



---

<b>Document title</b>	Full Draft - Ministerial Declaration
<b>Code</b>	2-4
<b>Category</b>	DEC
<b>Agenda Item</b>	2- Preparations for HELCOM 39-2018 and HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018
<b>Submission date</b>	28.11.2017
<b>Submitted by</b>	EU and Executive Secretary
<b>Reference</b>	

---

## Background

As agreed during the 13 November online HOD Meeting (§ 2.29 and 2.30 of the Outcome), the EU and the Secretariat have merged and condensed the input on all 4 themes into a text proposal. They took into account the comments received after the online HOD Meeting from SE (Theme 4), FI and DE.

The full draft of the Ministerial declaration is therefore submitted to HOD 53 with the objective of agreeing on as many issues as possible at HOD 53 2017. The process after the HOD 53-2017 will very much depend on the status of the agreement during that meeting.

## Action requested

The Meeting is invited to discuss the draft Ministerial Declaration with a view to clearing as many paragraphs as possible.

If possible, Contracting Parties are invited to send their comments in writing ahead of HOD 53 to the secretariat to facilitate discussions during HOD 53.

*General*

1. RECALLING the aim of HELCOM to restore the good environmental status of the Baltic marine environment by 2021 to have a healthy Baltic Sea environment, with diverse biological components functioning in balance, resulting in good environmental status and supporting a wide range of sustainable human economic and social activities.
2. WELCOMING the first version of the “State of the Baltic Sea” report that presents an assessment of environmental status, and pressures and impacts on the Baltic Sea marine environment, for the period 2011-2015, as well as social and economic analyses of the use of marine waters and cost of degradation and AGREEING to update and finalize this first version by June 2018, to provide the common basis to assess whether the goals and objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan have been achieved. DECIDING to prepare the next holistic assessment of the state of the Baltic Sea in 2023 / 2024, while keeping the assessment of indicators regularly updated.
3. NOTING with great concern the impacts of climate change on the marine environment in the Baltic Sea, with its decreasing ice extent and duration, increasing water temperature and lowering salinity. In recent decades, the frequency and intensity of saline water inflows from the North Sea has also decreased, which has led to all-time low concentrations of oxygen near the seabed, compared to prior to 2014/2015 inflow events. NOTING that these impacts add to the existing multiple pressures on marine ecosystems and thus make the need to reduce these pressures even more pressing.
4. ACKNOWLEDGING in this regard that the Paris Climate Agreement sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C, and WELCOMING the increasing visibility of ocean issues on the climate agenda.
5. NOTING with great concern (a) that over 95 % of the Baltic Sea area is still affected by eutrophication; (b) the unfavourable conservation status of Baltic marine biodiversity as a result of multiple pressures from human activities and in particular that several species, biotopes and habitats are still in danger of becoming extinct in the region; that most assessed habitats are not in good status, that there are signs of deterioration of food web; and (c) that levels of hazardous substances continue to be elevated and a cause for concern, non-indigenous species are still being introduced to the Baltic Sea, marine litter and underwater noise are pressures of special concern and around half of the seabed is estimated to be [potentially] disturbed by human activity.
6. NOTING that the status of Baltic Sea marine environment continues to be poor as a result of pressures from human activities and recovery is not yet sufficient to achieve the goals and ecological objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. NOTING ALSO that the most widely-distributed pressures causing impacts are excess nutrients, contamination, physical disturbance, underwater noise, non-indigenous species and extraction of fish and that an analysis of cumulative pressures and impacts indicates that those tend to be higher in coastal areas than the open sea.
7. RECOGNIZING that poor status of the marine environment has negative impacts also for sustainable use of marine resources and causes losses in recreational values that are estimated to be 1-2 billion euros annually and NOTING that the high level of eutrophication, if not reduced, is estimated to result in annual economic costs in the order of 4 billion euros that are spread across various sectors.

8. ACKNOWLEDGING the progress in implementing the 2007 Baltic Sea Action Plan with [68]% of the regional actions and measures implemented, and between [23%] and [60%] of the national actions completed by all or some Contracting Parties, and positive impacts it has had on preventing further deterioration, such as drastically reducing the number and volume of illegal oil spills, substantially decreasing the input and deposition of cadmium, mercury and lead, and increasing the abundance of most seal populations.
9. WELCOMING the significant progress that Contracting Parties have made in reducing the amount of nutrient input to the Baltic Sea from land-based sources and in addressing nutrient from ships which are estimated to decrease in the future.
10. REGRETTING, however, that Maximum Allowable Inputs of nitrogen have been fulfilled in only three out of seven sub-basins and of phosphorus in one sub-basin of the Baltic Sea.
11. EXPRESSING [STRONG] CONCERN however that, despite all current efforts that we made together and individually, GES for the Baltic Sea area and favourable conservation status of biodiversity, is unlikely to be reached by 2021.
12. REITERATING the agreed actions and measures in the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the Ministerial Declarations of Moscow (2010) and Copenhagen (2013), we RE-AFFIRM our strong commitment to strengthen the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the follow-up declarations, by 2021, as pledged by HELCOM at the Ocean Conference on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) in 2017.
13. We therefore COMMIT, as a first priority, to renewed efforts to make decisive progress towards our 2021 goals and in particular to strengthen our efforts to address the most widely-distributed and harmful pressures.
14. We AGREE to complete and fully operationalise the set of indicators used for regularly assessing the status of the marine environment, and to advance mapping and assessment of the extent and intensity of human activities in the Baltic Sea region, and the understanding of their impacts including the synergistic effects on the environment, and to use this information for strengthening the implementation of ecosystem-based management.
15. We DECIDE to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021 at the latest with the aim to set out a robust action plan for continuous achievement of the agreed HELCOM vision of a healthy Baltic Sea environment. We also DECIDE that the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan will, in addition to existing commitments to be fulfilled by 2021, address new emerging issues, on the basis of the commitments made in this Ministerial Outcome.
16. We REITERATE our determination to implement *Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action* and the Agenda 2030 and related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular its water- and ocean-related targets, and RECALL the concrete guidance on their regional implementation by the High-Level segment of HELCOM 38-2017. We therefore COMMIT to also using those goals and targets as a framework and guidance for the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.
17. The overall objectives of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan should be to set in place actions necessary for managing human activities in such a way that HELCOM's strategic goals "Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication", "Baltic Sea with life undisturbed by hazardous substances", "Maritime activities carried out in an environmentally friendly way" and "Favourable conservation status" can be achieved. We RECOGNIZE the economic and social benefits of achieving these objectives.

- 
18. We AGREE that the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan should be based on an ecosystem approach, should fully use the precautionary principle, be supported by fit-for-purpose scientific research, strong communication with stakeholders and knowledge sharing between science and policy and across all policy levels, and be developed in a participatory and transparent way that includes regional and local levels, as appropriate, NGOs, sectors and other stakeholders.
19. We ACKNOWLEDGE that the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan will not lead to a postponement of already agreed deadlines nor will it lead to a reduction of ambition levels of agreed actions and objectives.

#### *Eutrophication*

20. We RE-COMMIT to reach the country-allocated reduction targets for nutrients which will lower nutrient inputs to maximum allowable inputs as further specified by the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial meeting, including through implementation of measures taken under relevant EU legislation for contracting parties being EU Member States and under relevant national legislation in the Russian Federation.
21. We ACKNOWLEDGE that due to improved data on nutrient inputs in the reference period<sup>1</sup>, the country allocated nutrient reduction targets are no longer sufficient to achieve good environmental status of the Baltic Sea with regard to eutrophication and that, therefore, the follow up of the nutrient reduction requirements of the BSAP in the future needs to focus on national nutrient ceilings that are based on maximum allowable inputs.
22. In that context, we DECIDE to engage, as a priority, in further enhanced cooperation with the agriculture sector in the Baltic as well as aim for an enhanced cooperation with the relevant river basin commissions.

#### *Nutrient recycling strategy*

23. BEING AWARE that nitrogen fertilizer production is a highly energy consuming process and that its replacement could contribute to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and that phosphorus is a limited natural resource and a critical raw material, for which recycling methods for use in agricultural production already exists; RECOGNISING also that nutrient resources are not optimally managed and that there is a need to recycle nutrients, thereby reducing nutrient surpluses and losses, WE COMMIT to elaborate by 2020 a Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy that should:
- aim for reduced nutrient inputs to and eutrophication of the Baltic Sea,,
  - be based on the best available scientific knowledge on sustainable management and processing of nutrients in agriculture by safe recycling of nutrients especially from manure and sewage,
  - promote nutrient recycling in the Baltic Sea region, taking into account principles of circular economy, geographical and socio-economic conditions, as well as spatial distribution of nutrient stocks and their flows,
  - give guidance on risk assessments and solutions to prevent potentially harmful consequences from the application of recycled products and technological processes of nutrients recycling,
  - help to identify regional challenges, applicability and added value for the whole Baltic Sea region,

---

<sup>1</sup> Pre-BSAP period.

- be established with a step-by-step approach and contain a common vision and objectives for nutrient recycling.

24. WE DECIDE to develop as follow-up to the Strategy also nutrient recycling measures to be included in the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan.

#### *Marine litter and circular economy*

25. We REGRET that marine litter, and plastic litter in particular, continues to be a challenge in the Baltic Sea and we STRESS that marine litter does not belong there.
26. We are DETERMINED to combat marine litter through coordinated implementation of the Regional Marine Litter Action Plan and, for contracting parties that are EU Member States, of measures taken under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in order to achieve GES for marine litter in the Baltic Sea.
27. We COMMIT to regional expert work on defining maximum acceptable threshold values for marine litter in the Baltic Sea in close coordination with work undertaken by contracting parties in other relevant fora, and, if additional efforts are needed to achieve those levels, we COMMIT to developing ambitious, regionally coordinated, quantitative reduction targets, and associated baselines.
28. We also COMMIT to strengthening research and developing harmonised monitoring methods on the sources, distribution, amounts and impacts of marine litter, in coherence with similar work undertaken by contracting parties in other relevant fora, such as the Marine Strategy Coordination Group and its subsidiary bodies, and to improving assessment of the effectiveness of measures.
29. We EXPRESS SUPPORT to stopping plastics and micro-plastics from contaminating the marine and coastal environment, addressing the entire lifecycle of products and examining effective and cost-efficient options to reduce plastic and micro-plastic releases from products into the environment.
30. We DECIDE to develop possible measures to address micro-plastics in waste water effluents based on an increased knowledge on the scale of the problem.

#### *Micropollutants*

31. WE AGREE to identify the scale of problems of micro-pollutants in rivers, coastal and marine waters and, based on this knowledge, to consider possible mitigation measures - at source, on the user side and end-of-pipe, as appropriate.

#### *Underwater noise*

32. We WELCOME the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Baltic Underwater Noise Roadmap 2015-2017, including the establishment of a joint HELCOM/OSPAR registry of licenced impulsive sound events and development of a regional monitoring programme and guidelines for continuous noise as well as new knowledge on potential impact of underwater noise on species in the Baltic Sea.
33. We EMPHASIZE the need to further improve our understanding of the adverse impacts of underwater noise on the identified noise sensitive marine species and in particular the cumulative impacts of impulsive noise from multiple activities.

- 
34. We AGREE to develop and implement a coordinated regional action plan on underwater noise, aiming, in the long-term, at addressing adverse effects of underwater noise on marine species, whilst safeguarding the potential of the Baltic Sea for sustainable human activities.
  35. We COMMIT to continue fruitful cooperation between European Regional Sea Conventions in order to facilitate exchange of good practice and to breach knowledge gaps, and to continue regional expert work in defining threshold values for underwater noise that are consistent with GES for noise-sensitive species in the Baltic Sea.

#### *Seabed damage and disturbance*

36. We AGREE to develop ambitious, regionally coordinated, quantitative targets to reduce adverse effects of physical disturbance and habitat loss [on the basis of best available scientific advice], and, through improved scientific understanding of the sensitivity, distribution, and extent of seabed habitats and the effects thereof, to achieve GES for seabed habitats in the different basins of the Baltic Sea.
37. We COMMIT to working together to develop a regional action plan that will deliver the necessary reductions in adverse effects of physical disturbance needed to achieve GES.

#### *Biodiversity and impacts on resilient ecosystems*

38. We COMMIT to foster the restoration of biodiversity, to intensify regional, sub-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation and to promote the ecological balance of the Baltic Sea area with strengthened resilience, also as streamlined answer to human-induced climate change adaptation needs.
39. We AGREE to take actions to prevent the loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea and to improve the status of species, biotopes and habitats that are threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM Red Lists<sup>2</sup>, by establishing conservation plans for species, biotopes and habitats at risk of extinction, inside and outside protected areas.
40. WE WELCOME the significant progress made towards increasing the geographical coverage of the HELCOM marine protected areas (MPA) network; we COMMIT to strengthen our efforts - regionally and nationally - to improve the coherence, ecological representativeness and connectivity of the Baltic Sea MPA network, as well as their management, and improve understanding of the role of MPAs for ecosystem services, in order to enhance cost-effectiveness of MPAs management and yield the greatest environmental benefits. We also AGREE to strive for full achievement of Aichi Target 11 regarding the management, ecological representativeness and connectivity of the HELCOM MPAs network.
41. WE WELCOME the identification of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea in collaboration with the Convention of Biological Diversity, in line with the HELCOM commitment at the Ocean Conference on SDG 14.

#### *Climate change*

42. We STRESS the need for adaptive management to strengthen the resilience of the Baltic Sea in the face of climate change impacts and AGREE to increase HELCOM's preparedness to respond to climate change impacts, by taking foreseen climate change impacts into account when updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan and by exploring possibilities to adapt HELCOM's policies with the objective to ensure protection of

---

<sup>2</sup> BSEP No. 138 and 140

the marine environment also under the changing climate and to maximise the capacity of the Baltic Sea ecosystem to contribute to mitigation of climate change through blue carbon storage.

43. WE EMPHASIZE the need to further strengthen the scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change together with multiple other stressors on the Baltic Sea marine environment and AGREE that HELCOM should take action to bridge this knowledge to policy.

#### *Implementation of the ecosystem approach*

44. WE RECOGNIZE that knowledge on the relationship between the state of the marine environment and human well-being is essential for advancing application of the ecosystem approach to management of human activities and in maritime spatial planning in the region, as well as for implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on Biological Diversity.
45. To this end, we AGREE to further develop and carry out coordinated regional economic and social assessments, including ecosystem service analyses and natural capital accounting, taking advantage of improved methods and comparability of data.
46. We also AGREE to encourage further coordinated research to support cost of degradation analyses, cost-effectiveness analyses of regional measures, and assessment of cost and benefits related to achieving good environmental status covering the entire Baltic Sea region.
47. We EMPHASIZE that this will help the transition towards a sustainable use of marine goods and services by present and future generations and the results will serve for the next holistic assessment of the marine environment and other processes, to the benefit of marine management as well as maritime spatial planning.
48. *Additional paragraph TO BE ADDED LATER ON in association with the HELCOM-EUSBSR workshop on internal nutrient reserves (28-29 November): A paragraph on deepening the knowledge on potential activities on managing nutrients in the sea.*

#### *Improving regional ocean governance*

49. We WELCOME the great successes already achieved in regional governance in the fields of maritime transport and maritime spatial planning:
- In particular, we WELCOME the progress made in addressing the environmental impact of the maritime transport sector in the Baltic Sea via (a) the collaborative long-term effort to designate the Baltic Sea as a NO<sub>x</sub> Emissions Control Area (NECA), (b) HELCOM commitment at the Ocean Conference on SDG 14 on NECA and to promote green shipping technology and use of alternative fuels, and (c) the recent International Maritime Organization (IMO) decisions on the date of enforcement of the Baltic Sea as a special sewage area under MARPOL Annex IV<sup>3</sup>,
  - We also RECOGNISE the Baltic Sea region as a forerunner in regional cooperation on maritime spatial planning (MSP) and regional governance, involving HELCOM and VASAB and facilitated by the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group, and the important contribution maritime spatial planning can make to fulfil the Agenda 2030, in particular SDG 14,

---

<sup>3</sup> 1 June 2019 for new IMO registered passenger ships and 1 June 2021 for existing passenger ships with an extension until 1 June 2023 for direct passages between St. Petersburg area in Russia and the North Sea

- 
- We APPRECIATE the constructive cooperation with other partners in the region, including the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and UNDERLINE in this context the many successful cooperation projects developed within the BONUS Research Programme or the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), such as Baltic Scope or Baltic Lines, as well as initiatives by cities and municipalities in areas of common interest.
50. To further regional governance, we COMMIT to strengthen cooperation, policy coherence and coordination at all levels, including with international, regional and sub-regional organisations and institutions, arrangements and programmes for delivering water- and ocean-related SDGs under Agenda 2030, in all sectors and in particular:
- in maritime transport, we COMMIT to improve the availability of port reception facilities in the region for sewage and the delivery of garbage from ships in general,
  - we REITERATE the common goal of all Baltic Sea countries to, by 2020, establish maritime spatial plans that are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach, and in this regard, stress the importance to further cooperate to use the agreed principles, guidelines, concepts and mechanisms for planning purposes and develop them further as needed,
  - we AGREE to strengthen coordination and cooperation mechanisms with global and regional fishery bodies active in the Baltic Sea region, such as BALTFISH, the Baltic Sea Advisory Council and ICES, to create synergies (for instance in data collection) and ensure compatibility between conservation and management measures.
51. We STRIVE for joint approaches and synergies among HELCOM and relevant multilateral environmental agreements including CBD, CMS and ASCOBANS and UNEP Regional Seas Programme. We will closely COOPERATE also with other global organizations such as IMO to regionally back the implementation and further development of MARPOL, the Ballast Water Convention and other IMO instruments for the Baltic Sea area. We will CONTINUE the constructive cooperation with actors involved in the framework of the EUSBSR to contribute to the implementation of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan.
52. WE AGREE to cooperate with other Regional Sea Conventions in our work to reach SDGs, and RECOGNIZE the opportunities for increased knowledge, efficiency gains and effectiveness when jointly addressing implementation challenges, and WE IDENTIFY non-indigenous species, underwater noise, migratory birds, MPA network and management, threatened and endangered species as example of issues on which cooperation in particular with OSPAR could be pursued in the future.
53. We UNDERLINE that regional governance is also a successful tool to raise awareness on the situation of the Baltic Sea area, enhance ocean literacy, and support transparency, networks and campaigns.
54. We AGREE TO strengthen the cooperation with OSPAR in collaboration on common challenges and transboundary issues to gain efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of SDGs [such as non indigenous species, noise, migratory birds, MPA network and management, threatened and endangered species];
55. Finally, we RECALL that this Ministerial Outcome is not binding onto HELCOM contracting parties and is not intended to create rights or obligations under international or domestic law.
-