



Document title	Outcome of DG BSAP 4-2020
Code	5-11
Category	CMNT
Agenda Item	5 – Update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan
Submission date	30.11.2020
Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	HOD 59-2020document 5-8

Background

The attached document includes the Outcome of the Fourth Meeting of the Drafting Group for the Updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (DG BSAP 4-2020) that was held online on 23 November 2020. The Outcome contains comments to the draft overarching preamble and segment introductions for the updated BSAP (c.f. document 5-8).

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the comments by DG BSAP 4-2020 when considering document 5-8.



Outcome of the Fourth Meeting of the Drafting Group for the Updated Baltic Sea Action Plan

(DG BSAP 4-2020)

Introduction

0.1 The Fourth Meeting of the Drafting Group for the Updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (DG BSAP 4-2020) was held online on 23 November 2020.

0.2 All the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention, attended the Meeting, as well as Observers from Federation of European Aquaculture Producers and World Wide Fund for Nature. The List of Participants is contained in **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Rüdiger Stempel, HELCOM Executive Secretary. Ms. Susanna Kaasinen, Associate Professional Secretary from the HELCOM Secretariat acted as secretary of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda of the Meeting as contained in document 1-1.

Agenda Item 2 Latest activities in the BSAP update process

2.1 The Meeting took note that the first draft of the updated BSAP has been submitted to HOD 59-2020. The Meeting also took note that the SOM results will be discussed at SOM Platform 5-2020 and HOD 59-2020, and that the reporting on the joint HELCOM actions has been completed by the HELCOM Working Groups and the reporting on national actions is still ongoing.

Agenda Item 3 Overarching preamble for the updated BSAP

3.1 The Meeting recalled that DG BSAP 3-2020 commented on the draft overarching preamble and noted that the Secretariat, taking into account the comments received, had submitted the overarching preamble to GEAR 23-2020.

3.2 The Meeting took note of the overarching preamble that was submitted to HOD 59-2020 as part of the first full draft of the updated BSAP as well as the comments by GEAR 23-2020 (document 3-1).

3.3 The Meeting supported the comments by GEAR 23-2020 and agreed to come back to reviewing the overarching preamble at a later stage when there is more information on the actions that will be included in the updated BSAP to ensure the linkage between the preamble and the operative sections. The Meeting noted that additional strategic statements might be included in the overarching preamble as part of this review.

3.4 The Meeting took note of the specific comments on the preamble text as contained in **Annex 2** of this Outcome.

3.5 The Meeting took note of a comment regarding paragraph 19 that there might be a need to agree when the environmental targets are reviewed.

3.6 The Meeting agreed that the further drafting of the overarching preamble, taking into account the given comments and guidance from HOD 59-2020, will be a topic for the next meeting of the drafting group.

Agenda Item 4 Segment teams

4.1 The Meeting took note of the outcomes of the DG BSAP segment team meetings and information on the next meetings of the segment teams.

4.2 The Meeting welcomed the information that Finland is leading the segment team on sea-based activities, but noted, that the other segment teams have no lead country. The Meeting encouraged the Contracting Parties to take a lead of the segment teams and nominate participants to the teams to ensure a good coverage of experts of all topics addressed by the segments.

4.3 The Meeting took note that the segment teams have reviewed the segment specific introductions for the four segments (eutrophication, hazardous substances and litter, sea-based activities, and biodiversity) and that some segment teams had reviewed and amended existing actions based on comments received after HOD 58-2020.

4.4 The Meeting took note of the following suggestions regarding the segment specific introductions:

- The structure of the segment introductions should be more or less the same across all segments;
- The section on description of the current state could be moved from the start of the operative section to the introductory part;
- The introductions could be shortened by removing background information so that the focus would be on the actions;
- There is a need for stricter guidance to align the texts, e.g. the texts under the sub-heading “action areas” are not cohesive across segments and this part could perhaps be structured along with the management objectives;
- The text could contain strategic statements;
- A statement calling for the implementation of HELCOM Recommendations should be included in the introductory parts of the BSAP.

4.5 The Meeting expressed varied views on the appropriate length of the segment specific introductions. The Meeting took note of the views by some Contracting Parties that the introductions could be half a page long with references to existing documents such as the State of the Baltic Sea report, and the views by others that the texts should be self-sufficient without too many references and thus would need to be longer to provide context (although preferably within the recommended page limitations). The Meeting also took note of the view that the length of the introductions could vary between segments.

4.6 The Meeting took note of the proposal to invite the Secretariat after HOD 59-2020 to, where needed, prepare proposals for amendments to existing actions and to redraft the provisionally approved new actions based on the comments provided by experts, HELCOM Working Groups and HOD during the review process, as well as merge actions where overlap has been identified. These amended actions would then be presented for consideration and further work by DG BSAP and the segment teams in spring 2021. The Meeting also took note of the proposal that the Secretariat could in this process highlight if any of the actions could be moved to the segment specific introductions as strategic statements.

Agenda Item 5 Horizontal actions segment

5.1 The Meeting recalled that DG BSAP 3-2020 agreed on the overall structure of the horizontal actions segment and invited the Secretariat, in cooperation with the relevant HELCOM groups, to draft the introductory texts for topics of the horizontal actions segment.

- 5.2 The Meeting took note of the draft introductory texts for the horizontal actions segment (document 5-1).
- 5.3 The Meeting took note that text from Our Baltic Declaration has been utilized to formulate the commitments for the financing part. The Meeting agreed to come back to the binding nature of the commitments on financing at a later stage.
- 5.4 The Meeting took note of the proposal to include hot spots as a topic under the horizontal actions segment.
- 5.5 The Meeting took note of the view by Finland that the introductions could be shortened and noted that Finland will send written comments to the Secretariat.
- 5.6 The Meeting took note of the comment that “horizontal actions” might not be self-explanatory to the reader and should be better defined or that the name of the segment might be changed.
- 5.7 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to organize a written procedure to comment on the horizontal actions segment after HOD 59-2020 and agreed that the further drafting of the horizontal actions segment, based on the given comments and guidance from HOD 59-2020, will be a topic for the next meeting of the drafting group.
- 5.8 The Meeting took note of the proposal concerning hosting a high-level stakeholder donation event associated with the Ministerial Meeting.

Agenda Item 6 Next meetings

- 6.1 The Meeting agreed to organize the next meeting of the drafting group (DG BSAP 5-2021) as a full-day meeting in mid-February 2021 and invited the Secretariat to find a suitable date for the meeting taking into consideration winter holidays in different countries as far as possible.
- 6.2 The Meeting agreed that the topics of DG BSAP 5-2021 will be the further drafting of the overarching preamble and horizontal actions segment and reviewing the next versions of the segment specific introductions and actions.
- 6.3 The Meeting requested the Secretariat to make the documents for future meetings of DG BSAP and the segment teams available in Word format to facilitate commenting and submit documents to these meetings as early as possible.

Agenda Item 7 Any other business

- 7.1 The Meeting did not discuss any other business.

Agenda Item 8 Outcome of the Meeting

- 8.1 The draft outcome was prepared by the Secretariat and adopted via correspondence.

Annex 1. List of participants

Name	Representing	Name of organization	Email address
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Annex 2. Draft overarching preamble for the updated BSAP

1. We, the Ministers of the Environment of the Baltic Sea coastal states and the Commissioner for the Environment of the European Commission, assembled in Lübeck, Germany, on XY October 2021, on the occasion of the Ministerial Meeting of the Helsinki Commission:
2. **RECALL** the provisions of the 1992 Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention);
3. **REITERATE** the commitment of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention to restoring a thriving and resilient Baltic Sea ecosystem, as expressed in the HELCOM vision of “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”;
4. **ACKNOWLEDGE** that the work of HELCOM has led to significant environmental improvements in many areas and specifically that progress in implementing the 2007 Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) has contributed to preventing further deterioration of the environment of the Baltic Sea;
5. **NOTE** with great concern, however, that the goals of the 2007 BSAP were not achieved by 2021 as envisioned, and that the Baltic Sea area is still heavily affected by multiple pressures caused by human activities;
6. **NOTE**, in particular, that: (a) eutrophication, which results from a variety of factors and is partly due to the time lag between measures and effects, continues to heavily impact on the Baltic Sea; (b) levels of hazardous substances are still elevated and a cause for concern; (c) invasive alien species are still being introduced into the Baltic Sea; (d) marine litter is a pressure of special concern; (e) around half of the seabed is potentially disturbed by human activity ; (f) other pressures such as underwater noise disturb marine life; (g) overall the unfavourable conservation status of Baltic marine biodiversity is widespread as a result of human activities, with several species still in danger of becoming extinct, a poor status of most of the assessed habitats and various biotopes and habitats at risk of disappearing, as well as food webs showing signs of deterioration;
7. **UNDERScore** that we must continue to strive for good environmental status since the current state of the Baltic Sea marine environment remains unsatisfactory as a result of pressures from land- and sea-based human activities and that recovery is not yet sufficient to achieve the goals of the BSAP;
8. **RECALL** the decision by the 2018 Brussels Ministerial Meeting to update the BSAP by 2021 at the latest, with the aim of elaborating a robust action plan that will retain at least the level of ambition of the 2007 plan and will address new issues in addition to the existing commitments to be fulfilled by 2021 and will be aimed at achieving the agreed HELCOM vision of a healthy Baltic Sea marine environment;
9. **RECALL** also the Declaration adopted by the Ministers of the Environment, Maritime Economy, Agriculture and Fisheries of EU Baltic Sea Member States and of the Commissioner for ‘Environment, Oceans and Fisheries’ on September 28, 2020 committing to jointly boosting efforts to bring the Baltic to a good environmental status;
10. **AFFIRM** that, in order to address all relevant aspects of the ecosystem and the emerging challenges of marine management, the strategic goals underpinning the updated BSAP are a “Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication”, a “Baltic Sea unaffected by hazardous substances and litter”;

Commented [SK1]: WWF: Change to “restoring the Baltic Sea to a...”

Commented [SK2]: FI: This seems like an attempt to blur the fact that an excess of nutrients have been and continue to be lost (as input) to the Baltic Sea. In our opinion we cannot say that it results from a VARIETY of factors when there is a rather simple explanation to the majority of the phenomenon. So, this should rather read " which results from excess nutrient loading to the sea"

Commented [SK3]: FI: This part continues to hide the main message. It is not understandable to us how the time lag has contributed to CREATING the problem in the first place. It may have contributed to SOLVING the problem. Therefore it is not correct to say "and is partly due to"...It could be said "... and PERSISTS partly due to..."

Commented [SK4]: DK: Delete “strategic”

Commented [SK5]: WWF: Add “supporting” to clarify the sentence

“environmentally-sustainable sea-based activities”, all of which will lead to a “healthy and resilient Baltic Sea ecosystem”;

11. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the significant cost implications of not taking action against the varied threats to the Baltic Sea ecosystem and **NOTE**, for example, that according to the most recent “State of the Baltic Sea” report losses in recreational values alone due to the deterioration of the marine environment are estimated to be 1-2 billion euros annually and that a reduction of the high level of eutrophication, if reduced, is estimated to result in annual economic benefits in the order of 4 billion Euros across all relevant sectors of the economy;
12. **STRESS** that the achievement of good environmental status for the Baltic Sea will require major efforts and transformational change in all relevant sectors of the economy, including agriculture, fisheries, tourism, logistics, transportation and manufacturing, and necessitates among other things an increase in efficiency in the use of resources and a transition to a clean and sustainable circular economy;
13. **UNDERScore** the need to integrate environmental objectives with economic and socio-economic goals in order to advance sustainable development and **STRESS** the need for coherent spatial planning of human activities at sea across the region, applying an ecosystem-based approach;
14. **STRESS** the continued need for strong regional and cross-sectoral cooperation in working towards achieving good environmental status, involving relevant international and national organizations, financing institutions, scientific and research institutions, civil society and the private sector;
15. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the positive contributions made by intergovernmental organisations and non-governmental organisations towards preserving and protecting the Baltic Sea Area and ensuring a prudent utilisation of its marine goods and services and **NOTE** with gratification that the updated BSAP was developed in a participatory and transparent way at the regional and local levels, including all appropriate stakeholders, is based on the ecosystem approach, the precautionary principle, and relevant scientific research, enables knowledge sharing between science and policy across all levels, and gives due consideration to economic and social impacts of the measures to be taken to meet its objectives;
16. **REITERATE** the determination of HELCOM Contracting Parties to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework adopted under the Convention on Biodiversity and to engage with other relevant regional and global processes and **STRESS** the role of HELCOM in leading the regional efforts to this effect and as an important and recognized contributor in the context of international ocean governance;
17. **REITERATE** the need to coordinate and harmonize the work in the context of the HELCOM BSAP with various ongoing initiatives at the international, European, regional and national levels, including in particular the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the European Green Deal, as well as all other pertinent EU legislation and programmes and all pertinent legislation and policies of the Russian Federation, including the Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation;
18. **AGREE** that the effectiveness of action taken shall continue to be evaluated by using appropriate indicators to measure the progress towards the targets, allowing for the adjustments needed to ensure that the objectives are achieved;
19. **ACKNOWLEDGE** that the environmental targets in the various segments of the present plan are based on best available knowledge at the time of its elaboration and that, in line with the principles of adaptive management, the targets should be periodically reviewed and revised using a harmonised approach and the most up-to-date information;

Commented [SK6]: FI: Could we find a better wording than "high-level" e.g. "undesirable status"

Commented [SK7]: FI: Could we maybe say, instead of "relevant" which does not offer any extra information, "...in all sectors of the economy affecting the sea, including..."

Commented [SK8]: FI: and carbon neutrality

Commented [SK9]: FI: "...working towards..."

Commented [SK10]: DK: Delete "at the regional and local levels" Also, the whole section could benefit of some rewriting. It is long and includes many different subjects, which makes it hard to read.

20. **AGREE** to realize all actions and commitments in the updated BSAP by the dates specified in the plan, with a view to finalizing implementation of the BSAP as a whole by 2030 at the latest;
21. **WITHOUT PREJUDICE TO**, and seeking synergies with, national legislation, international agreements and the legislation of the European Union, as well as the legislation of the Russian Federation;
22. **ADOPT THE FOLLOWING UPDATED BALTIC SEA ACTION PLAN, AIMED AT ACHIEVING GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS IN THE BALTIC SEA**