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## Background

By HELCOM Rules of Procedures, Rule 2.1 the chairmanship of the Commission shall be given to each Contracting Party in turn in alphabetical order of the names of Contracting Party.

New chairmanship period began from 01.07.2014 and by alphabetical order, Estonia will chair HELCOM for next two years, till 30.06.2016.

Estonia as a member to the Convention has evaluated and prioritized matters and issues of HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and Declaration from HELCOM's 2013 Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting. The attached document is an outcome of this prioritization. The document also contains a proposal for a limited number of regional actions corresponding to the priorities of the Estonian Chairmanship in HELCOM. These proposed actions are in line with the existing HELCOM commitments, and the intention is that the Estonian Chairmanship will pay a special attention that these activities are promoted and successfully conducted.

## Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of Estonian priorities proposal for next HELCOM's Chairmanship period.

# HELCOM PRIORITIES DURING THE ESTONIAN CHAIRMANSHIP

(1 July 2014 - 30 June 2016)

## 1. POLLUTION MANAGEMENT

## 2. PLANNING, GOVERNANCE AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

## 3. ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS AND INFORMATION

### 1. POLLUTION MANAGEMENT

**Reduction of pollution load** - Intensify the implementation of water management plans and environmental measures under the rural development plans<sup>1</sup> in order to decrease the load of nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorous) from mainland into the Baltic Sea. Construct water collection and purification systems for small and medium-sized settlements<sup>2</sup>, among other measures. Carry out applied research to assess and further test options for 'natural' phosphorus and nitrogen recycling. Aquaculture as an environmental measure: cultivation of algae, shells, etc. to remove phosphorus and nitrogen from the marine environment. Stimulate an effective re-use of phosphorus originating from technological residue of sewage treatment facilities and big farms<sup>3</sup>.

**Reduction of impact of hazardous substances** - Reduce or stop the use of HELCOM problematic chemicals by substituting these with substances not harmful for the environment<sup>4</sup>. Liquidate the still existing past pollution sites having impact on the environmental status of the Baltic Sea. Further develop the pollution response capacity and contingency in the Baltic Sea countries and the whole region, including for shoreline pollution accidents, oiled wildlife and oil pollution in ice conditions<sup>5</sup>.

**Regional Marine Litter Action Plan** - develop regional action plan on reducing marine litter. The plan is to be developed by 2015 at the latest, with the objective to reach considerable reduction of marine litter by 2025 compared to 2015<sup>6</sup>. Carry out applied research to investigate the dispersion of micro plastics in the marine environment, and develop and test applicable technology for removal of micro plastics and nano-particles in municipal sewage by 2020 at the latest, at the same time cooperating with industry in order to stop the use of micro plastics and nano-particles in production processes<sup>7</sup>.

### 2. PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

**Use, conservation and protection of the Baltic Sea regional coastal and marine areas** - develop regional integrated coastal management, maritime spatial planning and marine and maritime governance basis, principles and best practices<sup>8</sup> in order to contribute to blue growth and creation of new jobs and prosperity in the region while enabling a sustainable use of marine goods and services<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> HELCOM Rec. 28E/4 on Prevention of Pollution from Agriculture <http://www.helcom.fi/Recommendations/Rec%2028E-4.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para 16, 24 (B), 15 (N), 18 (N) + HELCOM Rec. 28E/5: Municipal Wastewater Treatment: <http://www.helcom.fi/Recommendations/Rec%2028E-5.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para XI, 22 (B), 13 (N)

<sup>4</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para 16, XI, 1-6 (H); 11 (H). Hazardous substances of concern: <http://www.helcom.fi/Lists/Publications/BSEP119.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> HELCOM Rec 34E/3 on Amendments to Annex VII to the Helsinki Convention: <http://www.helcom.fi/Recommendations/Rec%2034E-3.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para IX:

<http://www.helcom.fi/Documents/Ministerial2013/Ministerial%20declaration/2013%20Copenhagen%20Ministerial%20Declaration%20w%20cover.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para 24 (B)

<sup>8</sup> HELCOM 2013a Declaration Para 7, 11, 12, 13, I, 17 (B), 1 (K), 1 – 17 (M), 1-4 (MSP), 5 (F)

<sup>9</sup> EU, „A Sustainable Blue Growth Agenda for the Baltic Sea Region“, [http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/attachments/article/590671/Adopted%20SWD%20Blue%20growth%20agenda%2016.05.2014\(1\).pdf](http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/attachments/article/590671/Adopted%20SWD%20Blue%20growth%20agenda%2016.05.2014(1).pdf) , 13.06.2014

**Well-managed and ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas** - assess the current status of marine protection areas, develop and implement, by 2015, the Baltic Sea marine protected areas' management plans or measures<sup>10</sup>. Upon further necessity and in order to preserve and protect marine goods and services, agree on the extension of the network of marine protected areas.

**Fish stock and other environmental resources** - draw up or further develop ecosystem based management principles for fish stock and other marine environment goods and services<sup>11</sup>. By 2020 at the latest refine and implement positive incentives for the conservation and sustainable use of coastal and marine biodiversity including payments<sup>12</sup> for ecosystem services<sup>13</sup>, and stop, step by step, decrease or reform subsidies and incentives harmful to the coastal and marine biodiversity<sup>14</sup>.

### 3. ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS AND INFORMATION

**HELCOM's up to date monitoring programme**<sup>15</sup> - implement HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy<sup>16</sup>, update the HELCOM monitoring programme in 2014 and handbooks and guidelines in 2015<sup>17</sup> (incl. database and interface for the *Pollution Load Compilation* (PLC) data). Consolidate the HELCOM data management so that data delivered by Parties to the Helsinki Convention are usable for both measuring the implementation in HELCOM as well as drawing up other international or domestic monitoring information (e.g. EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive or the Marine Doctrine of the Russian Federation).

**Indicator- and environmental objectives' based assessment** - make the assessment of the status of the Baltic Sea fully operational by drawing up or exploiting an assessment system based on core indicators in order to measure the progress towards a good environmental status of the Baltic Sea<sup>18</sup>. Develop 2nd Holistic Assessment of the status of and pressures on the Baltic Sea by 2016/2017<sup>19</sup>.

**Access to environmental information and visibility of HELCOM activities** - further develop the HELCOM website, update HELCOM map applications to improve operational access to data. Implement the HELCOM Communication Strategy guided by the necessity to improve HELCOM's visibility and intelligibility for the general public<sup>20</sup>. Establish a communication network in HELCOM Contracting Parties to raise awareness of HELCOM efforts among the general public, including youth in the Baltic Sea countries<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> HELCOM Rec. 35/1 on HELCOM MPA <http://www.helcom.fi/Recommendations/Rec%2035-1.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> UK DEFRA, An Ecosystem Based Approach to the Common Fisheries Policy: Defining the Goals, 2002: <http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/DEFINING.pdf> 12.06.2014

<sup>12</sup> UK DEFRA, Payments for Ecosystem Services: A Best Practice Guide, 2013; [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/200920/pb13932-pes-bestpractice-20130522.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200920/pb13932-pes-bestpractice-20130522.pdf), 14.08.2014

<sup>13</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity and its AICHI biodiversity targets T 3, <http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>, HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para 4 (B)

<sup>14</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para 4 (B), EU ENVIRONMENT: [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/international/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/international/index_en.htm),

<sup>15</sup> HELCOM MORE 6/2013, Document 4/2, COMPILATION OF HELCOM MANUALS AND GUIDELINES, [http://meeting.helcom.fi/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?p\\_l\\_id=16324&folderId=2434394&name=DLFE-54652.pdf](http://meeting.helcom.fi/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=16324&folderId=2434394&name=DLFE-54652.pdf), 10.06.2014

<sup>16</sup> HELCOM MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGY 2013, <http://helcom.fi/action-areas/monitoring-and-assessment/monitoring-and-assessment-strategy>, 10.06.2014

<sup>17</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para 1 (K)

<sup>18</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para2 (K)

<sup>19</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para IV, 13 (M), 1(K)

<sup>20</sup> HELCOM Communication Strategy, 2014: <http://helcom.fi/Lists/Publications/HELCOM%20Communication%20Strategy.pdf>, 14.08.2014

<sup>21</sup> HELCOM 2013 Declaration Para 4 (B), 7 (B), 5 (H), 2 (MSP)

## Regional Measures to reach Goals that are set within HELCOM's Estonian Chairmanship Priorities

### 1. POLLUTION MANAGEMENT

#### REDUCTION OF POLLUTION LOAD

- Progress towards the targets of HELCOM Nutrient Reduction Scheme by:
  - Modernizing Annex III to the Helsinki Convention to better reflect possibilities to reduce agriculture originating nutrients.
  - Involving non-HELCOM countries into implementation of HELCOM targets in order to decrease their impact on the status of the marine environment.
  - Updating small and medium-size settlements WWTPs and develop new HELCOM Recommendation on sludge handling.
  - Upgrading Port Reception Facilities for sewage where still necessary.
  - Developing Recommendation on sustainable aquaculture based on ecosystem approach and innovative technics minimising negative impact on the marine environment
- Eliminate countries' remaining HELCOM Hot-Spots by 2016 at latest.
- Start developing quantitative environmental targets in other areas than eutrophication.

#### Reduction of impact of hazardous substances

- Reduce or stop the use of HELCOM problematic chemicals by substituting these with substances not harmful for the environment, and to focus on emerging substances such as pharmaceuticals
- Consider ways of strengthening HELCOM work in the area of hazardous substances.
- Adopt Revised HELCOM Guidelines for Management of Dredged Material at Sea and develop effective geographically referenced reporting system on dredging and dumping activities.
- Start upgrading regional preparedness and response related information and communication systems. Prepare and conduct Balex Delta 2015, 2016.

#### Regional Marine Litter Action Plan

- Develop, adopt and start implementing regional action plan on reducing marine litter.
- Carry out applied research develop and test applicable technology for removal of micro plastics and nano-particles in municipal sewage.

### 2. PLANNING, MANAGEMENT AND MARINE PROTECTED AREAS

#### Use, conservation and protection of the Baltic Sea regional coastal and marine areas

- Develop basics, principles, guidelines and best practices for regional integrated coastal management and maritime spatial planning, as well as marine and maritime governance, building on existing Recommendations, and with the aim to contribute to coherent implementation of relevant requirements and further development of the necessary data infrastructure.

#### Well-managed and ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas

- Assess the current status of marine protection areas and upon further necessity commence the extension of the network of marine protected areas.

#### Fish stock and other environmental resources

- Draw up or further develop ecosystem based management principles for fish stock and other marine environment goods and services, focusing e.g. on sustainable fishing practices and methods in marine protected areas.

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- Consider developing guidelines for establishing positive incentives to sustain coastal and marine biodiversity, determine incentives harmful to the coastal and marine biodiversity and commencing processes to stop or reform these incentives.

### 3. ASSESSMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS AND INFORMATION

#### HELCOM's up to date monitoring programme

- Update HELCOM monitoring guidelines by 2015.
- Consolidate the HELCOM data management following the principle – “one enter, many use”.

#### Indicator- and environmental objectives' based assessment

- Develop an assessment system based on core indicators by 2015.
- Develop 2<sup>nd</sup> HELCOM Holistic Assessment by 2017.

#### Access to environmental information and visibility of HELCOM activities

- Update HELCOM map applications to improve operational access to data.
- Commence regionally an information campaign to popularize contemporary coastal- and marine environment topics as well HELCOM relevant activities to raise public awareness.