

HELSINKI COMMISSION

Baltic Marine Environment

Protection Commission



HELCOM MINISTERIAL DECLARATION (HELCOM BREMEN DECLARATION)

adopted on 25 June 2003 in Bremen by the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting

The Helsinki Commission, represented by

- Minister of the Environment of the Government of the Kingdom of Denmark,
- Representative of the European Commission,
- Minister of the Environment of the Government of the Republic of Estonia,
- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of the Environment of the Government of the Republic of Finland,
- Federal Minister of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany,
- Minister of Environment of the Government of the Republic of Latvia,
- High Level Representative of the Ministry of the Environment of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania,
- Secretary of State in the Ministry of Environment of the Government of the Republic of Poland,
- Deputy Minister of Natural Resources of the Government of the Russian Federation, and
- Minister of the Environment of the Government of the Kingdom of Sweden,

ASSEMBLED in Bremen, Germany on the occasion of the Ministerial Meeting of the Helsinki Commission on 25 June 2003,

RECALLING the provisions of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (1992),

NOTING with satisfaction the joint endeavours of the Contracting Parties already undertaken as well as the work carried out within appropriate international organizations and the European Community,

CONSCIOUS of the sensitivity of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea Area and the importance the sea represents to the people living along the coasts, for economic, social, recreational and cultural reasons,

AWARE of the need to protect these shared resources for the benefit of present and future generations through the implementation of an ecosystem approach as envisaged in the concept of sustainability,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the outcome of the Johannesburg World Summit and in particular the decisions as regards chemicals, loss of biodiversity and marine fish stocks,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the Marine Environment and Tanker Safety Action Plan endorsed by the G8 Summit, held in Evian, France on 3 June 2003 and the Communiqué from the 12th Ministerial Session of the Council of the Baltic Sea States held in Pori, Finland, on 10-11 June 2003,

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the HELCOM Copenhagen Declaration on the safety of navigation and emergency capacity in the Baltic Sea Area,

MINDFUL that, since resources are generally getting scarcer, it is necessary to facilitate synergism wherever possible and to avoid the duplication of efforts,

WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING that the state of the marine environment has improved during the recent years due to joint efforts in the framework of the Helsinki Convention, WE ARE CONVINCED that there still is a need for further efforts and additional measures to restore and conserve our common sea,

EXPRESSING concern about eutrophication and the recent oxygen depletion events in the Baltic Sea area, the continued discharge of nutrients and hazardous substances, the threatened marine biological diversity and the environmental impact of shipping, all of which require our particular attention,

NOTING that for the purposes of this Declaration, "the Governments of the Contracting Parties" means the Governments of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden.

WE, THE MINISTERS AND HIGH LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE CONTRACTING PARTIES AND THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, HAVE ADOPTED the following Declaration:

I The role of HELCOM and its future priorities

WE NOTE that the EU accession process will be finalised on 1st of May 2004 with the foreseen consequence that eight of nine HELCOM Contracting States will be EU members and WE ACKNOWLEDGE a need for a new focus of the HELCOM work.

WE ARE CONVINCED that through our own actions, jointly or individually, the riparian countries can influence the state of the marine environment and the direction of its future state.

As a consequence hereof HELCOM should maintain equal partnership of Contracting Parties and contribute to enhancing the relation between EU and Russia in order to ensure that the same environmental measures are implemented in the whole Baltic catchment area.

WE ALSO RECOGNIZE that co-operation and co-ordination with EU and other international bodies, regional seas conventions, will become increasingly important.

BEING AWARE that the political and economic state of affairs around the Baltic Sea is changing and RECOGNIZING the need to define the priorities and the field of focus of HELCOM's work,

WE AGREE:

1. that a new and adjusted HELCOM approach will be built on the following elements: the future European Marine Strategy, political commitment within HELCOM including the Joint Comprehensive Program (JCP), provision of sound scientific basics, timely and proactive reactions, inclusion of social and economic aspects, effective resource management, harmonization and synergies and avoidance of double work,
2. that the work will have to focus on activities that bring added value. This will be ensured in a three stage -approach:

- a. by input to the regulatory process – pointing out the unique character of the Baltic Sea area;
 - b. by contributing and co-operating to develop a European Marine Strategy;
 - c. by making use of HELCOM's legally based mandate to develop Recommendations and supplementary measures, taking into account the specific requirements of the Baltic Sea Area,
3. that the priority issues for HELCOM in the near future will be ecosystem approach including nature conservation and biodiversity, joint monitoring and assessment, maritime safety and shipping including response activities as well as eutrophication and hazardous substances of relevance for the Baltic Sea. In these priority issues focus should be especially on activities not covered in other fora.

TO THIS END WE:

4. AGREE on the need to call upon HELCOM to stress the regional viewpoints and the specific requirements of the Baltic Sea in HELCOM's fields of action as well as to be an effective channel for introducing the local and regional aspects of the Baltic Sea in EU and other relevant international fora,
5. WILL DEVELOP HELCOM's role, responsibilities, working structure and methods as well as PROPOSE appropriate modifications for consideration and adoption for HELCOM 25/2004, based on the new approach and priority setting and taking into account the evolving political development in Europe and, in particular, in the Baltic Sea region.

II Environmental impact of Shipping

WE ACKNOWLEDGE the joint endeavours already undertaken by the Baltic Sea States, work undertaken and on-going within the International Maritime Organization as well as the European Community.

WE ARE CONVINCED of the need to adopt measures, in accordance with UNCLOS, within the framework of the International Maritime Organization, because of the global character of shipping, supplemented if necessary by measures at HELCOM level and by measures at EU level.

WE UNDERSTAND that the growing density of maritime traffic in the Baltic Sea area might result in accidental spillages of oil or other harmful substances.

WE ALSO EXPRESS our concern as to the continued excessive number of deliberate illegal oil discharges.

At the same time WE ARE AWARE of the necessity to fully implement all our obligations and ARE CONVINCED that it is necessary to further investigate the need for additional measures to ensure the safety of navigation and emergency capacity.

TO THIS END WE:

1. WILL INCREASE our efforts to ensure the safety of navigation and emergency capacity in the Baltic Sea Area, by making maritime safety an absolute priority for all Baltic Sea Governments, especially taking into account seasonal weather conditions,
2. REAFFIRM our commitment - as a matter of priority - to fully implement our obligations as set out in the HELCOM Copenhagen Declaration (i.e. the Declaration on the Safety of Navigation and Emergency Capacity in the Baltic Sea Area). Particular attention will be given to those aspects of the HELCOM Copenhagen Declaration, which require additional implementation measures/efforts in order to be fully implemented. A complete list of the areas for which a need for additional implementation measures are required appear in the report on the status of implementation by the Contracting Parties of the HELCOM Copenhagen Declaration,

3. The EU Members States and the Accession Countries WILL, based on the experience from existing PSSAs carefully consider the possible designation of areas in the Baltic Sea as PSSAs, taking into account the sensitivity of the Baltic marine environment and invite Russia to join our efforts in enhancing our co-operation in the framework of IMO. Finland and Sweden invited interested HELCOM Contracting Parties to join their respective efforts.
4. In addition, WE:
 - a. AGREE to enhance our co-operation on maritime safety in the framework of the International Maritime Organisation, with the objective of preventing maritime accidents and consequent pollution, through concrete measures, especially concerning the phasing out of single-hull vessels and the ban on transport of heavy oil in single hull vessels. Meanwhile, we will regionally seek agreement to ensure the same effect;
 - b. WILL ENSURE the availability of adequate emergency capacity; and
 - c. the provision of efficient means to reduce, with the aim to finally get a halt to, the deliberate illegal oil discharges, inter alia as outlined in the European Commission's proposals for measures on ship source pollution.
5. Therefore, WE HAVE ADOPTED:
 - a. HELCOM Recommendation 24/9 "Ensuring adequate emergency capacity".

III Eutrophication

WE NOTE that the semi-enclosed Baltic Sea has a slow water exchange and is therefore particularly sensitive to eutrophication.

WE NOTE WITH CONCERN that even though substantial efforts have been made to reduce inputs of nutrients¹, eutrophication still remains a problem. This is characterized by the serious oxygen deficiency events in 2002, extensive harmful plankton blooms and floating mats of decaying sea weed along coasts².

WE ALSO NOTE that the main sources of the still excessive inputs of nutrients are:

- nitrogen from agriculture,
- airborne nitrogen inputs both from land- and sea-based sources, and
- waterborne inputs from urban areas, small municipalities and some industries.

WE RECOGNIZE that a main source of waterborne nitrogen input is related to intensive agricultural practices taking place within current EU Member States. Also, losses of phosphorus give rise to concern in several countries.

WE CONSIDER that the EU enlargement process will bring large new areas of the Baltic Sea catchment under the EU Common Agricultural Policy and that this may lead to even higher nutrient inputs into the Baltic Sea Area.

BEING AWARE of the urgent need to increase efforts to combat eutrophication,

WE AGREE:

¹ Following the commitments made at the 1988 Ministerial Declaration and the Ministerial Communiqué of the Ministerial Session in 1998. The results are presented in: "The review of more specific targets to reach the goal set up in the 1988/1998 Ministerial Declarations regarding nutrients" (BSEP 89).

² The recent assessment products: "Environment of the Baltic Sea area 1994-1998" (BSEP 82B) and "The Baltic Marine Environment 1999-2002" (BSEP 87), and the 2002 Oxygen Depletion Event in the Kattegat, Belt Sea and Western Baltic.

1. to stress the need to accelerate the process of integrating environmental aspects and sustainable development in agriculture by implementing the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy, such as in fulfilment of environmental requirements by implementing agro-environmental schemes that would benefit the protection of the Baltic Sea,
2. to pursue the implementation of the Nitrate and Urban Waste Water Directives and other relevant EU Directives where this is or will be applicable,
3. to improve the agricultural practices towards reduction of adverse environmental effects in order to ensure efficient nutrient utilization based on Part II of Annex III of the Helsinki Convention and to implement appropriate measures. Some ideas are presented in the document "Possible future activities for the reduction of non-point source pollution from agriculture",
4. to continue our efforts to reduce inputs from other sources of nutrients,
5. to welcome the specific environmental programmes aimed at improving the quality of the Baltic Sea³, which have recently been established by some of the Contracting Parties and to urge the immediate elaboration of such programmes within other Contracting Parties to HELCOM,
6. to furthermore welcome initiatives taken by the European Commission to address airborne inputs of nitrogen from seagoing ships.

WE INVITE HELCOM, with the view to facilitate the development and implementation of the most effective set of measures to combat eutrophication, to develop and apply:

7. ecological quality objectives with appropriate indicators of the eutrophication status which express "good quality status" as stipulated in the Water Framework Directive, but covering the whole Baltic Sea Area,
8. tools to assess the implications of different policy scenarios on inputs of nutrients into and the resulting eutrophication status of the Baltic Sea Area or sub-areas thereof,
9. means to produce topical assessment and, when necessary, timely thematic reports on special events. Such means should also address facilities for early warning, efficient and speedy reporting and exchange of data and information required for such assessments.

IV Nature conservation and biodiversity

WE ARE CONVINCED that regional co-ordination by HELCOM is essential for implementing effectively nature conservation in the Baltic Sea area.

WE ARE AWARE that more action is needed to fully implement the system of Baltic Sea Protected Areas.

WE EMPHASIZE the need for further close co-operation between HELCOM and IBSFC, especially in reducing bycatches, in developing selective fishing gears and better fishing practices, as well as in protecting endangered species and WE REQUEST the two Commissions to intensify liaison on matters of common interest⁴.

WE EXPRESS concern on the severe status of the population of harbour porpoises and REAFFIRM our commitments to fully implement HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 concerning protection of harbour porpoises in the Baltic Sea area.

³ Communiqué of the Ministerial Session on 26 March 1998 to reaffirm the commitment to achieve the strategic goals set up in the 1988 Ministerial Declaration and to define a series of more specific targets to be realized before the year 2005 and reviewed in 2003.

⁴ Proposals for joint actions by the joint HELCOM/IBSFC Seminar on fisheries issues and environmental protection of the Baltic Sea, 20-21 February 2002 in Gdynia, Poland.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE the actions taken by ASCOBANS and give political support to the adoption and implementation of the Recovery Plan for Baltic Harbour Porpoises (Jastarnia Plan).

WE EMPHASIZE the importance of HELCOM co-ordinating regional issues on environment friendly and sustainable use of the Baltic Sea as well as ensuring co-operation on integrated management of human activities in coastal and open sea areas, and in cross-border issues.

1. Therefore, WE HAVE ADOPTED HELCOM Recommendation 24/10 "Implementation of Integrated Marine and Coastal Management of Human Activities in the Baltic Sea area".

V The future implementation and monitoring of the JCP

WE NOTE with satisfaction the status of the implementation of the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP)⁵ as presented in the report from the Implementation Task Force⁶.

WE CONSIDER that the content and message of the JCP, as a collective movement for the whole Baltic Sea catchment area and a political "trademark" of the Baltic Sea co-operation remain valid and should be continued.

WE ARE AWARE that the current appearance of the Programme Implementation Task Force (PITF) raises concern, that the PITF no longer is considered as an appropriate body for facilitating investments, that its attractiveness and added value have decreased and that, consequently, the JCP implementation process has to be adjusted to the needs of the 21st century, maintaining the spirit of the original programme.

WE TAKE INTO ACCOUNT the Strategy paper⁷ on the future of the JCP implementation mechanism.

TO THIS END WE AGREE that:

1. the Programme Implementation Task Force (PITF) should no longer exist as an individual body under HELCOM,
2. the tasks concerning JCP implementation, in particular monitoring the development in relation to the Hot Spots, should be continued under the umbrella of HELCOM, taking into account the overall political message of the JCP as a whole. The new implementation mechanism should be open to all members of the former PITF including the IFIs, NGOs and non-Contracting Parties in the catchment area.

VI Compliance with requirements of the Convention

WE WELCOME the progress made by the Contracting Parties regarding full implementation of the Convention and the Recommendations.

However, WE RECOGNIZE that some requirements still remain to be complied with, and EXPRESS our commitment to the full implementation of the Convention and the Recommendations.

⁵ JCP was established by the Baltic Sea Environmental Declaration, approved by the Diplomatic Conference (Helsinki, Finland, 1992) and endorsed for updating by HELCOM 19/1998.

⁶ The Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP) - Ten years of Implementation (BSEP No. 88)

⁷ Strategy paper on the future of the JCP implementation mechanism (document HELCOM HOD 10/2002, 2/6)

WE REALIZE that delayed and incomplete reporting of environmental monitoring data has resulted in difficulties to produce timely assessments on the inputs of pollutants and their effect on the Baltic Sea Area.

To overcome this, WE INVITE HELCOM to continue its work on making improvements to reporting standards.

WE NOTE with satisfaction that by 2006 HELCOM will review and harmonize its monitoring and assessment programmes, while taking into account:

- a. the ecosystem approach to management of human activities;
- b. the requirements within HELCOM and within other international organizations and the EU, including especially the EU Water Framework Directive;
- c. requirements for the handling and management of data and information to facilitate efficient data exchange, avoid duplication in reporting and produce timely assessments.

Furthermore, WE STRESS the important role of the Helsinki Commission in supervising the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendations with the aim to ensure that the same environmental measures are implemented in the whole Baltic Sea and its catchment area.