



HELCOM  
Ministerial Meeting  
2021



Lübeck, Germany • 20 October 2021

Updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan

# Ministerial Statement

of the 2021 Ministerial Meeting of the  
Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

**We, the Ministers of the Environment and Maritime Affairs, High Representatives of the Baltic Sea coastal states and the EU Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, assembled in Lübeck (Germany) on 20 October 2021, on the occasion of the Ministerial Meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission, HELCOM), have adopted the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), our powerful and action oriented roadmap to achieving Good Environmental Status in the Baltic Sea.**

Committed to protecting the Baltic Sea marine environment and seriously concerned by its current poor, unsatisfactory status, which is due to pressures from human activities and climate change, and standing on firm technical and scientific ground, HELCOM raises its strong voice when it comes to setting the agenda on environmental issues that concern the marine environment, in the Baltic Sea Area as well as in Europe and beyond. Our oceans and seas worldwide need a far more integrated management of human activities than up to this day, and the updated BSAP will contribute to achieving this goal.

The impact of human activities and climate change is resulting in biodiversity loss, impairment of the state of the Baltic Sea and a strongly decreased resilience of the Baltic Sea ecosystems to these pressures. The temperature of the Baltic Sea is rising at a higher rate than in many other parts of the world and the need to tackle numerous ecological and socio-economic impacts of climate change in the region is high. Bearing this in mind and given that the input of nutrients into the Baltic Sea also remains far too high, we see the need to continuously address this issue in our further work, including by revising existing regulations as deemed necessary.

At the same time, humankind strongly depends on the many ecosystem services provided by our seas. The updated BSAP is our answer to this extraordinary challenge. We need powerful and innovative tools, which means that the updated BSAP is even more important now than we expected it to be. By agreeing on the science-based and future-oriented updated BSAP – as HELCOM’s strategic programme of measures – we have accepted our responsibility and will pursue all necessary action to achieve a good environmental status of our sea, ultimately leading to a Baltic Sea in a healthy state.

The outbreak of COVID-19 reached the Baltic Sea Area in February 2020 and had a tremendous negative impact on health, the socio-economy and the economy of the Baltic Sea Area. Faced by the pandemic and the impact of global climate change and biodiversity loss, we are committed to turning the current crisis into a window of opportunities to demonstrate the importance of Regional Seas Conventions for the needed sustainable green recovery and the active role they play in this regard.

In addition to the concrete national, regional and intergovernmental measures and commitments<sup>1</sup> to protect the Baltic Sea ecosystem, the updated BSAP offers relevant knowledge and instruments. Therefore, it underlines and strengthens HELCOM’s role and position in the regional and global context of protecting

oceans and seas. The updated BSAP will thus be a valuable contribution to global ocean governance.

It is essential, in particular, to recall HELCOM’s important role in the implementation of the legislation on protection of marine environments at the regional level. Given that only appropriate structures will deliver adequate results, we reiterate HELCOM’s firm determination to ensure the efficiency and maximal support to the implementation of the updated BSAP. HELCOM has also played a pioneering role at the regional level over the past five decades in reducing various sources of pollution (input of nutrients and hazardous substances, marine litter) and protecting biodiversity. In doing so, HELCOM has applied the ecosystem-based approach and addressed the main pressures on the marine environment in a holistic and integrated way with concrete operational objectives and solid monitoring mechanisms.

Furthermore, HELCOM plays a vital role by contributing to the implementation of the relevant national and European legislation, including the key EU strategies<sup>2</sup> for those Baltic Sea States that are EU Member States, and, for the Russian Federation, to the implementation of its national legislation.

HELCOM also proves the relevance of regional organizations in responding to global issues. HELCOM confirms its preparedness as a reliable multilateral partner to accept and to share responsibility with regard to challenges beyond the limits of the Baltic Sea Area and to play a vital role:

- by contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular but not limited to, its Sustainable Development Goal 14,
- by proactively contributing to the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, 2021-2030, proclaimed by the United Nations, by sharing scientific achievements and noting the importance of reaching the objectives of the Decade,
- by strengthening collaboration with other regional and sectoral organizations as well as programmes and frameworks and thus strengthening the further development of global ocean governance,
- by being a partner in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme,
- by sharing HELCOM’s experience and knowledge in global events as well as
- by including global issues like climate change and biodiversity loss into our Agenda.

Several international high-level meetings on biodiversity loss, chemical pollution as well as protection of oceans and mitigation of climate change have been and will be held during 2021. As stressed by UN Secretary-General Guterres on the occasion of the opening of the fifth session of the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA 5) in February 2021, “the urgency to act has never been clearer. The year 2021 has been and will be a critical year with regard to national, regional and global responses to the crisis of our planet.” The HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2021 is an important contribution to this range of international high-level meetings.

1 In particular, for the contracting parties being EU MS, Our Baltic Declaration adopted by Ministers competent for Environment, Fisheries and Agriculture on 28 September 2020 – [https://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/ministerial\\_declaration\\_our\\_baltic\\_conference.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/environment/marine/pdf/ministerial_declaration_our_baltic_conference.pdf)

2 In particular the EU Green Deal