



Helsingør, 25 - 27 August 2024

25 April 2024

Congratulations by Mr Bodo Bahr

**Secretary General of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary
Conference (BSPC)**

HELCOM 50 Years

Thursday, 25 April 2024, 14.30 (EEST)

Venue: National Library of Latvia (Mūkusalas iela 3, Riga)

18:15 Congratulations by partner organisations

Excellencies, esteemed members of HELCOM, distinguished guests, and fellow advocates for the Baltic Sea,

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to bring you today the best greetings and wishes of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on the occasion of celebrating the milestone of the signing of the first Helsinki Convention and the establishment of HELCOM.

Even if essential goals that we have all set ourselves have not yet been reached, or not to the extent that we would all like, one thing remains fundamental on a day like this:

For fifty years, HELCOM has exemplified the power of multilateral cooperation in addressing the complex environmental challenges facing our region. We have made significant strides in promoting the sustainable development and preservation of the Baltic Sea ecosystem.

You, HELCOM, and your partners have worked tirelessly to combat marine pollution, promote biodiversity conservation, foster sustainable maritime practices and safety, contribute to combatting climate change and find solutions to the challenge of removing sea-dumped ammunition – to mention only a few.

You have worked with dedication and passion to achieve your goals and made progress even in extremely difficult geopolitical situations, be it during the Cold War in the beginning or now facing Russia's unprovoked, unjustifiable, and illegal war of aggression against Ukraine.

From the early days of its work in the 1990s, the BSPPC has repeatedly referred to the results of HELCOM's work; since the

start of the 2000s, when the BSPC attained observer status at HELCOM you have been one of our closest partners.

Responsible ministers of the presiding states, the chairpersons of HELCOM, and the executive secretaries inform the parliamentarians. They regularly report on the results of HELCOM's work at the annual conferences, the Standing Committee, and working group meetings.

Since the early 2000s, our three observers at HELCOM have submitted comprehensive reports on the work of HELCOM to the BSPC every year.

In almost all of our resolutions, we refer to the work of HELCOM and call for the broadest possible implementation of HELCOM's objectives by the governments of the BSPC member countries. The parliaments have always been on the progressive and ambitious side of implementing HELCOM's goals.

For many years, parliaments in the Baltic Sea region have placed great importance on involving the younger generations in our discussions and decision-making processes. I am therefore particularly pleased that the young generation has been so intensively involved in this event, as we have just experienced.

This is reminiscent of the extremely successful, lively and well-founded HELCOM Youth Forums of the past, which are still fresh in my mind.

And let me mention one more aspect: Very few people realise that when nothing is visible because nothing is happening, HELCOM's work is particularly successful and comprehensive. More than 20 years ago, in a tremendous effort that was strongly supported and

promoted by the parliaments, it was possible to enforce and implement far-reaching measures to strengthen maritime safety in the Baltic Sea based on binding agreements under international law.

This was a decisive contribution to preventing catastrophic tanker accidents in the Baltic Sea. In my view, this is one of the great examples of a successful, forward-looking, and responsible prevention policy.

I have been following HELCOM's work for 45 years – since the first Helsinki Convention came into force – and have been deeply involved in it for more than 25 years. From the experience of this time, only one demand can be derived with regard to the objectives of HELCOM:

Implement, implement, implement!!!

and accompany that with holistic assessments and reports about the status of the implementation as you are doing now!

We express our sincere appreciation to all who have contributed to the success of HELCOM over the past five decades. Unwavering dedication and tireless efforts have been the driving force behind collective achievements. I am confident that HELCOM will continue to make meaningful progress in safeguarding the Baltic Sea environment.

Due to Russia's ongoing brutal and unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine and the geopolitical situation, close and united cooperation between the democratic states in the Baltic Sea is more important than ever to achieve our goals of protecting the

Baltic Sea and realising the goals of HELCOM's current action plan.

Beyond that, it is crucial in these times that all efforts are made to ensure that the Baltic Sea remains a Sea of Peace.

The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference wishes you all the success and support you need to continue significant and ground-breaking progress in protecting the Baltic Sea and far beyond in marine policy and ocean protection.

Congratulations to HELCOM, congratulations on everything you have achieved in the past five decades with your highly committed work.

May our partnership continue to thrive as we strive towards a peaceful and sustainable future for the Baltic Sea region and beyond.

Thank you.