Annex 2 Draft Ministerial Declaration

6 March 2018 – Full draft v4 – 13.12.2017

The HOD 53-2017 Meeting agreed to the draft Declaration of the 2018 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting as included in this Annex, with the understanding that the document would still be subjected to further national consultation by all Contracting Parties due general study reservations on the draft.

General

1. RECALLING the objective of the Helsinki Convention to prevent and eliminate pollution in order to promote the ecological restoration of the Baltic Sea area and the preservation of its ecological balance, and RECALLING further the aim of HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan to restore the good environmental status of the Baltic marine environment by 2021 to have 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.

2. WELCOMING the first version of the "State of the Baltic Sea" report (2017) that presents an assessment of environmental status, and pressures and impacts on the Baltic Sea marine environment as well as social and economic analyses of the use of marine waters and cost of degradation and AGREEING to update and finalize this first version by June 2018, to provide the common basis to assess whether the goals and objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan have been achieved. PLANNING to prepare the next holistic assessment of the state of the Baltic Sea in 2023 / 2024 based on the updated assessment of indicators.

3. NOTING with great concern that (a) almost the whole Baltic Sea area is still affected by eutrophication, NOTING that this is partly due to the time lag between measures and effects, (b) unfavourable conservation status of Baltic marine biodiversity is widespread as a result of multiple pressures from human activities and in particular that several species, biotopes and habitats are still in danger of becoming extinct in the region; that most assessed habitats are not in good status, that there are signs of deterioration of food web; and (c) levels of hazardous substances continue to be elevated and a cause for concern, d) invasive alien species are still being introduced to the Baltic Sea, marine litter is a pressure of special concern, and other pressures such as underwater noise disturb the marine life, and e) around half of the seabed is potentially disturbed by human activity.

4. NOTING with great concern the impacts of climate change on the marine environment in the Baltic Sea, including decreasing ice extent and duration, increasing water temperature and lowering salinity, as well as the all-time low level of oxygen near the seabed. NOTING that these impacts compound existing pressures on marine ecosystems and thus make the need to reduce these pressures even more important, so as not to further impair the ability of the seas and ocean to act as climate regulator.

5. ACKNOWLEDGING in this regard that the Paris Climate Agreement sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°C, and WELCOMING the increasing visibility of ocean issues on the climate agenda.

6. NOTING that the status of Baltic Sea marine environment continues to be unsatisfactory as a result of pressures from human activities and that recovery is not yet sufficient to achieve the goals and ecological objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. NOTING ALSO that the most widely-distributed pressures causing impacts are excess nutrients, contamination underwater noise, invasive alien species, extraction of fish and

physical disturbance, and that an analysis of cumulative pressures and impacts indicates that those tend to be higher in coastal areas than the open sea.

7. RECOGNIZING that the state of the marine environment affects human welfare, and that according to the "State of the Baltic Sea" report losses in recreational values due to the deterioration of the marine environment are estimated to be 1-2 billion euros annually and NOTING that the high level of eutrophication, if reduced, is estimated to result in annual economic benefits in the order of 4 billion euros that are spread across various sectors.

8. ACKNOWLEDGING the progress in implementing the 2007 Baltic Sea Action Plan with [68]% of the regional actions and measures implemented, and between [23%] and [60%] of the national actions completed by all or some Contracting Parties, and positive impacts it has had on preventing further deterioration, such as drastically reducing the number and volume of illegal oil spills, substantially decreasing the input and deposition of cadmium, mercury and lead, and increasing the abundance of most seal populations,

9. WELCOMING the progress that Contracting Parties have made in reducing their nutrient input to the Baltic Sea from land-based sources and in addressing inputs from ships by designating the Baltic Sea as a special area under MARPOL Annexes IV and VI.

10. REGRETTING, however, that Maximum Allowable Inputs of phosphorus have not been fulfilled in six out of seven sub-basins and of nitrogen in four out of seven sub-basins of the Baltic Sea.

11. REITERATING the agreed actions and measures in the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the Moscow (2010) and Copenhagen (2013) Ministerial Declarations, we RE-AFFIRM our strong commitment to strengthen the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the follow-up declarations, by 2021, as pledged by HELCOM at the United Nations Ocean Conference on Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) in 2017,

12. WITHOUT PREJUDICE to national legislation, international agreements and legislation of the European Union, and EXPRESSING our strong political commitment to implement this Declaration, whilst noting that it is not legally binding in itself.

13. WE DO HEREBY ADOPT this HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration.

14. EXPRESSING CONCERN that, despite all current efforts that we made together and individually, GES for the Baltic Sea area and favourable conservation status of biodiversity, is unlikely to be reached by 2021, we CONTINUE to strive, as a first priority, for achievement of already agreed actions with renewed efforts to make decisive progress towards our 2021 goals and in particular to strengthen our efforts to address the most widely-distributed and harmful pressures.

15. We AGREE to complete and fully operationalise the set of indicators used for regularly assessing the status of the marine environment, and to advance mapping and assessment of the extent and intensity of human activities in the Baltic Sea region, and improve the understanding of their impacts including the cumulative effects on the ecosystem, and to use this information for strengthening the implementation of ecosystem-based management.

16. We DECIDE to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan by 2021 at the latest with the aim to set out a robust action plan for continuous achievement of the agreed HELCOM vision of a healthy Baltic Sea environment. We also DECIDE that the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan will, in addition to existing commitments to be fulfilled by

2021, address new issues, on the basis of the commitments made in this Ministerial Declaration and further deliberations during the BSAP updating process.

17. We ACKNOWLEDGE that while we work on updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan we will [at least] maintain ambition level of agreed actions and objectives.

18. We REITERATE our determination to implement the declaration *Our Ocean, Our Future: Call for Action* adopted by the high-level United Nations Conference (June 2017) and the Agenda 2030 and related Sustainable Development Goals, in particular its water- and ocean-related targets, and RECALL the role of HELCOM in leading the coordination of regional efforts in this regard and in line with the Outcome of the High-Level segment of HELCOM 38-2017. We therefore COMMIT to also using those goals and targets as a framework and guidance for the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

19. We DECIDE that the overall objectives of the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan should include actions necessary for managing human activities in such a way that the current HELCOM's strategic goals "Baltic Sea unaffected by eutrophication", "Baltic Sea with life undisturbed by hazardous substances", "Maritime activities carried out in an environmentally friendly way" and "Favourable conservation status" can be achieved, also linking relevant political processes and science. We RECOGNIZE the economic and social benefits of achieving these objectives.

20. We AGREE that the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan should be based on an ecosystem approach, fully use the precautionary principle, be supported by fit-for-purpose scientific research, strong communication with stakeholders and knowledge sharing between science and policy and across all policy levels, and be developed in a participatory and transparent way that includes regional and local levels, as appropriate, NGOs, sectors and other stakeholders.

Eutrophication

21. We RECALL the country-allocated reduction targets for nutrients which will lower nutrient inputs as specified by the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial meeting, including through implementation of measures taken under relevant EU legislation for contracting parties being EU Member States and under relevant national legislation in the Russian Federation.

22. We ACKNOWLEDGE that due to improved data on nutrient inputs in the reference period[3], the country allocated nutrient reduction targets are no longer always sufficient to achieve good environmental status of the Baltic Sea with regard to eutrophication and that, therefore, the follow up of the nutrient reduction requirements of the BSAP should focus on national commitments based on maximum allowable inputs and this should be reflected in the BSAP update.

23. RECOGNIZING, however, with concern the sustained high amounts of nutrient inputs especially from agriculture, we DECIDE to engage, as a priority, in further enhanced cooperation with the agricultural sector in the Baltic as well as aim for enhanced cooperation with other relevant sectors.

24. In that context, we DECIDE to engage with the relevant river basin authorities to better align nutrient reduction requirements of the BSAP with those of coastal waters.

25. RECOGNIZING with concern that large amounts of phosphorus have accumulated in the Baltic Sea during the past decades due to anthropogenic activities, resulting in an enhanced internal flux of nutrients between sediments and sea water thereby exacerbating eutrophication;

[3] Pre-BSAP period.

26. We ENCOURAGE as a first step to further improve the knowledge base regarding the nature and dynamics of internal nutrient reserves.

27. We EMPHASIZE that the risks to ecosystem and human health and long-term sustainability of effects of measures to manage internal nutrient reserves need to be considered and thoroughly evaluated. We ENCOURAGE to as a second step undertake research on the potential of measures to manage internal nutrient reserves, together with the development and application of a risk assessment framework in HELCOM to meet the necessary environmental requirements for measures planned for the open sea outside coastal waters and any other measures having potentially significant transboundary effects. We also ACKNOWLEDGE the need to elaborate - in line with the Helsinki Convention - commonly agreed regional principles as guidance for internal nutrient reserves management.

Nutrient recycling strategy

28. BEING AWARE that nitrogen fertilizer production is a highly energy consuming process and that its replacement could contribute to reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and that phosphorus is a limited natural resource and a critical raw material, for which recycling methods for use in agricultural production already exists; RECOGNISING also that nutrient resources are not optimally managed everywhere and that there is a need to improve both use efficiency and recycling of nutrients, thereby reducing nutrient surpluses and losses, WE COMMIT to elaborate by 2020 a Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy that should:

    - aim for reduced nutrient inputs to and eutrophication of the Baltic Sea,,
    - be based on the best available scientific knowledge on sustainable management and processing of nutrients in agriculture by safe recycling of nutrients especially from manure and sewage,
    - promote environmentally safe nutrient recycling in the Baltic Sea region, taking into account principles of circular economy, geographical and socio-economic conditions, as well as spatial distribution of nutrient stocks and their flows,
    - give guidance on risk assessments and solutions to prevent potentially harmful consequences from the application of recycled products and technological processes of nutrients recycling,
    - help to identify regional challenges, applicability and added value for the whole Baltic Sea region,
    - be established with a step-by-step approach and contain a common vision and objectives for nutrient recycling.

29. WE DECIDE to develop as follow-up to the Strategy also nutrient recycling measures to be included in the updated Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Marine litter and circular economy

30. We REGRET that marine litter, and in particular plastic waste, continues to be a problem in the Baltic Sea and we STRESS that marine litter does not belong in the sea.

31. We are DETERMINED to combat marine litter through coordinated implementation of the Regional Marine Litter Action Plan and, for contracting parties that are EU Member States, of measures taken for instance under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in order to achieve GES for marine litter in the Baltic Sea.

32. We RE-COMMIT to prevent and reduce marine litter from land and sea-based sources and to achieve a significant quantitative reduction of it by 2025. To that end we COMMIT to regional work on developing baselines and threshold values for maximum levels of marine litter in the Baltic Sea in close coordination with work undertaken by contracting parties in other relevant fora, and, if additional efforts are needed to achieve those levels, we COMMIT to developing ambitious, regionally coordinated, quantitative targets to reduce input of litter

33. We also COMMIT to strengthening regional research and developing harmonised monitoring methods on the sources, distribution, amounts and impacts of marine litter with particular focus on micro-plastics, in coherence with similar work undertaken by contracting parties in other relevant fora, and to improving assessment of the effectiveness of measures.

34. We SUPPORT measures aimed at preventing plastics including micro-plastics from contaminating the marine and coastal environment, addressing the entire lifecycle of products and examining effective and cost-efficient options to reduce plastic and micro-plastic releases from products and processes into the environment.

35. We DECIDE to develop possible measures to address micro-plastics in waste water effluents as well as storm water based on an increased knowledge on the scale of the problem.

Hazardous substances

36. WE AGREE to identify the scale of problems of contaminants of emerging concern, including micro-pollutants in coastal and marine waters and, based on this knowledge, to consider possible cost-effective mitigation measures and WELCOME the joint HELCOM-UNESCO status report on pharmaceuticals in the aquatic environment in the Baltic Sea Region as the information basis for developing measures, as appropriate, to prevent pharmaceuticals from reaching the Baltic Sea.

37. We also AGREE to identify and assess further hazardous substances and contaminants from offshore sources, which may give rise to pollution effects.

Underwater noise

38. We WELCOME the progress made in the implementation of the Regional Baltic Underwater Noise Roadmap 2015-2017, including the establishment of a joint HELCOM/OSPAR registry of licenced impulsive sound events and the development of a regional monitoring programme and guidelines for continuous noise as well as new evidence regarding potential impact of underwater noise on species in the Baltic Sea.

39. We EMPHASIZE the need to further improve our understanding of the adverse impacts of underwater noise on the identified noise sensitive marine species and in particular the cumulative impacts of impulsive noise from multiple activities.

40. We AGREE to develop an action plan and implement regionally coordinated measures on underwater noise, aiming, in the long-term, at addressing adverse effects of underwater noise on marine species, whilst safeguarding the potential of the Baltic Sea for sustainable human activities.

41. We COMMIT to continue fruitful cooperation between European Regional Sea Conventions and in particular OSPAR in order to exchange good practice and to fill knowledge gaps, and to continue regional work in developing threshold values for underwater noise that are consistent with GES for noise-sensitive species in the Baltic Sea, in close coordination with work undertaken by contracting parties in other relevant fora.

Seabed damage and disturbance

42. We AGREE to regional work on developing threshold values and if needed to achieve GES, to develop ambitious, regionally coordinated quantitative targets, to reduce adverse effects of physical disturbance and habitat loss on the basis of best available scientific advice, and, through improved scientific understanding of the distribution, extent and impact from pressures on different seabed habitats and the effects thereof .

43. We COMMIT to working together towards a regional action plan that will deliver the necessary reductions in adverse effects of physical disturbance.

Biodiversity and impacts on ecosystems

44. We COMMIT to increase the protection and restoration of biodiversity, and to intensify regional, sub-regional and cross-sectoral cooperation and to preserve and promote the ecological balance of the Baltic Sea area with strengthened resilience, also as streamlined response to human-induced climate change adaptation needs.

45. We AGREE to take actions to prevent the loss of biodiversity in the Baltic Sea and to improve the status of species, biotopes and habitats that are threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM Red Lists[4], by establishing conservation plans or other relevant programmes or measures for species, biotopes and habitats at risk of extinction, inside and outside protected areas.

46. WE WELCOME the significant progress made towards increasing the geographical coverage of the HELCOM marine protected areas (HELCOM MPAs) network; we COMMIT to strengthen our efforts - regionally and nationally - to fully establish an ecologically coherent and well-managed network of HELCOM MPAs, in particular to ensure connectivity between these sites, and improve understanding of the role of MPAs for ecosystem services, in order to enhance cost-effectiveness of MPAs management and yield the greatest environmental benefits. We also AGREE to strive for full achievement of Aichi Target 11 regarding the management, ecological representativeness and connectivity of the HELCOM MPAs network.

47. WE RECALL the HELCOM commitment on identification of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea in collaboration with the Convention of Biological Diversity, made at the Ocean Conference on SDG 14.

Climate change

48. We STRESS the need for research and adaptive management to strengthen the resilience of the Baltic Sea in the face of climate change impacts and AGREE to increase HELCOM's preparedness to respond to climate change impacts, by taking foreseen climate change impacts into account when updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan and by exploring the needs and possibilities to adapt HELCOM's policies with the objective to ensure protection of the marine environment also under the changing climate and to maximise the capacity of the Baltic Sea ecosystem to contribute to mitigation of climate change through blue carbon storage.

49. WE EMPHASIZE the need to further strengthen the scientific understanding of the impacts of climate change together with multiple other stressors on the Baltic Sea marine environment and AGREE that HELCOM should take action to bridge this knowledge to policy.

Implementation of the ecosystem approach

[4] BSEP No. 138 and 140

50. WE RECOGNIZE that knowledge on the relationship between the state of the marine environment and human well-being is essential for applying the ecosystem approach to management of human activities and in maritime spatial planning in the region, as well as for implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

51. To this end, we AGREE to further develop and carry out coordinated regional economic and social assessments, including mapping and analysis of ecosystem services and natural capital accounting, taking advantage of improved methods and comparability of data.

52. We also AGREE to encourage further coordinated research to support cost of degradation analyses, cost-effectiveness analyses of regional measures, and assessment of cost and benefits related to achieving good environmental status covering the entire Baltic Sea region.

53. We EMPHASIZE that this will help the transition towards a sustainable use of marine goods and services by present and future generations and the results will serve for the next holistic assessment of the marine environment and other processes, to the benefit of marine management as well as maritime spatial planning.

Improving regional ocean governance

54. We WELCOME the great successes already achieved in regional cooperation and governance for instance in the fields of maritime transport, maritime spatial planning and research:

    - In particular, we WELCOME the progress made in addressing the environmental impact of the maritime transport sector in the Baltic Sea via (a) the collaborative long-term effort to designate the Baltic Sea as a NOx Emissions Control Area (NECA), (b) HELCOM commitment at the Ocean Conference on SDG 14 on NECA and to promote green shipping technology and use of alternative fuels, and (c) the recent International Maritime Organization (IMO) decisions on the date of enforcement of the Baltic Sea as a special sewage area under MARPOL Annex IV[5],

    - We also RECOGNISE the Baltic Sea region as a forerunner in regional cooperation on maritime spatial planning (MSP) and regional governance, involving HELCOM and VASAB and facilitated by the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group, and the important contribution maritime spatial planning can make to fulfil the Agenda 2030, in particular SDG 14,

    - We APPRECIATE the constructive cooperation with other partners in the region, including the Council of the Baltic Sea States, and UNDERLINE in this context the many successful cooperation projects developed within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), such as Baltic Scope or Baltic Lines, or within the BONUS Research Programme as well as initiatives by cities and municipalities in areas of common interest.

55. To strengthen regional governance, we COMMIT to enhance cooperation, policy coherence and coordination at all levels for delivering water- and ocean-related SDGs under Agenda 2030, in particular:

    - in maritime transport, we COMMIT to improve the availability of port reception facilities in the region for delivery of sewage and other ship-generated waste ,

[5] 1 June 2019 for new IMO registered passenger ships and 1 June 2021 for existing passenger ships with an extension until 1 June 2023 for direct passages between St. Petersburg area in Russia and the North Sea

- we REITERATE the common goal of all Baltic Sea countries to, by 2020, establish maritime spatial plans that are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach, and in this regard, stress the importance to further cooperate to use the agreed principles, guidelines, concepts and mechanisms for planning purposes and develop them further as needed,

- we AGREE to strengthen cooperation on ship hull fouling both with regards to introduction of invasive alien species and hazardous substances in anti-fouling systems,

- we AGREE to strengthen coordination and cooperation mechanisms with international and regional fishery bodies active in the Baltic Sea region, in particular BALTFISH, and the Baltic Sea Advisory Council and ICES, to create synergies (for instance in relation to data management and the production of scientific advice) and ensure compatibility between conservation and management measures.

- We STRIVE to raise awareness on the situation of the Baltic Sea area, enhance ocean literacy, and support transparency, networks and campaigns.

56. We STRIVE for joint approaches and synergies among HELCOM and relevant multilateral environmental agreements including the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on Migratory Species and the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas.

57. We WELCOME the entry into force of the Ballast Water Management Convention on 8 September 2017 and COMMIT to regionally back ratification, harmonized implementation and further development of IMO instruments, including MARPOL and the Ballast Water Management Convention for the Baltic Sea area.

58. ACKNOWLEDGING that projects on issues of common interest under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has given substantial contribution to the implementation of the BSAP, we will CONTINUE the constructive cooperation with actors involved in this framework to contribute to the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

59. WE AGREE to cooperate with other Regional Sea Conventions and relevant River Basin authorities in our work to reach SDGs, and RECOGNIZE the opportunities for increased knowledge, efficiency gains and effectiveness when jointly addressing implementation challenges.

60. We AGREE TO strengthen the cooperation with OSPAR in collaboration on common challenges and transboundary issues to gain efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of SDGs such as ballast water management and introduction of invasive alien species, underwater noise, micro-plastic, migratory birds, MPA network and management, threatened and endangered species.

61. We are DETERMINED to continue working together in HELCOM to deliver our common objectives until 2030 and beyond efficiently and effectively; and to this end we WILL continue to work to strengthen the cross-sectorial, regional and inter-regional partnerships and mobilize financing to support implementation of the BSAP and Agenda 2030 in the Baltic Sea Region.