

## **“HELCOM’s Implementation Outlook of the Ocean-related SDGs in the Baltic Sea - A Roadmap to Agenda 2030 (HELCOM-A2030)”**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. It contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, many of which are highly relevant to the work of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans. Governments have a primary responsibility for implementing commitments to achieve these targets and goals, while Regional Seas Conventions are the natural home for considering any new regional actions and following up and reviewing the relevant SDGs. Regional Sea Conventions are also best suited to apply the ecosystem approach and to form multi-stakeholder partnerships, thus, enhancing inter-institutional cooperation and coordination. This is also in line with the EU Chairmanship priorities until 2018 and the next Ministerial Meeting of HELCOM.

Contracting Parties met in a high-level session on 28 February 2017 and pointed out the following issues to implement SDGs in the Baltic Sea region.

### **HELCOM successes already deliver on SDG implementation...**

Contracting Parties will coordinate the regional implementation of ocean-related SDGs in the Baltic Sea using the HELCOM platform. HELCOM can concretely contribute to achieving SDG 14 and targets 6.3., 12.4 and 13.2. Also a number of targets under SDGs 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12 and 17 are also relevant to reaching the objectives of the Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area.

Strengthened implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, based on the ecosystem approach and the commitment to achieve a Baltic Sea in good environmental status by 2021, is needed to fulfil the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea. 66 out of 106 regional actions and 11 out of 68 national level actions of the Baltic Sea Action Plan have been fully implemented so far, with successes in setting up a nutrient reduction scheme, curbing airborne emission and discharges from shipping, tackling some hazardous substances, piloting ecosystem approach in maritime spatial planning, and covering 11.8% of the Baltic Sea with marine protected areas. All these examples showcase the added value of a regional approach, addressing more than one target of SDG 14 in a coherent way. Policy making based on commonly agreed principles and best available science, paired with a transparent and participatory stakeholder involvement, as well as partnerships for integrated management of human activities, are proven factors underlying these HELCOM achievements.

### **... and a future HELCOM agenda will be geared towards full SDG implementation**

HELCOM will intensify and focus its efforts towards SDGs addressing issues of regional concern and interest. HELCOM will speed up the implementation of the marine litter regional action plan, continue its battle against eutrophication, especially to cut inputs of phosphorus, and start the elaboration of a regional action plan on underwater noise, to fulfil SDG 14.1. It will ensure close cooperation on any maritime spatial planning in the Baltic Sea area and management plans for all marine protected areas, to fulfil SDG 14.2 and 14.5. HELCOM will continue supporting more sustainable agricultural practices, to contribute to SDG 2.4, and ecosystem-related fishery measures, towards SDG 14.4 and 14.6. HELCOM will strive for more resilient marine ecosystems to be better prepared for human-induced climate change challenges. It will also promote further regional development of social and economic analyses to create tailor-made connecting points between implementation of different SDGs.

Furthermore, the HELCOM holistic state of the Baltic Sea assessment will serve as baseline scenario for SDG implementation. SDGs will also be used as guidance when reviewing and setting up new HELCOM priorities, as needed, until 2030, to fill in gaps, for instance, in relation to climate change adaptation and acidification issues, or on enhanced partnerships with sectorial bodies.

**...including strengthening partnerships for sustainability...**

In response to ever growing challenges in the Baltic Sea region, Contracting Parties will strengthen and expand the cross-sectorial, regional and inter-regional partnerships, in the region, Europe and globally. HELCOM will collaborate with other Baltic Sea organisations, such as the Council of the Baltic Sea States and with OSPAR and with other Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans to draw from each other's experience on SDG issues. HELCOM knowledge will continuously be utilized to support implementation efforts, including within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

**...and contributing to the global process**

HELCOM will continue leading the coordination of regional efforts to deliver on the relevant SDGs, through improved monitoring and stronger implementation of agreed measures towards healthy oceans. Contracting Parties will coordinate the use of HELCOM indicators to measure and compare progress towards reaching ocean-related SDGs. HELCOM's Baltic reports will serve as input to the World Ocean Assessment and the High-level Political Forum. Contracting Parties, in close collaboration with relevant international organisations, may also make use of HELCOM as a platform to coordinate regional, synchronized voluntary reviews on SDG 14 implementation as national input to the High-level Political Forum to reach "the Future We Want".

Contracting Parties will draw from the existing HELCOM experience to support the UN Conference "Our oceans, our future: partnering for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14"<sup>1</sup>. HELCOM will contribute with voluntary commitments on SDG 14 to be registered for the Conference. Finally, Contracting Parties and HELCOM may consider presenting joint commitments at Our Ocean Conference in October 2017 in Malta.

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<sup>1</sup> 5-9 June 2017, New York