



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

HELCOM statement for the Ministerial Conference on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution (1-2 September 2021)

HELCOM (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission) is the governing body of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, the Helsinki Convention. Contracting Parties to the Convention are Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. These countries gathered more than forty years ago to achieve a common goal: to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution through intergovernmental cooperation. Time has passed, and new pressures threaten to jeopardize the achievement of such a goal, among which marine litter is an issue of concern. HELCOM official starting point on this topic dates back to 2013 when countries committed to significantly reduce marine litter by 2025, compared to 2015, and to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment as part of the 2013 Ministerial Declaration. Furthermore, HELCOM countries decided to develop a regional action plan by 2015 at the latest with the aim of achieving such ambitious objective. Such Action Plan has been recently updated based on lessons learnt from the implementation of the first Action Plan adopted in 2015 and on the best available information on amounts and composition of litter found in the coastal and marine environments as well as its sources and pathways to the Baltic Sea. Through its nearly thirty actions, the Action Plan is to be considered as the main regional tool to achieve the marine litter ecological and management objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. Some of these actions, for instance, addressing other organizations or institutions having specific competence to act (e.g. exclusive competences of the European Union, the International Maritime Organization regarding new regulations for shipping) require a coordinated approach. Cooperation with other Regional Seas Conventions is an essential part of this work ensuring mutual learning and coordination of actions. Furthermore, the Contracting Parties commit to a global agreement on plastics and microplastics, which could include national management plans on plastics and microplastics as an element within the agreement. Therefore, HELCOM welcomes the Draft Ministerial Statement to be considered during this Ministerial Conference on Marine Litter and Plastic Pollution as kindly co-convened by Germany, Ecuador, Ghana and Vietnam.

Helsinki, 30 August 2021

Rüdiger Stempel
Executive Secretary