

Dear Minister Ville Niinistö

We, Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB), the Fisheries Secretariat (FISH) and Oceana, believe that the Baltic Sea region can become a global model for marine conservation and sustainable management. We have already agreed on many of the necessary targets – what we need now is action to secure the environmental objectives already agreed upon in 2007 HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and 2010 Moscow Ministerial declaration.

We have been following the ongoing review of the HELCOM BSAP closely, and we are very concerned about the lack in real implementation and the absence of national actions related to some of the major environmental problems and challenges facing the Baltic Sea. We now urge you to defend the objectives and targets of the BSAP, recognise the failure of meeting some of the deadlines, and agree on a clear path for the full implementation of the necessary actions to restore the good ecological status of the Baltic marine environment by 2021.

The Ministerial Declaration is under preparation and important discussions on its content are taking place at a national and regional level. If you, as Minister, are serious about safeguarding the implementation of the BSAP and the BSAP objectives you agreed in 2007 and 2010, you must decide on new actions to be taken in the coming 1–3 years. If not, the objectives of the BSAP will not be reached in time.

We have identified shortcomings particularly in the following areas, which are crucial to the future health of the Baltic Sea:

1. Reduced eutrophication for a healthier sea

- Decide on powerful actions to reduce the harmful nutrient run-off from the agriculture sector, that is responsible for 50 % of the total nutrient load to the Baltic Sea;
- Introducing mandatory nutrient bookkeeping/nutrient balancing for farmland in the Baltic Sea region by 2014 in order to identify sources of nutrient surplus on farmland;
- Implement nutrient-balanced fertilization practices by limiting the net surface balance surplus of nitrogen and phosphorus, via setting limits of a maximum of 50 kg Total-N per hectare utilised agricultural area and year, as well as a maximum of 8 kg Total-P per hectare utilised agricultural area and year, by 2015; or by limiting optimal economical fertilization or with other corresponding national measures;
- Fulfil actions set out in the BSAP adopted by Ministers in 2007 and 2010, but still not implemented, such as establishing a list of Agricultural Pollution Hot Spots, in order to include installations for intensive rearing of cattle, poultry and pigs not in compliance with Annex III of the Helsinki Convention by 2014, to address important nutrient sources; and
- Transpose the requirements in the HELCOM legally binding Annex III, Part 2 – Prevention of pollution from agriculture, into national legislation.

2. Responsible management of Baltic Sea fish stocks

- To take adequate measures to recover and maintain Baltic Sea fish stocks above biomass levels which can produce Maximum Sustainable Yield by no later than 2021;
- By keeping or increasing the minimum landing size for Baltic cod, ensure that fisheries management measures are coherent with the implementation of the BSAP and MSFD goals and does not prevent actions to secure the development of a natural size and age distribution of the Baltic cod stocks;

- Set management targets that uphold the reproductive capacity of the Baltic cod and allows cod to spawn at least once before it is caught;
- Adopt a range of measures to minimise bycatch of undersized fish and non-target species, including mitigating the high mortality of juvenile cods caused by the trawl fisheries (>10 million baby-cod killed every year); and making sure that the discard ban includes strong incentives to solve the problem of discards at sea through improved selectivity and fishing behavior;
- Agree to develop by 2014 at least one comprehensive salmon river management plan in each of the HELCOM countries with weak salmon populations, as well as to develop such plans for at least one potential river for salmon reintroduction in both Finland and Poland, with priority to Baltic Main Basin and Gulf of Finland (ICES assessment units 4,5 and 6), and to implement such plans by 2016.

3. Securing restoration and maintenance of healthy biodiversity

- Complete the ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the Baltic Sea by designation of new MPAs with no further delay (the deadline passed in 2010), by
 - 2014, as a first step, ensure that at minimum 10 % of each Baltic Sea sub-basin is protected, and when this does not secure ecological coherence;
 - 2016, designate adequate areas for protection to ensure that the network can be considered ecologically coherent in terms of the agreed criteria;
- When doing so, having special focus on the protection of key features and threatened and/or declining species and habitats, including essential fish habitats;
- Improve management of MPAs and produce and submit national progress reports on the establishment and implementation of individual management plans for all existing marine protected areas no later than 2014, in order to fulfil HELCOM decisions from 2010; and
- As a matter of priority, implement fisheries management plans for MPAs by taking specific measures to minimise unwanted catches and certain fishing impacts, like bottom trawling and dredging, on marine habitats to secure the objectives of MPAs, including regulations for environmentally friendly and selective fishing gear, by 2015.

The Baltic Sea belongs to us all and should be a source of enjoyment, beauty and sustainable use for generations to come. We want to see a strong, action-oriented Ministerial Declaration as a result of the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in Copenhagen on 3 October. We ask you to show strong leadership and agree to implement actions to improve the status of Baltic Sea fish stocks, reduce eutrophication, and restore and protect the marine environment. Our campaign this summer – Race for the Baltic – shows that you have strong support for such policies from the citizens in the Baltic Sea countries. We now call on you to make the Baltic Sea region a model for marine management in the EU and globally, by continuing HELCOM's strong commitment for the better future of the Baltic Sea.

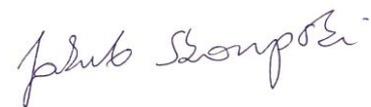
Yours sincerely,



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