

Contribution by Latvia

Latvia would like to thank the governments of Portugal and Kenya for organising this conference. It is very timely taking into account the challenges the oceans and seas are facing.

Transboundary effects of pollution is a global challenge and require coordination and cooperation beyond national borders.

International cooperation is very important for Latvia. Latvia is one of the countries around the Baltic Sea. More than half of the river runoff is from neighbouring countries upstream.

I would like to share **our vision from perspective of the regional cooperation** and the role of the Regional Sea Conventions in conservation and sustainable use of ocean and marine ecosystems.

From July 2022 **Latvia overtakes the rotating Presidency of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)** for the next two years period. HELCOM is a governing body of the Convention on the Protection of Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea area (Helsinki Convention).

For the past five decades, the **HELCOM applies ecosystem-based approach** and addresses the main pressures on the marine environment in a holistic and integrated way.

The priority for Latvia's presidency will be the implementation of the **Baltic Sea Action Plan**, which was updated in 2021. The Action Plan is a science-based and future-oriented strategic plan until 2030.

It includes around two hundred measures, which address pressures on the marine environment, as well as the main human activities causing these pressures and land-based and sea-based marine pollution.

We believe that the **Baltic Sea Region`s experience and measures taken could greatly contribute to the achievement of all targets of SDG 14.**

One of the global challenges is the increasing amount of **marine litter**, in particular plastic and microplastics. It is common for the seas worldwide, including the Baltic Sea. A Regional Marine Litter Action Plan can be an inspiring example of the role of regional organisations.

Latvia has joined the United Nations Group of Friends to Combat Marine Plastic Pollution as one of its founding members.

We support the work towards a new **global legally binding instrument on marine litter and plastic pollution**. We look forward to working together to

promote effective solutions to address the increasingly urgent plastic pollution challenge.

Today we focus more on the international cooperation. However, we should also continue the work at national level.

In Latvia we see the river basin management plans as an effective instrument. River basin management plans provide a framework for the protection and sustainable use of water resources, as well as contribute to the protection of relevant marine waters. These plans can address risks related to water scarcity and droughts, as well as floods. They are based on the assessment of river basin characteristics and consider the impact of climate change.

I believe that with persistence and by working together we can protect our seas and oceans.

Thank you!