

Intervention by Deputy Minister of Climate and the Environment, Mr. Juhani Damski, Finland

Ocean Action Panel 8: Promoting and supporting all forms of cooperation, especially at the regional and sub regional level

Excellencies, distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends of the ocean,

Finland is a long-term supporter of the multilateral system and global cooperation. At the same time, we are a proud host to the **oldest** regional seas commission of the world, the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission HELCOM.

The Baltic Sea is among the **most vulnerable and troubled sea areas** in the world. This is largely due to its nature as a semi-enclosed, shallow, brackish sea, with a catchment area four times larger than the sea itself. The sea suffers from impacts of excess nutrients, most of which originate already from several decades ago, and which cause the sea to suffer from algal blooms and dead bottoms.

While many parts of the Baltic Sea remain in a poor state, we have begun to **reverse some of the damage** through science-based policymaking. Our experience has, in particular, taught us that many solutions to achieve healthier seas are based on measures done on land.

In the Baltic, we take several measures to accomplish our commitments stemming from the region wide **Baltic Sea Action Plan**. These measures include country-specific nutrient load reduction targets, actions targeting hazardous substances, marine litter and underwater noise, as well as actions directed towards shipping and fishing, just to name a few.

Our regional actions also address area-based management measures. HELCOM has set a target of at least **30%** of the Baltic Sea marine area being under protection by 2030, with at least one-third of these areas being strictly protected. However, we want to emphasize that the key to success lies on the **quality** of these conservation measures, in addition to their **quantity**. It goes without saying, that without effective and concrete conservation measures, protected areas remain only words on a paper.

I'm fairly confident when I say that the Baltic Sea is among the **most researched** sea areas in the world. With its long continuous data sets and state of the art monitoring and assessments, the work of HELCOM has always been based on the best available

science. The wide network of scientists and researchers remain the backbone of our work.

In this regard, HELCOM also actively cooperates with **other regional seas conventions**, both within Europe, and beyond. Here, I would like to commend UNEP for bringing together and facilitating cooperation between different regional seas actors of the world, covering altogether 18 regions globally. We believe that effective environmental governance thrives when environmental agreements complement one another, and their implementation remains coherent.

Strong regional seas mechanisms support strong multilateral cooperation, and vice versa.

Thank you.