



**Statement by Monika Stankiewicz, HELCOM Executive Secretary
at the high-level United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable
Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources
for sustainable development, Plenary meeting 9 June 2017, New York**

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished participants,

All seas and oceans in the world are important. However for us, people living on the shores of the Baltic Sea, this small sea in the northern Europe is the most important one.

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, or HELCOM, works to achieve a healthy marine environment and ensure the sustainable use of its resources, based on a regional convention.

HELCOM has enjoyed continuous support of its Contracting Parties for over four decades. These Contracting Parties are Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Sweden and European Union.

Regional cooperation in the Baltic Sea has led to recent 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 12% 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 Sustainable Development Goal 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 seen by the Contracting Parties as factors underlying these HELCOM achievements.

Despite many efforts and significant progress, status of the marine environment of the Baltic Sea is still of a great concern.

HELCOM members has pledged for this Conference a commitment to strengthen the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan to support ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals. The Baltic Sea Action Plan is an ambitious programme to restore the good ecological status of the marine environment by 2021, adopted in HELCOM in 2007.

For instance, this commitment includes:

- speeding up the implementation of the marine litter regional action plan, continuing the battle against eutrophication and planning towards the elaboration of a regional action plan on underwater noise, to fulfil SDG 14.1,
- ensuring 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,
- supporting sustainable agricultural practices, to contribute to SDG 2.4, and ecosystem-related fishery measures, towards SDG 14.4 and 14.6.

More generally, 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 Sustainable Development Goals.

For years, HELCOM has developed regional indicators and assessments to measure the environmental status of the Baltic Sea, which can also be used for the future regional work on the implementation of the SDGs.

HELCOM has also committed to identify Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea under the Convention on Biological Diversity. This process will contribute to fulfilling the regional goal of drawing up and applying maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea region which are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach.

Last but not least, Contracting Parties have committed to cutting 80% of NOx emissions from ships operating in the Baltic Sea in order to combat the problem of eutrophication in the region. The reduction will be achieved by the designation of the Baltic Sea as a NOx Emission Control Area under MARPOL in the International Maritime Organization. HELCOM together with its partners will promote the green shipping technology and use of alternative fuels to further reduce harmful exhaust gas emissions and greenhouse gases from ships.

Follow-up on the implementation will be an important part of efforts to reach SDG 14. HELCOM will have a possibility to do so at our Ministerial Meeting already next year.

I thank you.