



**The HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on the Baltic Sea Action Plan,
KRAKOV 15 Nov 2007, Poland**

Statement by JAANUS TAMKIVI

Minister of the Environment of the Republic of Estonia

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today HELCOM is taking an important step on the management of its activities in the Baltic Sea Area. This is essential for many reasons:

Despite the fact that the Baltic Sea countries during the last 10-15 years have significantly contributed to the quality of the Baltic Sea the quality of the Baltic Sea ecosystems is still worsening and the number of activities having impact on the marine environment is constantly increasing.

Our today's endeavour attempting to treat such a highly sensitive marine area through integration of many spheres, conveys an excellent example to the World. The current Baltic Sea Action Plan is a compact and structured arrangement scheme with a well-developed aim to improve the health of the Baltic Sea. As we know, today preparation of several European Union initiatives incorporating the principles of integrated thinking such as the Marine Strategy directive and the Maritime Policy are still underway. The HELCOM Contracting Parties, drawing up this Action Plan, have placed themselves in a forefront - while we are implementing the Action Plan the rest of the EU and the global community will gain from our success and calamities. Thus, this combined effort is of great value.

In 2005 the Helsinki Commission launched a new initiative to reduce pollution in the Baltic Sea and to deal with the harm caused to the marine environment. The necessary measures and actions for this purpose have now been incorporated in the Baltic Sea Action Plan for which all the Contracting Parties have made their input.

One of the main objectives of the Action Plan is to take eutrophication process under control through limiting the pollution load from land-based point and diffuse sources. Already today, Estonia has set strict urban wastewater treatment regulations on effluent discharged into the Baltic Sea. Additionally, Estonia has adopted measures to reduce industrial wastewater. Although we have little industry, we advocate the use of the Best Available Technology (BAT) with the least possible impact on the environment. Although the reduction targets established are putting a certain strain on us, we feel we are able to implement these recommendations within the given time period indicated in the Action Plan.



We distinguish the philosophy behind Annex III to the Convention, which sets requirements for well-structured and standardised farming including recommendations on the size of farms, the use of fertilizers, as well as storage and use of manure. Agriculture has most significant impact on the marine environment and we cannot overlook that.

It is scientifically well ascertained that presence of hazardous substances in sea organisms, flora and fauna does reveal. However since the sea in its dynamics does not recognise any borders set by humans, it is essential that the targets for depletion and further banning of hazardous substances are reached via combined effort. Thus, the objectives set in the Action Plan must be achieved through integrated cooperation within HELCOM as well as in States, between relevant national sectors.

Biological diversity issues require complex consideration. In short, we must keep account of the vast variety of resources; know, how to use them in a sustainable manner and how to preserve this rich diversity for our children.

It is important that we agree to develop and start to implement broad scale, cross- sectoral, marine spatial planning principles. However, in comparison with other seas in Europe and worldwide the Baltic Sea has its dramatic differences in character as a semi-closed space with brackish and slow conversion of sea water. This unique characteristic adds to our high risk management tasks.

We also agree that immediate actions are important to take to develop a long-term management plans for fisheries, were an integrated ecosystem approach is taken into account.

Today, shipping is the most visible and central activity at the Baltic Sea, putting remarkable pressure on the marine ecosystems. This pressure originates from ship accidents, accidental or intentional pollutions, airborne emissions, etc. On the Baltic we cannot tolerate negligence on marine routes, thus it is indispensable that all efforts, such as early warning, surveillance and integrated response systems are done on the common basis of well developed and modern systems. By doing so, we convey our message to our international partners and outside of the Baltic Sea region, and that is: we care for our Sea.

On the abovementioned reasons and issues Estonia highly appreciates the work of the HELCOM Secretariat on making the Baltic Sea Action Plan viable. At the same time we acknowledge remarkable input of the experts and our partners from all the Contracting Parties. It is thanks to their strenuous efforts that this Action Plan is ready for approval here today at the HELCOM Ministerial meeting.



Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to draw your attention to an extract from the EU Marine Blue Book on Maritime Policy recently published by the European Commission:

“The seas are Europe’s lifeblood. Europe’s maritime spaces and its coasts are central to its wellbeing and prosperity – They are Europe’s trade routes, climate regulator, sources of food, energy and resources, and a favoured site for its citizens’ residence and recreation.

Our interactions with the sea are more intense; more varied, and create more value for Europe than ever before. Yet the strain is showing. We are at a crossroads in our relationship with the oceans.”

To conclude with, I wish that when being at a crossroad, we would choose the path of sustainability supporting harmony between the Nature and human life at the Baltic Sea.

Thank you for your attention.