

5 April 2013



**Statement
of the High Level Conference on the Protection of the
Environment of the Baltic Sea Region
(Saint Petersburg, 5-6 April, 2013)**

At the invitation of the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Heads of Government and High Level Representatives of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the European Union together with the business community and non-governmental organizations met at the High Level Conference on the Protection of the Environment of the Baltic Sea Region in Saint Petersburg, April 5-6, 2013, in order to assess progress towards the common goal to achieve a good environmental condition in the Baltic Sea Region and to identify further means of strengthening cooperation for sustainable development, including public-private partnerships in the field of environmental protection of the Baltic Sea Region.

Economic development of the Baltic Sea Region needs to take into account environmental responsibility. Precious heritage of the Baltic Sea must be protected, preserved and, where practicable, restored. As a result, the sea must be clean, healthy and productive.

The participants of the Conference reaffirmed the significance and intrinsic importance of the process started by and commitments made at the Baltic Sea Action Summit (BSAS) in 2010 in Helsinki with the participation of Heads of State and Government of the countries of the Baltic Sea Region, the European Commission, the business community and non-governmental

organizations to protect the environment of the Baltic Sea; the participants acknowledged the work that has been done by the BSAG and its contribution in initializing the BSAS Process.

The participants of the Conference noted the importance of the existing mechanisms of cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region and reconfirmed the role of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) as the overall political forum for intergovernmental co-operation and dialogue in the region.

The participants of the Conference stressed the key role of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, its governing body - the Commission on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea (HELCOM) as the solid platform for cooperation to achieve a healthy Baltic Sea and a driving force for the implementation of the ecosystem approach, and strongly supported the further implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and welcomed the upcoming HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in Copenhagen October 3, 2013.

The participants of the Conference encouraged CBSS and HELCOM to continue to create synergies in order to implement effectively the Vision for the BSR by 2020 as described in the Vilnius Declaration.

The participants of the Conference acknowledged the important role of the Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP), and the participating financial institutions - the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB), the Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), European Investment Bank (EIB), Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau (KfW), as an effective mechanism for the implementation of projects tackling environmental issues of the region.

The participants of the Conference took note of the CBSS Pilot Financial Initiative implemented through financial institutions – Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau KfW and State Corporation Bank for Development and Foreign

Economic Affairs (Vnesheconombank, VEB), as a new mechanism with the aim to contribute to the environmental protection in the region.

The participants of the Conference noted the significant work on the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, within the four segments: eutrophication, biodiversity and nature conservation, hazardous substances and maritime activities.

The participants acknowledged in particular the progress made in the municipal wastewater sector as an action to reduce nutrient input to the Baltic Sea ecosystem which causes its eutrophication. At the same time they stressed the need to continue efforts also in other sectors of the economy including agriculture, shipping and measures to reduce the content of polyphosphates in detergents.

The participants of the Conference welcomed the work of the Ad hoc Expert Group to update and review the existing information on dumped chemical munitions in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM MUNI), established in accordance with the decisions of the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in 2010 in Moscow, to be further considered within HELCOM.

The participants of the Conference recognized maritime spatial planning as a basic mechanism for the application of the ecosystem approach in the management and sustainable use of marine resources, welcomed the cooperation between HELCOM and the Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 (VASAB) in this regard.

The participants of the Conference called on the CBSS through its Expert Group on Sustainable Development - Baltic 21 to undertake further efforts to elaborate and implement adaptation strategies to cope with inevitable consequences of climate change.

The participants of the Conference acknowledged that improving energy efficiency and expanding the use of renewable and environmentally friendly energy sources offers great opportunities for environment and climate protection across the BSR. They support cooperation in this regard.

The BSR Energy Co-operation (BASREC) of CBSS is the ministerial platform for the energy dialogue on these issues in the BSR.

The participants of the Conference noted the importance of public-private partnership, which involves the interaction among representatives of the countries, international, regional and non-governmental organizations, business and scientific communities, municipalities and cities to achieve good ecological status of the Baltic Sea by 2021.

The participants of the Conference welcomed the establishment of the Saint Petersburg Initiative as a regional network of business and scientific community and non-governmental organizations, which will act as a mechanism for public-private practical interaction to promote cross-border cooperation, economically viable actions and projects for the benefit of the Baltic Sea Region environment.