



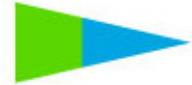
WWF® *for a living planet*®

WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

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Draft letter

Dear Prime Minister/Head of State,

Tomorrow you/your representative will meet in Helsinki to “provide a platform for arriving at practical commitments to save the Baltic Sea”. Governments around the Baltic Sea have a history of good ambitions when it comes to improving the environmental conditions of the sea. Governmental initiatives include the 1977 Helsinki Convention and all its ministerial declarations; the Baltic Sea Environmental Declaration of 9 April 1992; the Baltic 21 agenda, initiated by the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea countries in 1996; the Baltic Sea Action Plan of November 2008; and lately the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, adopted by the European Council in October 2009.

We believe that while good ambitions and bold commitments definitely have a place in the restoration of the Baltic Sea, words need to be followed by deeds to a greater extent than hitherto if we are to see any actual improvements in the sea.

We certainly need to continue working within regional and European institutions to establish solid long term change processes that have a chance to match the severity and complexity of the problems. However, while we work on these long term processes, there are several things that can be done now in the short term to improve the state of the Baltic Sea. Many of these short term measures have already been “promised” by your and other governments.

Therefore, the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme with its partner organizations¹, proposes the following seven simple things that you and your government should be able to do right now, with very small changes to existing legislations and budgets. They are far from what is needed to restore the Baltic Sea to a good environmental status, but we think they could be a good start:

1. *Ban all uses of phosphates in detergents.* Eutrophication is the single biggest threat to the ecology of the Baltic Sea and banning the use of phosphates in detergents has been shown to be the most cost-effective measure to achieve a substantial reduction of nutrients entering the Baltic Sea. Some countries have already banned phosphates and some large manufacturers of detergents have decided to do the same. A ban should cover all uses of phosphates in detergents: household as well as industrial; laundry as well as dishwasher detergents.

2. *Introduce a tax on N and P in mineral fertilizers.* Run-off from agriculture is the single biggest source of excess nutrients to the Baltic Sea, resulting in eutrophication. While many

¹ The following organizations are partners within the WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme: Baltic Fund for Nature, Estonian Fund for Nature, Lithuanian Fund for Nature, Pasaules Dabas Fonds, WWF-Denmark, WWF-Finland, WWF-Germany, WWF-Poland and WWF-Sweden.

measures to reduce the run-off involve long-term changes in land-use and practice, on farm as well as on landscape level, a very simple measure that immediately would reduce nutrient run-off would be a tax on nitrogen and phosphorus in mineral fertilizers. Introducing a fee on fertilizers is a cost-effective way to stimulate farmers to reduce excess nutrient use in agriculture practices. By redistributing the fees into environmental investments, the agriculture sector will gain more resources to address its impact on the Baltic Sea.

3. *Ban fishing of eel until the stock is recovered and restore inland migration routes.* The European eel stock is at a historical minimum and continues to decline. Recruitment in 2008 and 2009 was especially low and a total decline of 99% has been estimated. Overfishing combined with habitat alteration, including barrier to eel passage and deterioration in water quality, contribute to the present situation. The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) has repeatedly recommended that all anthropogenic impacts should be reduced to as close to zero as possible. Only with very radical measures do we stand a chance to save the eel population of the Baltic Sea. In the Baltic Sea Action Plan, governments promised to rapidly implement long-term management plans for eel so that “by 2008 successful eel migration from the Baltic Sea catchment area to the spawning grounds is ensured”. The long term solution is for countries to agree on a common management plan for the region. In the meantime the only way to secure the survival of the eel population is a national ban of all eel fishing, combined with active measures to restore migration routes.

4. *Ratify the Ballast Water Convention.* Every day, every hour, an estimated 7,000 coastal and marine organisms travel across the world oceans in the ballast water tanks of ships. When released in a new environment they may become “invasive” which means that they compete with local organisms for food and/or space. This may lead to irreversible ecological changes and in turn economical losses and losses to biodiversity –history is full of examples. The 2004 International Maritime Organization’s (IMO) Convention on the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water and Sediments will prevent trading ships from continuing to spread harmful invasive species via ballast water. However, not enough countries have thus far ratified the convention (30 countries and 35% of the world tonnage is needed). Today, few or no obstacles remain for countries to ratify the convention and thus it could be finalized swiftly.

5. *Clean up remaining Helcom hotspots.* The Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP), signed by Heads of States in 1990, specified a series of actions to be undertaken at “pollution hot spots” around the Baltic Sea. The most notorious hot spots are point sources such as municipal facilities and industrial plants, but the programme also covers pollution from agricultural areas and rural settlements, and sensitive areas such as coastal lagoons and wetlands where special environmental measures are needed. The Helcom hot spots list has been a powerful tool to reduce pollution to the Baltic Sea. It has had a major impact in many local coastal areas and is very well accepted among stakeholders in the region. As of December 2009, 73 of the original 162 hotspots are still “active”, i.e. not yet cleaned up. There is no excuse for not delivering what was promised a long time ago.

6. *Provide adequate port reception facilities for cruise ship sewage.* Cruise ships annually carry some 80 million passengers around the Baltic Sea. The wastewater produced in these vessels is estimated to include some 72 tons of nitrogen and 18 tons of phosphorus. A considerable part of this wastewater is still discharged into the Baltic Sea, mainly in international waters. In addition to excess nutrients, ship borne wastewater also carries bacteria, viruses and other pathogens, leftover food, detergents, as well as heavy metals. An obstacle to the solution to

this problem is the lack of adequate sewage reception facilities in many of the major ports around the Baltic Sea. It should be a simple thing for governments to require action from these ports.

7. *Establish a network of marine protected areas.* The establishment of marine protected areas is an explicit measure of the EU Habitats Directive, the Birds Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, as well as of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. The successful completion of an ecologically coherent network of well-managed Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs) by 2010 is a fundamental target set forward initially in 1994 by the adoption of **HELCOM Recommendation 15/5** on Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs). Recent evaluations show that the current BSPA network does not fulfil the criteria for an ecologically coherent network. This means that many species and habitats in the Baltic Sea are still under serious threat. In order to secure a healthy ecosystem for the future, there is an urgent need for actions to protect and restore them.

We hope that these seven simple things will inspire you to action and we will continue to monitor how they are followed through by you and your government.

Sincerely,

[to be signed by local CEO]