



22 January 2016

Executive Summary

Contribution from the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) to the Part I of the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, pursuant to General Assembly draft resolution A/70/L.22, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”

While the issue of marine debris, plastics and microplastics in the Baltic Sea has been recognized and addressed by HELCOM for long, the 2013 Ministerial [Declaration](#) included a more clear commitment: to develop a Regional [Action Plan](#) on Marine Litter for the Baltic Sea (RAP ML) by 2015 at the latest. The Plan should have the aim of achieving a significant quantitative reduction of marine litter by 2025, compared to 2015, and of preventing harm to the coastal and marine environment.

RAP ML was fully adopted in June 2015 with thirty regional actions, including two specific actions to tackle the issue of micro particles and micro plastics. Within RAP ML, i.a., concrete measures for prevention and reduction of marine litter from its main sources are being taken; common indicators and associated targets related to quantities, composition, sources and pathways of marine litter are being developed; and the socio-economic and biological impacts of marine litter are identified.

The implementation of RAP ML will now be conducted through the push from Lead Countries, facilitated by the HELCOM Experts Network on Marine Litter ([Terms of Reference](#) for the period 2015-2018 agreed in November 2015), under the umbrella of the HELCOM Pressure group. While the majority of the RAP ML actions have Leading and/or Co-Leading countries (22 out of 30), there is work to be done for starting the implementation for the rest.

Moreover, cooperation with other Regional Seas Conventions, e.g. OSPAR, Barcelona Convention and Bucharest Convention, has been initiated on joint implementation of common actions, as well as with the Global Partnership on Marine Litter.

The HELCOM [project](#) for the Development of the Second Holistic Assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II) aims to provide an update on the overall environmental status in the Region. The assessment, due to first release by mid-2017, will for the first time also concern marine litter as contributing to assessing cumulative impacts. Work is ongoing on developing indicators for beach litter, microlitter in the watercolumn, and litter on the seafloor.

In addition, pushing into action the thirty agreed regional tasks in the Action Plan on Marine Litter is the key focus of the [HELCOM Stakeholder Conference on Marine Litter](#) to take place 9 March 2016, which aims at gathering a wide array of stakeholders to announce – or reiterate – their commitment to combating marine litter in the Baltic Sea.