

Joint Statement to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 by KIMO International and Race For The Baltic

KIMO International and Race For The Baltic affirm their support of HELCOM's continued commitment and efforts to the protection and restoration of the Baltic Sea, and welcome HELCOM's role as coordinator of regional input into implementation of the UN Global Goals, in particular Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life below water.

We commend HELCOM's efforts to complete the comprehensive "State of the Baltic Sea" report and the work to integrate new knowledge into the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

With the 2021 target year of the Baltic Sea Action Plan being only three years away, KIMO International and Race For The Baltic hope that this Ministerial Meeting will decide on intensified efforts to ensure stronger follow-through on the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

KIMO International and Race For The Baltic welcome HELCOM's interest to explore ways to engage with municipalities, and the public, private and third sector more closely in implementing the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

KIMO International and Race for the Baltic believe that the key to effective action is a long-term approach which enhances cross-sector cooperation, strengthens partnerships and increases linkages across policy, research and implementation. This approach embraces the potential for innovation and sustainable economic growth, as well as restoration of good environmental status of the marine environment. Catalyzing and supporting the involvement of local stakeholders – cities, municipalities, NGOs, industry, entrepreneurs, innovators, citizens – is fundamental to achieving this sustainable future.

Turning environmental challenges into opportunities and capturing benefits

Investing in clean and healthy waters will boost jobs and economic activity in municipalities. Addressing the pollution impacting the Baltic Sea should not be seen as a cost, but as an opportunity to create local jobs and increase socio-economic benefits.

A report¹ commissioned by Zennström Philanthropies, and published in 2015 by The Boston Consulting Group, highlighted that within the entire Baltic Sea region, 900,000 jobs could be created by 2030, representing almost 2% of the total labour supply, through investments in clear waters. There are also many environmental and socioeconomic benefits from addressing eutrophication, such as improved biodiversity, reduced risk of flooding and a healthier population.

By restoring local waters, a municipality can develop sustainable businesses and increase recreation, aesthetic value, flood control, biodiversity, and citizen well-being. For an average municipality, the difference between two scenarios, clear waters state and shipwrecked state, could amount to almost 3,000 full-time jobs and €270 million in economic output aggregated over the course of 15 years.

A key way for municipalities to contribute to improved water quality, both locally and in the Baltic Sea, is by developing a local Baltic Sea Action Plan, as promoted by programmes such as the Baltic Sea Accelerator². Such plans address the geographical and socioeconomic factors of the local municipality, while working with the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan as a reference framework.

KIMO International and Race For The Baltic suggest the following key recommendations to HELCOM as concrete ways to support and facilitate the development of local BSAPs in the region's municipalities. These recommendations have been developed through key findings from the Baltic Sea City Accelerator pilot programme, as well as from conclusions from a pilot project "Baltic Sea Pioneers for better Pollution Monitoring and Reporting", led by SIWI Swedish Water House, in partnership with Race for the Baltic and The Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management (S2S platform). Also instrumental to the recommendations is feedback from ongoing consultations with the 180 municipalities and organisations which KIMO International represents.

- Provide a checklist based on HELCOM priorities to assist municipalities in identification of local priorities and the potential to undertake environmental measures which can contribute to improved socioeconomic development in municipalities in the Baltic Sea region.
- Increase access to existing water quality data in a clear and transparent way to assist municipalities to identify local pollution sources and to showcase progress that has been made.
- Provide targets and recommendations that could serve as indicators for municipalities to report their progress and contributions towards improving the Baltic Sea environment.
- Support increased communication and cross-regional connectivity to facilitate municipalities' work.

Municipalities play a key role

The 1,500 or so coastal municipalities in the Baltic Sea catchment area play a crucial role in creating a safe and healthy environment for the population. It is their role also to enforce national laws and to drive or increase local voluntary actions such as the reduction of nutrient input from agriculture and stormwater. The municipality serves as the key stakeholder and has comprehensive knowledge of the local area, waters and discharge sources. As the most local authority, municipalities can coordinate initiatives, drive impact and influence the behaviours of local businesses and citizens. Furthermore, municipalities procure and invest in technology that will clean up local waters.

Citizens' engagement with locally driven initiatives plays a vital role together with cooperation beyond municipal borders. Examples include the Fishing for Litter project, a simple, effective initiative that reduces marine litter through involvement of the fishing industry, ports and harbours, and the numerous beach clean-up projects that take place in coastal municipalities that also raise public awareness of pollution and marine litter in the Baltic Sea.

KIMO International and Race For The Baltic believe that national and regional agencies should inform, educate, support and adequately fund municipalities, thus empowering them to be more strategic about

what actions they focus on to safeguard their waters, coastlines and to fulfil their role as local implementers. This work - from informing to implementing - can be supported by international networks and organisations such as KIMO International, Race For The Baltic, NGOs and other local actors who seek to promote collaboration among a range of stakeholders from the public and private sector.

Considerations to step up implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)

Being aware of the harmful effects of marine pollution on the environment and on human health and the socioeconomic losses that it causes to Baltic Sea activities (fishing, shipping, tourism, recreation), KIMO International and Race For The Baltic urge HELCOM to step up implementation of the BSAP by setting measurable targets and achievable goals for specific stakeholders so that the number of concrete actions taken is increased. International examples of best practice can provide inspiring examples for our Region to adapt.

Based on our work and observations, KIMO International and Race For The Baltic strongly urge HELCOM to consider the following to support the vital work done at local level:

- Engage more closely with municipalities and other local actors to implement the BSAP commitments by increasing and improving information and guidance from national agencies, thus empowering municipalities to take concrete actions and utilise the potential for economic growth in efforts to restore the status of the marine environment;
- Adopt a multilevel governance approach to implementing local measures, so that the important work done by municipalities is valued and supported by regional, national and internal levels;
- Promote sharing of examples of successful projects and best practices to municipalities and provide guidelines and recommendations on the most effective measures to reduce water pollution, in particular from waste water, storm water and marine litter;
- Explore synergies with a broader cross-sectoral range of organisations and businesses, including innovative companies, HELCOM observers, international networks and organisations to support local level work through projects, collaborations and partnerships;
- Set specific, measurable targets and concrete actions for awareness raising and education, particularly in riverine and hinterland municipalities, and support them to make changes for positive environmental and economic benefit;
- Lack of coordination in multilevel governance has led to poor compliance and delays in implementation of measures. A cohesive, inclusive governance structure should be implemented to slow down ecosystem decline and accelerate creation of new socioeconomic opportunities;
- Ensure sufficient funding is allocated and available to municipalities and other stakeholders, and, further, accessible via innovative or streamlined mechanisms, to more rapidly take actions that address the mitigation of pollution and restoration of the Baltic Sea.

¹Restoring waters in the Baltic Sea Region: a strategy for municipalities and local governments to capture economic and environmental benefits. Commissioned by Zennström Philanthropies and published by the Boston Consulting Group, February 2015.

²Baltic Sea Accelerator Programme is an initiative of Race For The Baltic. The platform brings together local governments, science and business to identify cost-effective, smart and innovative solutions to local water challenges using a strategic business lens.

KIMO is an international association of municipalities who work to protect, preserve and enhance marine and coastal areas and to find enduring solutions to marine environmental issues. It is a fully independent organisation driven by the collective opinions and ambitions of its member municipalities. Established in 1990, KIMO now represents around 180 municipalities and organisations in 8 countries.

Race For The Baltic is a foundation of Zennström Philanthropies and works to convene leaders made up of forward-thinking politicians, industry professionals, NGOs and local governments who are determined to reverse the negative trends and restore the Baltic Sea environment, so as to ensure the long term economic viability of the region.