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from : General Secretariat  
to : Delegations

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Subject : Regional approaches to management of water and the marine environment,  
including implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region  
- Council conclusions

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Delegations will find in the Annex to this note the above-mentioned conclusions, which were adopted by the Council (Environment) on 22 December 2009.

**Regional approaches to management of water and the marine environment, including implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region**

**- Council conclusions -**

THE COUNCIL:

1. RECOGNISES the value of marine ecosystem goods and services and the protection of the marine environment as a precondition for sustainable development and prosperity and therefore, UNDERLINES the need to strengthen ecosystem-based decision-making, to make integration of environmental concerns in sectoral policies more effective, recalling Article 11 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
2. STRESSES the need for the closest possible co-operation between all countries sharing marine waters and transboundary water catchment areas, including countries that are not members of the European Union, to ensure effective protection of all waters and of the marine environment, in line with the obligations for cooperation laid down in the Marine Strategy Framework Directive <sup>1</sup> (MSFD) and the Water Framework Directive <sup>2</sup> (WFD);
3. RECALLS that the MSFD was welcomed by the European Council as the environmental pillar of the Integrated Maritime Policy (IMP), WELCOMES the Council conclusions of 16 November 2009 on Integrated Maritime Policy <sup>3</sup> and ACKNOWLEDGES the MSFD as an important regulatory platform to support the development of the integrated approach of the IMP;

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<sup>1</sup> Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for community action in the field of marine environmental policy (Marine Strategy Framework Directive). (OJ L 164, 25.6.2008)

<sup>2</sup> Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy. (OJ L 327, 22.12.2000)

<sup>3</sup> 15175/1/09 REV 1.

4. WELCOMES that the IMP is developing in coherence with the MSFD, with an approach taking the specificities of the different marine regions into account, applying the ecosystem-based approach as an overarching principle to ensure the sustainable management of human activities, having regard to their cumulative impacts;
5. UNDERLINES the importance of activities under international and regional sea conventions (including the Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions, HELCOM and OSPAR), river conventions and other international conventions relating to the management of human activities having an impact on the marine environment, in the implementation of EU marine and water legislation, and CALLS for enhanced co-ordination between these agreements with a view to increasing environmental protection, as well as co-ordination with other relevant regional initiatives related to water management, such as Horizon 2020, the work to establish the Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean in the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean, DABLAS and UNECE <sup>4</sup>, and EMPHASISES the relationship between land based activities and the marine environment;
6. WELCOMES the progress made in setting up the Environmental Partnership in the Black Sea area, under the aegis of the Black Sea Synergy <sup>5</sup> and looks forward to its early official launching;

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<sup>4</sup> UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

<sup>5</sup> See Council Conclusions on the Black Sea Synergy Initiative (9432/07) and Communication from the Commission "Black Sea Synergy – A new regional cooperation initiative (COM(2007) 160)

7. AGREES to take all necessary measures to ensure a successful implementation of the MSFD throughout its extended policy cycle, in particular as regards the determination by Member States of characteristics for good environmental status and the establishment of targets and indicators, based on common criteria and methodological standards to be developed, and the entry into operation by 2016 of ambitious programmes of measures necessary to achieve good environmental status, as well as the need for a co-ordinated implementation of the MSFD and the WFD, in particular for coastal waters;
8. ACKNOWLEDGES that, to achieve good environmental status, there is a need for enhanced efforts to implement the Birds and Habitats Directives at sea, and to complete the designation and to put in place management of Natura 2000 marine networks as well as of networks of marine protected areas in the framework of international or regional sea conventions in accordance with the MSFD, and ENCOURAGES increased co-operation between international organisations that deal with issues related to the conservation of habitats and species and sustainable management of marine resources, including regional fisheries bodies;
9. RECALLS the importance of the protection of marine ecosystems, *inter alia* through comprehensive networks of marine protected areas, for resilience to human induced environmental change, including climate change;
10. UNDERLINES the importance of scientific research as a basis for policy- and decision-making and, therefore, WELCOMES the continued implementation of the EU Strategy for Marine and Maritime Research, as well as the proposal by the Commission on the participation of the European Community in the joint Baltic Sea Research and Development Programme (BONUS), based on Article 185 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and REITERATES its invitation to the Member States concerned and the Commission to consider appropriate proposals for research and development activities in all European marine regions, seas and oceans with particular emphasis on the Mediterranean and Black Sea basins, keeping in mind the objectives and requirements of the MSFD;

11. CALLS on all Member States to consider, in any marine region or sub-region where the status of the sea is so critical as to necessitate urgent action, the possibility of making the region in question a pilot project in accordance with Article 5, paragraph 3, of the MSFD;
12. WELCOMES the Commission's launch of an EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and its Action Plan, RECALLS the Council conclusions of 26 October 2009 and the European Council conclusions of 30 October 2009, and LOOKS FORWARD to the forthcoming EU Strategy for the Danube Region, taking into account downstream effects on marine waters and the need for protection of regional water resources;
13. NOTES the potential of macro-regional strategies, where there is clear added value and regional demand, as a useful tool for improving the coordinated development and implementation of EU sectoral policies affecting water and the marine environment, involving the agricultural, fisheries, transport and energy sectors and seeking support from other policy instruments, such as the regional and research policies, and recalls the invitation to the Commission to present a progress report on the Baltic Sea Strategy to the Council by June 2011;
14. UNDERLINES the importance of the increased coordination and the enhanced integration that can be provided by the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, supporting the successful implementation of EU legislation, including the MSFD, WFD, the Nitrates Directive and REACH, and enhancing fulfilment of the requirements and timeframes set out in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) <sup>6</sup>;

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<sup>6</sup> HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, adopted by the Baltic Sea littoral States and the European Community on 15 November 2007 in Krakow, Poland  
[http://www.helcom.fi/BSAP/MinisterialMeeting/en\\_GB/Ministerial\\_Meeting\\_2007/](http://www.helcom.fi/BSAP/MinisterialMeeting/en_GB/Ministerial_Meeting_2007/)

15. CALLS on the EU Member States in the Baltic Sea Region and on the Commission to implement without delay the Action Plan linked to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, and STRESSES the importance of integrating environmental concerns in implementing the four pillars and priority areas of the Action Plan and of highlighting the need to reduce the impact of hazardous substances through addressing diffuse and point sources, including chemical weapons, where appropriate, thus supporting ongoing work, including HELCOM's engagement in this respect;
16. ACKNOWLEDGES that the environmental situation of the Baltic Sea is so critical as to necessitate urgent action, RECALLS the commitments and timetables under the HELCOM BSAP, CALLS inter alia for an expedient establishment of the Baltic Sea Region as a pilot project under the MSFD and INVITES the Commission to initiate supportive action within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region;
17. WELCOMES the initiative to encourage the development of Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) based on an ecosystem approach in the Baltic Sea Region and looks forward to increased activities in this regard as being important for the implementation of the IMP, and INVITES the Commission to develop further co-ordination between its initiatives related to the MSP, the MSFD and integrated coastal zone management;
18. EMPHASISES the need for a more effective use of existing EU instruments and funds, as well as other existing resources and financial instruments, and CALLS on the Commission to provide advice to the Member States for ensuring that financing from existing instruments and funds contributes to the protection of water and the marine environment;

19. CALLS on Member States to take necessary measures against eutrophication in marine and fresh waters by different means, one being the phasing out of phosphates in detergents, and INVITES the Commission without delay to present proposals for harmonising EU legislation in the light of an impact assessment covering inter alia environmental and internal market aspects with a view to phasing out and/or banning phosphates in detergents starting with phosphates in laundry detergents for domestic use and going beyond that, based on the evidence from a further impact assessment.

