Report on Sea-Dumped Munitions for the 30th BSPC
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The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) was established in 1991 as a forum for political dialogue between parliamentarians from the Baltic Sea Region. BSPC aims at raising awareness and opinion on issues of current political interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea Region. It promotes and drives various initiatives and efforts to support a sustainable environmental, social and economic development of the Baltic Sea Region. It strives at enhancing the visibility of the Baltic Sea Region and its issues in a wider European context.

BSPC gathers parliamentarians from 11 national parliaments, 11 regional parliaments and 5 parliamentary organisations around the Baltic Sea. The BSPC thus constitutes a unique parliamentary bridge between all the EU- and non-EU countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

BSPC external interfaces include parliamentary, governmental, sub-regional and other organizations in the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension area, among them CBSS, HELCOM, the Northern Dimension Partnership in Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS), the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF), the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Cooperation (BSSSC) and the Baltic Development Forum.

BSPC shall initiate and guide political activities in the region; support and strengthen democratic institutions in the participating states; improve dialogue between governments, parliaments and civil society; strengthen the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region by means of close co-operation between national and regional parliaments on the basis of equality; and initiate and guide political activities in the Baltic Sea Region, endowing them with additional democratic legitimacy and parliamentary authority.

The political recommendations of the annual Parliamentary Conferences are expressed in a Conference Resolution adopted by consensus by the Conference. The adopted Resolution shall be submitted to the governments of the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU, and disseminated to other relevant national, regional and local stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and its neighbourhood.
## Contents

1. Introduction ........................................................................................................... 5
2. Resolution of the 29th BSPC of 24 August 2020 – item 15 ................................. 6
3. Implementation of the 29th BSPC resolution in and by the states .......................... 7
4. Questionnaire on sea-dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea .................................. 7
5. Motion in the German Bundestag ........................................................................ 8
6. Activities at the EU level .................................................................................... 9
   6.1. Correspondence with the European Commission .......................................... 9
   6.2. European Parliament resolution ................................................................. 10
7. Presentation of DAIMON 2 outcomes in September 2021 .................................. 10
8. HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 – updating the BSAP .......... 11
9. Kiel Munition Clearance Week .......................................................................... 12
11. Recommendations for action ............................................................................ 14
12. Summary ........................................................................................................... 16
13. References ......................................................................................................... 17
14. Annexes ............................................................................................................ 19
   14.1. Statements on item 15 of the 29th BSPC resolution .................................... 19
       14.1.1. Denmark ....................................................................................... 19
       14.1.2. Estonia ....................................................................................... 19
       14.1.3. German Bundestag ..................................................................... 19
       14.1.4. Hamburg ................................................................................... 19
       14.1.5. Latvia .......................................................................................... 20
       14.1.6. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern ......................................................... 20
       14.1.7. Poland ......................................................................................... 20
       14.1.8. Schleswig-Holstein .................................................................... 20
       14.1.9. Sweden ....................................................................................... 22
   14.2. Letter to European Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius .......................... 23
   14.3. Reply from European Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius ....................... 26
   14.4. Letters from MEPs to the Commission President ....................................... 28
   14.5. Letter from Commission President Ursula von der Leyen ......................... 31
   14.6. European Parliament resolution .............................................................. 33
   14.7. Questionnaire on sea-dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea to the BSPC members .... 37
   14.8. Replies to the questionnaire ....................................................................... 39
       14.8.1. Poland ....................................................................................... 39
       14.8.2. Russia ....................................................................................... 42
       14.8.3. Sweden ....................................................................................... 43
   14.9. Motion of the German Bundestag .............................................................. 45
1. Introduction

This report on my activities as the BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Munitions builds on my interim report from last year and should be read as a second instalment. The fundamental aspects of the issue were already covered in the first instalment and are largely still current, although there have been new developments and findings in technological and scientific terms. With regard to the problem as described and the urgent need for action, nothing has changed. On the contrary, another year has gone by. This report gives me a chance to detail the latest developments and again to explicitly highlight the most crucial points. This is especially important in view of the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting to be held in Lübeck, Germany, on 20 October 2021.

Almost all of the time since my November 2019 election as Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Munitions has been coloured by the COVID19 pandemic. In the end, international contact with experts across the Baltic Sea region could not be conducted in the way I would have preferred. Thanks to digital meetings, telephone calls and written communications, however, it was nevertheless possible to maintain regular and in part very intensive dialogue with various experts from the spheres of science and research, associations, politics and public administration, and business and industry.

I can attest that many specialists working in science and research, in the Baltic Sea region and beyond, enjoy an outstanding network of ties to one another. There is a munitions community spanning multiple countries and sectors, in which people have come to know one another and share a common goal. I must also attest, however, that the scientific findings which have been accumulating rapidly in recent years, the latest technological developments and the rising urgency have not yet been successfully embedded on the political agenda in a sustained and comprehensive manner. The reasons for this are manifold. They lie not in a lack of effort on the part of scientists and associations but in the need to make the knowledge that exists among specialists accessible to a wider audience. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those players who have generously deployed their expertise to support me and willingly shared information with me over the last two years. My sincere thanks also go to our Secretary General, Bodo Bahr, who gave me all manner of help and advice and so made my reporting job considerably easier.

1 https://www.bspc.net/bspc_interim-report-on-sea-dumped-munitions-for-the-29th-bspc/
As a BSPC member and Rapporteur and as a Member of the German Bundestag, I have always understood it as part of my job in the area of legacy munitions to raise awareness of the urgency with which hazardous remnants of war need to be salvaged and neutralised. To judge by current developments, this seems to have been achieved, with greater attention being paid to the issue in the political sphere. Without a doubt, the resolutions we unanimously agreed at the 28th and 29th BSPCs and the interim report played a role in that success. As members of the BSPC, we should see it as our joint achievement. With the completion of the present report, I consider my task as Rapporteur fulfilled for now – but the job itself remains to be done, and it needs to be done in the 20 years that lie ahead. I look forward to tackling it alongside you all.

Peter Stein

2. Resolution of the 29th BSPC of 24 August 2020 – item 15

The 29th annual BSPC was held in a digital format on 24 August 2020. The participants, elected and seconded representatives of the states in the Baltic Sea region, unanimously agreed a resolution which, in item 15, contains a call relating to legacy munitions in the Baltic Sea and thereby builds on the 28th resolution. Under item 15 of the 29th resolution, the governments in the Baltic Sea region, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and the European Union are called upon, with regard to the safeguarding of our environment, seas and oceans for future generations and acknowledging the priorities of Germany’s HELCOM Chairmanship, to intensify efforts to monitor and to treat the problem of dumped munitions, wrecks and ghost nets in the Baltic Sea on a common international approach supporting the existing national and international efforts and responsibilities, moreover to strengthen existing political structures and scientific projects, also thus to make the Baltic Sea region become a global leader in the field of solving problems associated with dumped munitions and unexploded ordnance located underwater as well as in the field of wrecks and ghost nets.²

² https://www.bspc.net/29th-bspc-resolution-final-adopted/
3. Implementation of the 29th BSPC resolution in and by the states

By the specified date of 16 July 2021, the BSPC Secretariat had received statements from 13 of the 22 regional and national governments. This participation by more than half of the states which provide BSPC members was gratifying, particularly given that some of the statements were very extensive and detailed. It should be noted that four of the 13 statements received do not highlight the part which is of relevance here, item 15. However, some of them did provide responses to the Rapporteur’s questionnaire on sea-dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea instead.

4. Questionnaire on sea-dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea

The aims of this report included creating an overview of actual national activities dealing with legacy munitions in the Baltic Sea that have taken place in the countries around its coast since last summer and of how current developments are perceived at the international level. I therefore decided, since I was unable to visit the BSPC member states because of the pandemic, to put together a small questionnaire on sea-dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea, which was sent to the BSPC members via the relevant secretariats in various countries and regions. My great thanks go to Secretary General Bodo Bahr and all the staff of the regional and national BSPC secretariats for all their support with that project. I would also like to express my gratitude for the responses.

Analysis of the replies received firstly confirms that the legacy munitions in the Baltic Sea are seen as a major joint challenge. Secondly, it reveals that assorted national activities have been happening in the different coastal states and – even more importantly – a regular reckoning with the dangerous remnants of war has been documented.

Although the idea of a voluntary donor fund has been hailed as welcome, no concrete proposals for its practical implementation have been put forward. Understandably, the need to sort out historical and legal responsibility remains a factor, and I agree that this issue is of particular import. Clearing up these special issues must not generate disagreement at the wrong time or be taken as a reason to put off taking action. The advancing corrosion of the munitions means we have no time left to play with. The only prerequisite for starting the necessary measures must be the desire to undertake an immediate joint effort. Otherwise, we will run out of time.

As we only received several responses to my questionnaire, they are not at first glance representative. Taken in combination, however, especially the responses from Germany, Poland, Russia and Sweden and the statements on the 29th BSPC resolution together provide a cohesive overall picture that allows for at least some cautious conclusions about the general state of opinion.
5. Motion in the German Bundestag

Being the BSPC delegate from the German Bundestag, I have also been addressing the issue of legacy munitions in my role as a member of that parliament during the reporting period. My goal was the introduction of a motion in the Bundestag aiming for far-reaching national measures in dealing with sea-dumped munitions. I experienced a great deal of support in pursuing that endeavour and am delighted that a motion by the governing coalition was adopted on 6 May 2021. Its subject is the responsible handling of munitions in the North and Baltic Seas and the more widespread use of maritime technologies. The core elements of the motion include a call to construct a waterborne platform, as a testing and pilot project, which can be used to salvage munitions in an effective and environmentally friendly manner and neutralise them while still out at sea. The Federal Government is moreover called upon both to introduce measures in its own territory and to engage in more extensive international cooperation with other states around the coast. This includes the creation of a permanent donor fund fed on a voluntary basis by the coastal states (with the involvement of the EU), from which a group of experts, for example attached to HELCOM, can finance the monitoring and the procurement procedures for the detection and ecologically responsible salvaging of legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas. Additionally, the motion calls on the Federal Government to campaign for all current research, findings and outcomes relating to legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas to be collated multinational and for databases to be standardised.

A similar motion in this area was introduced by the opposition and formed the basis of a public hearing before the Bundestag Committee on the Environment on 17 May 2021. A video recording of the hearing is available on the Bundestag website, alongside the presentations that were made. The nine experts included a Russian, Dr Mikhail Maistrenko. The hearing was a success, and all the experts and other participants across all parties were agreed that, in view of the advancing corrosion and the associated increase in the threat to the ecosystem, salvaging these remnants must not be put off any longer, especially in the Baltic.

I would also like to mention at this point that the environment ministers of Germany’s Länder have been intensively working on the topic of sea-dumped munitions at their biannual Conference of Environment Ministers in recent years and, among other things, have adopted a decision for a stronger approach to solving the problem.

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4 Annex 14.9
5 https://www.bundestag.de/ausschuesse/a16_umwelt/oeffentliche_anhoerungen#url=L2F1c3NjaHVlc3NlL2ExNl91bXdlbH-Qvb2VmZmVudGxpY2hlX2FuG9KnVuZ2VuLzgpOTkxMC04Mzk5MTA=&mod=mod544426
6. Activities at the EU level

Alongside the Baltic Sea states and other multinational organisations in the Baltic Sea area, the European Union plays a pivotal role when it comes to dealing with legacy munitions in the Baltic Sea. The reason for this lies not only in the fact that many Baltic Sea states are members of the EU but also in the various programmes that the EU has co-financed or is still co-financing in this field, such as CHEMSEA, DAIMON and DAIMON 2. Added to this is the European Commission’s seat on HELCOM, an organisation which the Rapporteur’s surveys found to be key to tackling the shared challenge.

6.1. Correspondence with the European Commission

The recommendations contained in the interim report raised the idea of a voluntary donor fund of at least EUR 500 million to facilitate swift action. It is intended to take effect before and while historical and legal issues are still being cleared up. The proposal met with a lot of approval behind the scenes, but no official sources have yet actually announced an intention to participate, nor has the budget been set.

In that context, it was necessary to seek the support of the German politician Niclas Herbst, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-Chair of its Committee on Budgets and member of its Committee on Fisheries, and jointly approach Virginijus Sinkevičius, the European Commissioner responsible for these matters. A joint letter sent in November 2020 put forward the idea of a voluntary donor fund and requested the European Commission’s support.6

In his reply of December 2020, Commissioner Sinkevičius welcomed the initiative, expressed openness to the idea of a voluntary donor fund and mentioned that the Commission had launched a study relating to legacy munitions in the Baltic Sea.7 Commission President Ursula von der Leyen also addressed the topic in her letter of 19 April 2021, in which she encouraged the EU member states to undertake national and international action to tackle the problem of legacy munitions.8 She moreover suggests that the above-mentioned study, to be completed by the end of the year, could leave room for assisting member states with follow-up activities. I take all this as encouragement to develop our Baltic Sea area as a pilot region for dealing with this globally acute problem.

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6 Annex 14.2
7 Annex 14.3
8 Annex 14.5
6.2. European Parliament resolution

On 27 April 2021, the European Parliament, by 660 of 668 votes, adopted an extensive petition from among its ranks on the subject of legacy munitions in the Baltic Sea. This had been preceded by a letter to the Commission President drafted at the initiative of Polish MEPs, which had gained widespread support in the European Parliament.

The text adopted by the European Parliament raises a whole series of important points and ultimately calls on the Commission to devote greater efforts to dealing with the legacy munitions present in the Baltic Sea. Items K 10 to K 12 are particularly noteworthy, calling on the Commission to

- engage all the relevant EU agencies and institutions, including the European Defence Agency, to utilise all the available resources and to make sure that the problem will be reflected in all the relevant EU policies and programming processes, including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan;
- ensure that the issue of munitions dumped in European seas is included in the horizontal programmes in order to enable the submission of projects covering regions affected by the same problem (the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, North Sea and Baltic Sea) and facilitate the exchange of experience and best practices;
- devote concerted efforts to tackling pollution in the Baltic Sea and to foster all types of regional, national and international cooperation to this end, including through its partnership with NATO.

7. Presentation of DAIMON 2 outcomes in September 2021

An initial presentation of DAIMON 2 outcomes was given at a digital meeting on 15 June 2021. The intention is to present them more fully at the DAIMON 2 conclusion session during Kiel Munition Clearance Week from 6 to 10 September. DAIMON 2 has demonstrated once again that advancing corrosion and the associated leakage of compounds used in explosives are making the munitions present in the Baltic Sea a considerable threat to the ecosystem. One of the research project’s objectives was to make predictions about corrosion in the various types of munitions and to show not only on what a large scale compounds used in explosives can be detected in fish and shellfish but also how quickly they make these completely unpalatable for human consumption. It found that the first metal casings would be entirely corroded in as little as ten years’ time.

10 Annex 14.4
11 Annex 14.5
12 https://www.daimonproject.com/daimon2-final-meeting-1506.html
8. HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021 – updating the BSAP

Under Germany’s Chairmanship from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021, the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting will be held in the Hanseatic City of Lübeck in Germany on 20 October 2021. The plan is to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) there as well as to discuss the findings of the HELCOM Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED).

Reference was made in the interim report to the necessity of extending the mandate of SUBMERGED, which would normally have expired at the end of 2020, and to the group’s extensive report, which was at an advanced stage of its production at the time. It is pleasing to see the statement from Schleswig-Holstein on item 15 of the 29th BSPC resolution indicating that SUBMERGED has now become a permanent working group. We should very much welcome that development.

With regard to the update of the BSAP, the aim must be the explicit inclusion as a long-term environmental priority of salvaging and neutralising munitions and other hazardous products in the Baltic Sea.

According to the Research Services Directorate of the German Bundestag, the Contracting Parties of the Helsinki Convention could assign that additional task to HELCOM. Under Article 20(1) of the Helsinki Convention, the explicitly formulated duties of HELCOM include keeping the implementation of the Convention under continuous observation, making recommendations on measures relating to the purposes of the Convention and promoting scientific research in a spirit of international understanding. Over and above these duties, Article 20(2) provides for HELCOM – after negotiating and reaching unanimity internally in accordance with Article 19(5) – to assume such other functions as it deems appropriate to further the purposes of the Convention.

It is therefore of great importance to adopt a resolution at the 30th BSPC which calls on the governments of the Baltic Sea region, the CBSS and the EU to that effect.

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13 https://helcom.fi/helcom-at-work/ministerial-meetings/2021-lubeck/
14 Annex 14.1.8; link: https://www.bspc.net/implementation-of-the-29th-resolution-labor-issues1/
15 Bundestag briefing notes: WD 2 - 3000 - 052/21 (12 July 2021)
9. Kiel Munition Clearance Week

In the week from 6 to 10 September, Kiel Munition Clearance Week (KMCW) will be held in Kiel, Germany. The man who initiated it, Jann Wendt, is also the founder of the munitions cadastre AmuCad mentioned in the interim report and is internationally extremely well connected within the munitions community. One sign of the significance of the long-prepared KMCW is that Daniel Günther, Minister President of Schleswig-Holstein, has become its patron. Many high-level representatives from the scientific, industrial, political and military spheres will attend and engage in intensive dialogue in the context of workshops, presentations and discussions.

The special thing about KMCW is that it will bring together not only numerous players from the Baltic Sea region but also, under the aegis of the Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) Oceans, representatives of those particularly affected by sea-dumped munitions on the North Sea and Mediterranean coasts.

According to the event organisers, the agenda will include the following topics:

1. The state of research
2. Environmental and societal impacts
3. Legal aspects
4. Detection and identification technologies
5. Remediation solutions
6. Stakeholder roles and responsibilities
7. Economic opportunities
8. Funding options

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16 https://munitionclearanceweek.org/
17 https://www.amucad.org
18 http://www.jpi-oceans.eu/
10. Joint Programming Initiative Oceans – JPI Oceans

Due to the pandemic situation, it was not possible for the Rapporteur to establish contact in person with the secretariat of JPI Oceans, which is located in Italy. Fortunately, the Rapporteur maintains intensive contact with Claus Böttcher, the coordinator of the new Knowledge Hub, which was launched by the JPI Oceans Management Board in November 2020. Claus Böttcher is head of BLANO\(^9\) and one of the organisers of KMCW and has been particularly recognized for his experience and his efforts not only with JPI Oceans but throughout the munitions community around Europe.

A better understanding of what exactly JPI Oceans does may be gained from the JPI Oceans homepage.\(^{20}\) According to its own description, JPI Oceans is an intergovernmental platform that strives to increase the impact of national investments in marine and maritime research and innovation. It focuses on long-term collaboration between EU member states, associated countries and international partners. The platform provides its member countries with a shared voice, a strategic agenda and an action plan to address complex ocean-related challenges facing society that cannot be resolved at the national level.

The JPI Oceans Action on munition in the sea\(^{21}\) was proposed by the Strategic Advisory Board in April 2014 and approved by the JPI Oceans Management Board in November 2015. The aim of the joint action is to coordinate research and innovation to assess risks, define priorities and suggest intervention options with regard to munitions in the marine environment. The outcomes of the action will be used to support the identification, monitoring and elimination of threats through more systematic and sound approaches.

The added value generated by this JPI Oceans Action consists of three aspects:

1. Introducing and structuring interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral European scientific cooperation
2. Providing an interface between scientific expertise and operators
3. Contributing to cost and time efficient solutions

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19 Bund/Länder Working Group North and Baltic Sea; Link: https://www.meeresschutz.info/blano.html
20 http://www.jpi-oceans.eu/
21 http://www.jpi-oceans.eu/munitions-sea
11. Recommendations for action

As mentioned in the introduction and documented in this report, there has been very gratifying progress made on munitions clearance in the Baltic Sea since the interim report was issued – and I do not refer only to the increased political and public attention being directed towards the subject, which has been achieved in spite of the challenges of the COVID19 pandemic. It is regrettable, however, that key points of the recommendations for action set out in the 2020 interim report are yet to be implemented and therefore appear again in the list below. A number of additional recommendations are given in light of the upcoming HELCOM Ministerial Meeting of 20 October and the impending update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

Recommendations for action already included in the interim report:

• All current research, findings and results on the topic should be collated multinationally, and data should be standardised.
• Comprehensive monitoring of the contaminated sites should be established and maintained.
• Research into the use of bio-indicators should be intensified.
• A joint, multinational group of experts (science and technology/processes) should be set up to issue annual recommendations based on constant evaluation for the targeted, necessary handling of sea-dumped munitions and unexploded ordnance.
• Swift, environmentally friendly action must be possible. There must therefore be an option to omit lengthy discussions about responsibilities, establishment of legal consequences and identification of perpetrators upfront when such activities would obstruct the necessary timeline.
• To resolve this issue, a permanent multinational fund should be set up to finance the expert group, the monitoring and the relevant tendering procedures for the treatment of legacy munitions.
• An example is provided by international donor funds like the development funds under the aegis of the United Nations, which have proved to work well. A stable framework for legacy munitions could be supplied by the EU institutions or preferably by the HELCOM structures.
• In a corresponding voluntary donor conference (ideally with the involvement of the EU), the initial aim should be an amount of EUR 500 million to flexibly finance the measures that the experts recommend.
• Current technical developments may lead to a reduction of around 80% in the costs of salvaging and dealing with munitions. At the same time, therefore, the private marine technology sector should be involved in the economic process by means of regular procurement procedures for the proposed measures. This will support the steady continuation of technological development and value creation in our region as a whole.
• The Baltic Sea area has the potential to become a pilot region for the sustainable, scientific, technological and value-creating resolution of the legacy problem of munitions throughout our waters. Similar contamination can be found in many seas, coastal waters, estuaries, harbour areas and lakes around the world.
The following recommendations for action are given in addition and as further specification, not least with an eye on the coming update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on 20 October 2021:

- Efforts to salvage and neutralise munitions in the Baltic Sea should be enhanced by means of measures undertaken within the framework of multinational cooperation in accordance with the 28th and 29th BSPC resolutions as well as the recommendations for action issued by the BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Munitions.

- The various national findings, research results and data should be collated within a group of experts, preferably attached to HELCOM. Concrete measures to remove munitions from the Baltic Sea should be prepared on that basis.

- When it comes to implementing the financial instrument referred to in the 28th BSPC resolution, the aim should be an international, voluntary donor fund, and the possibility of HELCOM managing such a fund under Article 20(2) of the Helsinki Convention should be investigated.

- The Baltic Sea area should be established as a global pilot region for the environmentally responsible, swiftest possible and cost-effective salvaging and decontamination of legacy munitions in marine waters.

- The governments of the Baltic Sea region, the CBSS and the EU should take all necessary steps to ensure they can finish removing and neutralising munitions and other hazardous products from the Baltic Sea within the next 20 years.

- The removal and neutralisation of munitions present in the Baltic Sea, and all the measures required for that endeavour, should be explicitly included in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) as long-term environmental priorities. The same applies, in accordance with our 29th BSPC resolution, to hazardous substances in wrecks and ghost nets.
12. Summary

Experts keep telling me that there has never been such powerful impetus, such clear momentum and such great readiness to finally undertake a systematic effort to salvage and destroy these hazardous munitions. But a sustainable solution is only possible if we can maintain the current impetus and not only continue to observe developments but scale up international collaborations and capabilities to industrial dimensions.

It is up to us, as members of the regional and national parliaments, to induce our governments to take swift cooperative action in the Baltic Sea region. The conditions are in place for immediate action: we have sufficient data, methods for risk analysis and decision-making, tried and tested technological solutions and the structures provided by HELCOM.

The Baltic Sea area has the potential to become a pilot region for research, development and application scalable to the entire maritime industry. Other munitions dumping grounds will benefit; there are large numbers of them around the world.
13. References

- Link to the 28th BSPC resolution:
  https://www.bspc.net/conference-resolution-28-bspc-adopted-270819/

- Link to the statements on the 28th BSPC resolution:
  https://www.bspc.net/bspc_statements_28thbspc_resolution/

- BSPC Standing Committee November 11, 2019:
  https://www.bspc.net/valerijus-simulik-chairs-standing-committee-in-berlin/

- Link to the 29th BSPC resolution:
  https://www.bspc.net/29th-bspc-resolution-final-adopted/

- Link to the statements on the 29th BSPC resolution:
  https://www.bspc.net/implementation-of-the-29th-resolution-labor-issues1/

- Link to the BSPC interim report on sea-dumped munitions for the 29th BSPC:
  https://www.bspc.net/bspc_interim-report-on-sea-dumped-munitions-for-the-29th-bspc/

- Link to the European Parliament resolution:

- Link to the DAIMON project:
  https://www.daimonproject.com/

- Link to the BASTA project:
  https://www.basta-munition.eu/

- Link to the MUNITECT network:
  https://www.munitect.de/en/home

- Link to the UDEMM project:
  https://udemm.geomar.de/

- Link to the CBSS Bornholm Declaration:

- Link to HELCOM:
  https://helcom.fi

- Link to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting of 20 October 2021:
  https://helcom.fi/helcom-at-work/ministerial-meetings/2021-lubeck/
• Link to the report Munitions in German Marine Waters – Stocktaking and Recommendations (in German):
  https://www.schleswig-holstein.de/DE/UXO/Berichte/PDF/Berichtetag_blano_fortschritt2018.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=1

• Link to the EUSBSR:
  https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/

• Link to AmuCad:
  https://www.amucad.org

• Link to Kiel Munitions Clearance Week:
  https://munitionclearanceweek.org/

• Link to Germany’s priorities for its Chairmanship of HELCOM:

• Link to BLANO (in German):
  https://www.meeresschutz.info/blano.html

• Link to JPI Oceans:
  http://www.jpi-oceans.eu/munitions-sea


• Cooper, Nick; Cooke, Simon (2015): Assessment and management of unexploded ordnance (UXO) risk in the marine environment. CIRIA, London


• Carbon Trust (2020): Guidance for geophysical surveying for UXO and boulders supporting cable installation


• Bundestag briefing notes: WD 2 - 3000 - 052/21 (12 July 2021)
14. Annexes

14.1. Statements on item 15 of the 29th BSPC resolution

14.1.1. Denmark

Denmark fully supports all relevant efforts to monitor and to treat the problem of dumped munitions, wrecks and ghost nets in the Baltic Sea. Such efforts should be developed and executed on the basis of complete risk assessments and without detriment to national security.

14.1.2. Estonia

Estonia acknowledges that ammunition dumped at sea as well as wrecks and ghost nets constitute an environmental and safety issue in the Baltic Sea. These problems being of large-scale, widespread and transboundary character, require a joint approach by the Baltic Sea states. The issue of dumped munitions is addressed within the HELCOM group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects. The problem of ghost nets will be addressed in the Revised HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter as well as in the updated Programme of measures of the Estonian Marine Strategy.

14.1.3. German Bundestag

The German Government reaffirms its intention to attach special political significance during its HELCOM Chairmanship to the subject of maritime contamination and lost or discarded fishing equipment and to advance the development of international and cross-institutional cooperation on the matter. The goal is also to translate national approaches, strategies and procedures into the regional and supra-regional context.

14.1.4. Hamburg

Hamburg works together with its partners in the Federal Government and Länder Working Group on the North and Baltic Seas (BLANO) to implement the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (Document 22/1694). The national programme of measures for the North and Baltic Seas is currently being updated. A main focus, supported by the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, is improving marine protection and sustainable use of the seas. The Senate welcomes the active role of the German Federal Minister as the current chairwoman of HELCOM and the great commitment of the Federal Ministry of the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety in the HELCOM working bodies. The Senate supports the Federal Government in the priorities it has set for achieving its climate targets and for the protection of the Baltic Sea in respect of:

- reducing the pollution of the Baltic Sea with nutrients and maritime waste.
- reworking the Baltic Sea Action Plan to take account of regionally important core topics by 2021 at the latest.
- including global developments such as the 2030 Agenda Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Oceans).
14.1.5. Latvia

At the moment the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of the Republic of Latvia has no special projects regarding problems associated with dumped munitions and unexploded ordnance located underwater, or wrecks and ghost nets. There are legal provisions in national legislation and the Maritime Spatial Plan limiting access and activities in such areas.

14.1.6. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has been part of the “Expert Network Munitions in the Sea” of the joint Bund-Länder Working Group North and Baltic Sea since its founding meeting in February 2012. The members of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment, the Ministry of the Interior and Europe as well as the Munitions Extraction Service Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Munitionsbergungsdienst Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, MBD MV) represent the Federal State at the relevant meetings. The MBD MV also provides expert consultations on the threat of unexploded ordnance for NGOs organising the extraction of ghost nets. Extensive research conducted since 2017 has delivered comprehensive data on coastal military exercise locations and thus supplements the documentation of marine areas, which have been increasingly used for firing practice since 1871. This research revealed that dud from shooting practice could potentially be dispersed over a more than 15,000 km² area stretching far beyond the coastal waters of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. In addition, the Munitions Extraction Service Mecklenburg-Vorpommern participates in other research projects as an associated partner or consulting body (e.g. within the framework of the DAIMON project). To this end, direct contacts with the BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-Dumped Munitions have also taken place.

14.1.7. Poland

Legislative work on the Order No. 150 of the Prime Minister of 25 September 2020 on the appointment of the Inter-Ministerial Team on the risks arising from hazardous materials deposited in the maritime areas of the Republic of Poland. The task of the team will be to assess the risks associated with the occurrence of hazards arising from hazardous materials deposited in the maritime areas of the Republic of Poland, including the preparation and presentation for approval by the Council of Ministers of a detailed action plan of public administration and the supervised and subordinate units on the subject of toxic warfare agents and their degradation products deposited in the maritime areas of the Republic of Poland, conventional weapons and fuel and petroleum substances deposited in wrecks, together with the identification of entities responsible for carrying out the tasks, the schedule of implementation of these tasks and the expected financial outlays for their implementation.

14.1.8. Schleswig-Holstein

The Baltic Sea region is the leading region on these topics all over the world. To which extent HELCOM’s objectives can be reached under the German Presidency is not the responsibility of the state of Schleswig-Holstein or Germany. However, the German Presidency and the respective vice-presidents of the countries have agreed on further proposals to deal with and solve the burdens, which also result in marine ammunition and ghost networks, in order to advance these issues in the Baltic Sea region together with all the parties (see paragraph 14).

With regard to ammunition loads in the sea, a particular challenge is to attract further contracting parties to participate in the issue in order to obtain as comprehensive a picture as possible of the conventional ammunition in the Baltic Sea. A first success is visible. The work of the ad hoc working group HELCOM Submerged,
which expires at the end of 2020, will continue as a submerged expert network at the request of Germany and Poland. The work can go on. The Heads of Delegation have to take a corresponding decision by 2021. Some measures asked for in point 24 of the 28th BSPC resolution are already on the way. The financing instrument for dealing with ammunition in the Baltic Sea region is still outstanding. Baltic Sea wide concepts for monitoring and handling ammunition start by corresponding projects. The Kiel Munitions Clearance Week 2021 - to take place on 10 September 2021- can form a special milestone here. The aim of this international event is to provide a platform for politics, science, business and administration to inform and exchange information on marine ammunition, the impacts and possibilities of handling. Schleswig-Holstein has developed over the last 10 years a kind of knowledge region for ammunition in the Sea and has launched many projects and initiatives.

Kiel Munitions Clearance Week 2021 is an intermediate target, but also a starting point for the next step towards an orderly clearing concept for the Baltic Sea. This can function as starting point for concepts of other marine areas. In addition to the previously described establishment of the expert network Submerged under HELCOM RESPONSE, Kiel Ammunition Clearance Week 2021 will also make a visible contribution to point 15 of the 29th BSPC resolution. During this event, the two EU-funded projects DAIMON 2 and BASTA will organize project meetings under Polish and German coordination, thus underlining the importance of the Baltic Sea region for the topic. This will once again present the Baltic Sea region as an important example in the handling of marine ammunition.

On 01 January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations entered into force. Objective 14 (SDG-14) describes the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas and marine resources. The goals described are realistic by 2030 under the precondition that all actors will take the necessary measures. Regional cooperation such as HELCOM contribute to this, among other things, with the objectives formulated for the German Presidency. The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference can take a responsible position here in order to persuade its own governments to adopt at least a regionally coordinated strategy for dealing with marine ammunition and, above all, to resolve the issue of a sustainable financial instrument.

With regard to ghost networks, a wide range of initiatives, activities and research projects are on the way or in preparation:

At the political level, the 93. Conference of Environment Ministers on 15 November 2019 asked the Bund/Länder Working Group North and Baltic Sea (BLANO), including the fisheries industry, nature conservation associations and, where appropriate, other actors, to identify appropriate measures for the MSFD programme as well as targeted research and development needs to solve the ghost network problem in the North and Baltic Seas. It also asked BLANO to explore possible financial instruments and to report on the results to the Conference of Environment Ministers as soon as possible.

As part of the updating of the MSFD Action Programmes, an existing measure continue under the new title “Prevention, Search, Recovery and Disposal of Ghost Networks”. It includes a comprehensive portfolio of measures (avoidance, mapping, locating, collecting, discarding, recycling, eco-friendly materials, marking, producer responsibility, educational work), thereby contributing to the implementation of the HELCOM BSAP and the HELCOM Recommendation 36/1 (Regional Marine Litter Action Plan).

In addition, the National Round Table on Sea Waste has treated the ghost network problem since 2016 in order to support and operationalize the implementation of the MSFD measures to achieve the national environmental objective “sea without exposure to waste”. Schleswig-Holstein has taken part in this discussion. In this context, expertise from the relevant areas (fishing and port industry, public authorities, environmental associations, etc.) will be brought together in order to define and operationalize concrete options for action.
During the ongoing German HELCOM presidency and the Schleswig-Holstein vicechairmanship, the following other thematic issues are focal points:

I. Intensification of activities to prevent, search and salvage “ghost nets” in the Baltic Sea region:

Up to now, the following measures exist for the German Baltic Sea waters:

- Methods for mapping ghost nets;
- Strategies to avoid loss of fishing gear Evaluation of marking systems for better retrieval of lost fishing gear;
- Overview of options for the collection and handling of fishing gear out of service in ports;
- Treatment scheme in ports from the design of reception facilities to recycling;
- Explore recycling opportunities for fishing gear out of service;
- Sonar technique for the recovery of lost fishing gear;
- an environmental impact study on the impact of salvage operations and a risk assessment of ammunition loads in the sea.

In this context, we have to make sure that new procedures do not create additional burdens on the marine environment. For this purpose, for example, we have to pay attention to the underwater sound inputs resulting from the sonar technology.

II. Improving communication and knowledge-share between stakeholders:

In particular, further improvement of communication with fishermen, various interest groups and other organizations is important with the aim of reducing prejudices (e.g. fears about stigmatization of fisheries), to learn from the many years of experience of fishermen, to raise awareness of problems and, if possible, to jointly develop strategies for reducing or avoiding net losses.

III. Preparation of a HELCOM Recommendation on Abandoned, Lost and Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG):

From the findings already gained and with the help of the exchange with fishers and other stakeholders, the completion of the already planned HELCOM Recommendation on ALDFG is to tackle.

14.1.9. Sweden

Regarding sea mines from WW1 and WW2, Swedish naval units continue to support the Baltic states in underwater mine clearance. This support is conducted both for environmental reasons as well as to secure the sea lines of communications in the Baltic Sea.

The Swedish government supports the priorities of the German chairmanship and is actively engaged in the discussions on updating the Baltic Sea Action Plan. The Swedish government has initiated work on a national programme on wrecks where several priority wrecks have been identified for which a decontamination programme has been initiated. In addition, Sweden has an ambitious programme for decontamination of contaminated soil, mostly related to historic industrial activities, that also include harbour and marine areas. Regarding ghost nets, the Swedish government provides financial support to the fishing industry and other stakeholders, who also participate in the work on retrieving lost fishing gear. This work also relates to the implementation of the EU plastics directive.
14.2. Letter to European Commissioner Virginijus Sinkevičius

Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

As Commissioner for Environment, Seas and Fisheries you are certainly aware that more than 1.6 million tons of hazardous warfare materials in the North Sea and Baltic Sea are a growing threat to human and the environment. They effect the economy by growing risks, in particular in the fisheries, shipping and the offshore sector.

In the Baltic Sea, scientific data on risks and impacts on the ecosystem is now very well developed. In essence, the EU funded research project DAIMON, which delivered important results in spring 2019, has contributed to this. The follow-up project DAIMON 2 is already ongoing.

It is to be welcomed that the European Commission takes the pollution-pressure on the seas very seriously. The current and planned Interreg Baltic Sea Region program reflects that in an excellent way. It is also to be welcomed that transnational cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region will continue in the next programming period 2021-2027 and that in the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) the fight against pollution will be a priority of the new Baltic Sea Region Program 2021-2027.

In this context, the problem of munitions is one of the objectives of the current HELCOM Presidency by Germany. In addition, at the end of 2020, the HELCOM Working Group SUBMERGED will present a comprehensive report on lost packed chemical cargoes, dumped munitions, contaminated wrecks and dangerous...
waste loads in the Baltic Sea. As the European Commission is a member of HELCOM, you are certainly aware of this.

The scientific findings, ongoing programs and the existing commitments of individual EU Member States are not specifically addressed here. Instead, reference is made to the interim report by BSPC rapporteur Peter Stein on “sea-dumped munitions” of August 2020.

This report also contains a number of proposals to address the pressing problem outgoing from sea-dumped munitions. (link: https://www.bspc.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BSPC_Interim-report-on-sea-dumped-munitions-for-the-29th-BSPC.pdf)

A compelling element here is swift, collective, international action, regardless of individual moral, historical or legal responsibilities. A common, uniform approach to solving this problem would be an action in the best European sense!

Bearing in mind that Covid-19 poses enormous economic and financial challenges to all EU countries, we believe that the setting up of a voluntary donor conference, modelled on the UN funds, from international cooperation, such as environmental and climate protection, immunization or the fight against hunger, is an important and effective first step.

Under the constant technical supervision of an independent expert group, the scientific findings must be brought together, standardized and expanded. Networked monitoring of the affected sea areas and objects is to be set up and maintained. The objective must be the ability to carry out a sound risk assessment recognized by all stakeholders. Following a regular recommendation from the expert group, the most dangerous objects and areas can be prioritized and gradually made harmless with proposed measures. Adverse effects on the environment and risks to humans, materials and animals shall be minimized.

The measures proposed by the experts will be tendered internationally and will be financed flexibly from this fund. In this way, the maritime industry, as well as waste management specialists, are addressed and involved. This leads to steadily
increasing efficiency, environmental protection and falling prices, but also to the creation of more capacity and jobs in this area.

If successful in principle, the EU could become a global model and technology leader. There are numerous underwater munitions dumps around the world, while at the same time having high potential risks and pressure for action. As a result, Europe can play an important supporting role not only with know-how and experience, but also with the world’s leading technology and our professionals.

Dear Commissioner,

We would very much appreciate your views on this issue, in particular with regard to the BSPC interim report, and ask for your support in setting up an international donor conference.

With kind regards

Niclas Herbst
Member of the European Parliament

Peter Stein
Member of the German Bundestag, BSPC-rapporteur
Dear Mr Herbst, dear Mr Stein,

Thank you for your letter of 12 November 2020.

Your letter, as well as the “Interim report on sea-dumped munitions for the 29th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)” reflects the extensive research you have carried out on sea-dumped munitions and the multitude of hazards they pose to human safety, environmental health and to the normal execution of maritime economic activities including fishing, transport and offshore energy projects. I would like to commend you on this comprehensive work.

The issue of dumped munitions and of various hazardous wrecks on the sea floor in European sea basins is indeed a large-scale problem that merits appropriate attention. I appreciate that your report for the 29th BSPC highlights the Commission’s actions to address these issues, as well as the actions of HELCOM and of various EU Member States, particularly those around the Baltic Sea and the North Sea.
I would like to inform you that the Commission has just launched a study that will produce relevant guidance to enhance cooperation between Member States’ authorities, private bodies and regional organisations in dealing with accidental recovery or any encounter with unexploded ordnances and chemical munitions dumped at sea.

Funding to address the problem of dumped munitions and hazardous wrecks can come from the European Territorial Cooperation programs, which work in shared management between the European Commission and participating countries and are co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The transnational Baltic Sea Region (BSR) programme provided funding for the CHEMSEA and DAIMON 1 and 2 projects, which you referred to in your report. For the 2021-27 BSR programme, the Commission proposed in its orientation paper that there should be a strong focus on tackling the pollution of the Baltic Sea.

As regards your idea of an international donor conference, I look forward to learning more about the planned format and focus of such an event.

Yours sincerely,

Virginijus Sinkevičius
To: President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen

12 March 2021

Dear President,

We are deeply concerned about the risk still posed today by chemical and conventional munitions dumped on the Baltic seabed after World War II. This is one of the most important causes of pollution in the Baltic and the most dangerous one, since effects of eventual spills and leakages go beyond the borders of one country and have economic, security, social, health and environmental consequences. Therefore, we call on the European Commission for an urgent action and for the provision of adequate financial resources in the new financial perspective, not only in the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme for the years 2021-2027, but also in other horizontal programs in which the issue of the munition dumped on the seabed should be included.

As a consequence of World War II dozens of tons of munitions and chemical weapons were sank in the Baltic Sea, which now experts consider to be one of the most polluted seas in the world. Due to inter alia incomplete documentation on the number and places of dumps, it is impossible to determine the exact amount of the chemical munitions lying on the seabed, containing toxic substances, such as mustard gas, and representing a serious hazard to the environment and to the people. Depending on the source, it is estimated that it is more than 50,000 tons. Apart from the munition itself, there are also hundreds of shipwrecks which progressive corrosion creates a risk of leakage of fuel, petroleum products and poisonous warfare agents. This may cause an ecological disaster and poison large areas of the Baltic Sea, which is particularly concerning since the Baltic is only connected to the ocean by the Danish Straits, which results in a very low self-cleaning capacity. As an effect, it might result in one of the greatest environmental disasters, which then we will have to handle with for decades.

Chemical munitions and chemical agents leaking from the shipwrecks in the Baltic Sea may affect all human activities at sea: fishing boat crews, crews of ships performing underwater engineering works, divers performing underwater works, crews of research vessels exploring the seabed, crews of floating units, port workers servicing call ships to ports, crew of rescue units and even tourists. The dangers resulting from contact with a released poison control agent is enormous, ranging from the direct harm to the human body, to the possibility of transferring poison control agents in the food chain.

We welcome the EU’s successful efforts and support for mine action worldwide, including in the Balkans, Africa and Asia. We believe that the pressing problem of dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea and the Skagerrak calls for the similar engagement from the EU. Hence, we welcome the fact that the EC hosted in 2019 a Colloquium on the Challenges of Unexploded
Munitions in the Sea, which was an important step to share experience and knowledge between relevant stakeholders.

Therefore, we strongly call on the European Commission to:

1. ensure continuity of the actions undertaken in the previous years, such as CHEMSEA, DAIMON and the ongoing DAIMON 2 project,
2. secure adequate financing of research and actions required at resolving the dangers coming from the dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea, within the 2021-2027 Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme and horizontal programmes,
3. support the efforts on national levels, such as mapping of the location of the dumped munitions, as well as controlling and removing hazardous materials,
4. secure adequate financing and support the development of the environmentally friendly technology for disposal and destruction of the conventional and chemical munitions,
5. ensure that horizontal programmes allow the submission of projects covering regions affected by the same problem (the Adriatic-Ionian, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea) and would enable the exchange of experiences and best practices,
6. make sure that the problem will be reflected in all the relevant EU policies and in the programming processes, including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan,
7. initiate the work on the comprehensive plan of action for a disposal and removal of the hazardous remains of the World War II,
8. include the problem as one of the fields of the EU-NATO cooperation,
9. engage all relevant European agencies and institutions to utilize all available resources, including the European Defence Agency.

We are convinced that without tackling the problem of the dumped munitions the objective to ‘Save the Sea’, as stated in the European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, cannot be achieved. The work on the 2021-2027 Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme is currently on the way with the next meeting of the Joint Programme Committee (JCP) planned for the end of March. Therefore, we call on the Commission to follow up conclusions of the 2019 Colloquium and address our recommendations, including within the next Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme.

Yours sincerely,

Anna FOTYGA, ECR, Poland
Rasa JUKNEVIČIENĖ, EPP, Lithuania
Urmas PAET, Renew, Estonia
Henna VIRKKUNEN, EPP, Finland
Viola VON CRAMON-TAUBADEL, Greens/EFA, Germany
Charlie WEIMERS, ECR, Sweden
Roberts ZĪLE, ECR, Latvia
Andris AMERIKS, S&D, Latvia
Kosma ZLOTOWSKI, ECR, Poland
Nilz TORVALDS, Renew, Finland
Miriam LEXMANN, EPP, Slovakia
Sven MIKSER, S&D, Estonia
Adam JARUBAS, EPP, Poland
Petras AUŠTREVIČIUS, Renew, Lithuania
Gianna GANCIA, ID, Italy
Elżbieta KRUK, ECR, Poland
Dorien ROOKMAKER, NI, Netherlands
Aušra MALDEIKIENĖ, EPP, Lithuania
Witold Jan WASZCZYKOWSKI, ECR, Poland
Martin BUSCHMANN, NI, Germany
Juozas OLEKAS, S&D, Lithuania
Inese VAIDERE, EPP, Latvia
Hermann TERTSCH, ECR, Spain
 Günther SIDL, S&D, Austria
Sergey LAGODINSKY, Greens/EFA, Germany
Ivan Vilibor SINČIĆ, NI, Croatia
Beata SZYDŁO, ECR, Poland
Dace MELBĀRDE, ECR, Latvia
François-Xavier BELLAMY, EPP, France
Ryszard CZARNECKI, ECR, Poland
Andrius KUBILIUS, EPP, Lithuania
Javier NART, Renew, Spain
Elżbieta RAFALSKA, ECR, Poland
Beata MAZUREK, ECR, Poland
Hannah NEUMANN, Greens/EFA, Germany
Magdalena ADAMOWICZ, EPP, Poland
Alviina ALAMETSÄ, Greens/EFA, Finland
Karen MELCHIOR, Renew, Denmark
Tudor CIUHODARU, S&D, Romania
Dear Honourable Member,

I would like to thank you and your co-signatories for your letter of 12 March 2021 conveying your concerns about the problems caused by chemical and conventional munitions dumped after World Wars I and II in the Baltic Sea.

From an environmental perspective such munitions qualify, under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive¹, as a potential source of chemical contamination and litter in the marine environment, which has to be monitored by Member States to keep the possible threats of this pollution to the environment under strict control. Adequate measures must be devised in marine strategies both at national and cross-national level.

In the Baltic Sea, work has been led within the HELCOM Convention for the Protection of the Baltic Sea, by the ‘Submerged’ expert group, to map, monitor and, if possible, clean up dumping sites to protect human health and the marine environment².

As a contracting party to this Convention, the European Union, represented by the European Commission, has supported these efforts.

In particular, the Commission encourages both national and international actions, taking into account the conclusions of the Colloquium on the Challenges of Unexploded Munitions, held in Brussels in 2019.

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Ms Anna Fotyga, MEP
European Parliament
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1047 BRUSSELS

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Through the joint Baltic Sea research and development programme (BONUS Art. 185), the Commission supported research and innovation activities between 2014 and 2016 that informed the work to update the wreck register on those posing the highest risks for environmental pollution in the Baltic Sea.

Currently, the Commission is financing several projects, which will use smart data integration and Artificial Intelligence, as well as near-real-time explosive compound detection in seawater. Some of the projects are funded through the Interreg Baltic Sea regional programme. Some will participate in the International Forum for tackling the challenges of offshore munition clearance, the so-called 'munition clearance week', in Kiel in September 2021.

In January 2021, the European Commission launched a specific study to map the dumped munitions, to improve coordination in monitoring and tackling them, to determine a set of common procedures and response models in dealing with accidental munition recovery, to identify and assess best practices for removals, limiting harmful impacts to the marine environment. The study will be completed by the end of 2021, possibly leaving room for further assisting Member States in follow-up actions.

Due to the nature of the issue, the Member States directly concerned will need to consider the possibilities for practical follow-up. Within the 2018 EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan, Member States agreed to undertake specific activities in the Baltic Sea, to optimise the disposal and elimination of sea-dumped chemical munitions and unexploded ordnances.

Yours faithfully,

Ursula von der Leyen
European Parliament resolution of 27 April 2021 on chemical residues in the Baltic Sea, based on Petitions Nos 1328/2019 and 0406/2020 (2021/2567(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Petitions Nos 1328/2019 and 0406/2020,

– having regard to Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union, Articles 4 and 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and Articles 35 and 37 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,


– having regard to the commitments to ‘save the sea’ and make the Baltic Sea Region a world leader in maritime security under the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, and the commitment of the EU Member States to eliminate sea-dumped chemical munitions and unexploded ordnances under the EU Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan,

– having regard to the Commission’s zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment as set out in Chapter 2.1.8 of its communication of 11 December 2019 on the European Green Deal (COM(2019)0640), and the EU’s commitment to halt biodiversity loss and

¹ OJ C 304, 6.10.1997, p. 147.
become a world leader in addressing the global biodiversity crisis in accordance with its Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and Biodiversity Strategy for 2030,

- having regard to the obligations undertaken by the states parties pursuant to Article 2 of the 1992 UN Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and Article 4 of the 1999 Protocol on Water and Health thereto,

- having regard to the Commission’s upcoming Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme for 2021-2027,

- having regard to the 1992 Helsinki Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, the Baltic Sea Action Plan and the findings of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) on sea-dumped chemical munitions,

- having regard to the commitments of states under the UN Sustainable Development Goals, namely target 3.9 to reduce deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and contamination, target 6.3 to improve water quality by eliminating dumping and minimising the release of hazardous chemicals, and targets 14.1 and 14.2 to prevent marine pollution and protect marine and coastal ecosystems,

- having regard to resolution 1612(2008) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on chemical munitions buried in the Baltic Sea, and to the accompanying report of 28 April 2008,

- having regard to the deliberations on Petitions Nos 1328/2019 and 0406/2020 during the meeting of the Committee on Petitions held on 3 December 2020,

- having regard to Rule 227(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas at least 50 000 tonnes of conventional and chemical weapons containing hazardous substances (such as mustard and tear gas and nerve and choking chemical agents) have been dumped into the Baltic Sea since the end of the Second World War;

B. whereas these munitions degrade slowly and leak toxic substances into the water, posing a danger to human health by contaminating food and causing severe burns and poisoning upon direct contact, damaging marine ecosystems and biodiversity, and jeopardising local economic activities such as fishing, the extraction of natural resources and the generation of renewable energy from power plants;

C. whereas owing to its geographical situation, the Baltic Sea is a semi-enclosed sea with a slow turnover of water and very low self-cleaning capacity; whereas it is considered one of the most polluted seas in the world, with oxygen levels falling in its deep waters, which is already putting marine life in danger;

D. whereas valuable research has been carried out by the ad hoc HELCOM Working Group on Dumped Chemical Munitions (CHEMU), the EU-funded project entitled ‘Modelling of Ecological Risks related to Sea-Dumped Chemical Weapons’ (MERCW), and the ad hoc HELCOM expert groups to Update and Review the Existing Information on Dumped Chemical Munitions in the Baltic Sea (MUNI) and on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED);
E. whereas the need for greater cooperation was expressed during the Colloquium on the Challenges of Unexploded Munitions in the Sea held in Brussels on 20 February 2019;

F. whereas the international community lacks reliable information about the volume, nature and locations of the disposed munitions owing to poor documentation of these activities and insufficient research on the seabed of the Baltic Sea;

G. whereas no consensus has been reached on the current state of the munitions, the exact danger they pose and the possible solutions to this problem;

H. whereas the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme provided funding for the 2011-2014 Chemical Munitions Search and Assessment (CHEMSEA), 2016-2019 Decision Aid for Marine Munitions (DAIMON) and 2019-2021 DAIMON 2 projects for a total of EUR 10.13 million (EUR 7.8 million of which – 77 % – came from the European Regional Development Fund); whereas these projects studied the dumping locations and the content and state of the munitions and how they react to Baltic conditions, and provided administrations with decision-making tools and training in technologies used for risk analysis, remediation methods and environmental impact assessment;

I. whereas the issue of conventional and chemical munitions dumped in the sea is being addressed by NATO, which has adequate tools, instruments and experience to resolve this problem successfully;

J. whereas the CHEMSEA project, which came to an end in 2014, concluded that while chemical munition dumping sites do not represent an immediate threat, they will continue to be a problem for the Baltic Sea;

K. whereas the high transport density and high rate of economic activity in the Baltic Sea Region render this not only an environmental issue, but also one with considerable economic implications, including for the fishing industry;

1. Underlines that the environmental and health dangers posed by the munitions disposed of in the Baltic Sea after the Second World War is not only a regional, European issue, but a serious global problem with unpredictable short- and long-term transboundary effects;

2. Urges the international community to embrace a spirit of cooperation and genuine solidarity to step up its monitoring of dumped munitions in order to minimise the possible risks for the marine environment and activities; urges all sides party to classified information about the dumping activities and their exact locations to declassify this information and to allow the countries affected, the Commission and the European Parliament to access it as a matter of urgency;

3. Calls on the Commission and the Joint Programming Committee of Interreg Baltic Sea Region to secure adequate financing for research and actions required to resolve the dangers posed by the munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea; welcomes the dedicated efforts and constructive research undertaken by HELCOM and within the frameworks of the CHEMSEA, DAIMON and DAIMON 2 projects financed by the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme;

4. Calls on all sides involved to comply with international environmental law and provide additional financial contributions to the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme for 2021-
2027; welcomes the 2021-2027 transnational Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme, which will fund measures to reduce the pollution of the Baltic Sea;

5. Stresses the necessity for regular monitoring of the state of corrosion of the munitions and an up-to-date environmental risk assessment on the impacts of the contaminants released on human health, marine ecosystems and the region’s biodiversity;

6. Welcomes the efforts made at a national level, such as mapping the locations of the dumped munitions and monitoring and removing hazardous materials;

7. Emphasises the importance, in this connection, of interstate and interregional cooperation mechanisms, free access to public information, and the efficient exchange of scientific knowledge and research;

8. Calls on the Commission, for the purposes of its zero pollution ambition for a toxic-free environment, to establish an expert group with the Member States affected and other stakeholders and organisations, tasked with the following mandate: (i) studying and mapping the exact locations of contaminated areas; (ii) proposing suitable environmentally friendly and cost-effective solutions for monitoring and cleaning the pollution with the ultimate aim of removing or fully neutralising hazardous materials where extraction is impossible; (iii) developing reliable decision-making support tools; (iv) conducting an awareness-raising campaign to inform the groups affected (such as fishers, local residents, tourists and investors) of the potential health and economic risks; and (v) developing emergency response guidelines for environmental disasters;

9. Regrets the fact that none of the EUR 8.8 million allotted under the European Neighbourhood Instrument was used for the DAIMON or DAIMON 2 projects under the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme;

10. Calls on the Commission to engage all the relevant EU agencies and institutions, including the European Defence Agency, to utilise all the available resources and to make sure that the problem will be reflected in all the relevant EU policies and programming processes, including the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Maritime Security Strategy Action Plan;

11. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the issue of munitions dumped in European seas is included in the horizontal programmes in order to enable the submission of projects covering regions affected by the same problem (the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, North Sea and Baltic Sea) and facilitate the exchange of experience and best practices;

12. Asks the Commission to devote concerted efforts to tackling pollution in the Baltic Sea and to foster all types of regional, national and international cooperation to this end, including through its partnership with NATO;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States and other states concerned.
14.7. Questionnaire on sea-dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea to the BSPC members

Peter Stein
Member of the German Bundestag
BSPC-rapporteur on sea-dumped munitions

Dear colleagues,

As the BSPC Rapporteur for Sea-dumped Munitions, I would like to thank the Standing Committee of the BSPC for ensuring that the topic of “unexploded ordnance and sea-dumped munitions” (UXO) has been dealt with in-depth by the BSPC for years.

It is also a success of the BSPC’s activities that momentum on this issue has now increased throughout Europe. In concrete terms, this new momentum was also triggered by the unanimous resolutions of the 28th and 29th BSPC Annual Conferences and the BSPC Interim Report on Sea-dumped Munitions from 2020.

For the 30th Annual Conference, I will present my final report as rapporteur as planned. The report is intended to contain an overview of the concrete national and regional activities that have taken place since last summer in dealing with ammunition dumps and how current developments are being assessed.

It would be a great help if you could support the preparation of an overview of the current status of activities in the individual member countries of the BSPC by sending me a statement on the attached questions. I am particularly interested in activities at the parliamentary level and considerations from a parliamentary perspective.

If you could send me answers to the attached questions by the end of June, I would be very grateful.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Stein, MP
Questionnaire on sea-dumped munitions:

1. Do you have any recent remarks on the implementation of No. 15 in the 29th BSPC resolution?

2. Do you have any comments on the proposals listed in chapter 11, "Next steps", of the Interim Report on Sea-dumped Munitions? (link)

3. Which current or planned national/regional activities/initiatives from your country/region in the field of sea-dumped munitions in politics, science, economy and industry do you know?

4. Are you in contact with representatives from government, research or industry on that?

5. Do you know about cases/hazardous events with explosive ordinance in the territorial waters of your country since the 29th BSPC?

6. Do you have any comments on the measures mentioned in the attached decision of the European Parliament from 26 April 2021 from your point of view? (link)

7. How forceful should the role of the BSPC, the CBSS, HELCOM, the EU and other international institutions be in dealing with sea-dumped munitions in the future?

8. Do you have any concrete proposals for a multinational approach to dealing with sea-dumped munitions?

9. What are your views on a call for a voluntary, multinational donor fund to launch an "Ocean Munitions Clearance Initiative"?
14.8. Replies to the questionnaire

14.8.1. Poland

Gdynia, 22 June 2021

SENATOR
OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

Sławomir Rybicki

Mr Peter Stein
Member of the German Bundestag
BSPC-rapporteur on sea-dumped munitions

Dear Mr Stein,

With reference to your letter, I include below the replies to your questions.

1. Do you have any recent remarks on the implementation of No. 15 in the 29th BSPC resolution?

I agree with the priorities of the German Presidency of HELCOM.

2. Do you have any comments on the proposals listed in chapter 11, "Next steps", of the Interim Report on Sea-dumped Munitions? [link]

I also agree with the “Next Steps”. It seems that the essential issue is to align on data, research methodology and the place for information exchange. This is the key to a good planning. We should ensure that these bodies always have a wide range of experts. The good diagnosis will help prepare a good strategy, and will ensure a sustainable and solid financing. I would like to add that the process must include studies on animals and plants – protected species and species obtained for various purposes as well. Let me also add that standardized procedures for handling hazardous materials should also be recast in terms of the explosion impact on the ecosystem.

3. Which current or planned national/regional activities/initiatives from your country/region in the field of sea-dumped munitions in politics, science, economy and industry do you know?

I have been receiving information about activities concerning dumped ammunition, in the fields of politics, science, economy and industry.
In the field of science, this concerns for instance DAIMON2 project or the study of shipwrecks to detect dumped fuel. The government and the parliamentary majority plan to be active in this respect; I don’t know about any specific details, though.

4. *Are you in contact with representatives from government, research or industry on that?*

I have put an official question to the government concerning this issue to clarify what actions have been and will be taken by the government. As a member of the Senate Environment Committee I initiated the Committee’s meeting to discuss the issue (25.02.2020). On the recent government actions, I still wait for the minister’s reply on the results of works of the relevant inter-ministerial team established by the Prime Minister and on its plans for the future.

5. *Do you know about cases/hazardous events with explosive ordinance in the territorial waters of your country since the 29th BSPC?*

Shortly before the 29th BSPC, in June 2020, the mine laying near the entry to the Port of Gdynia was towed away far into the gulf where it was detonated (it weighed 987 kg.). In September 2020, two sea mines which had laid at the bottom of the Śmiała Wisła Canal in Gdańsk (weight of approx. 1000 kg) were towed away and detonated. In October 2020, in Świnoujście, near Karsibór ferry crossing, the British Tallboy bomb from World War II was discovered (total weight of almost 5,400 kg). The unsuccessful deflagration process turned into an unplanned detonation. Nobody was hurt.

6. *Do you have any comments on the measures mentioned in the attached decision of the European Parliament from 27 April 2021 from your point of view? (link)*

Generally, I agree with the contents of the resolution. It is important that hazard monitoring is next translated into legislation (e.g. into navigation maps or fishery maps) and into navigational warnings. It should also lead to the exclusion of relevant zones from exploitation.

7. *How forceful should the role of the BSPC, the CBSS, HELCOM, the EU and other international institutions be in dealing with sea-dumped munitions in the future?*

International cooperation is a necessity. The role should be defined in a way (experts should develop optimal solutions which will be accepted by politicians to ensure
agency) that will help us move forward effectively. Also we cannot forget about NATO in this project.

8. Do you have any concrete proposals for a multinational approach to dealing with sea-dumped munitions?

We cannot forget about regional authorities throughout the process – local governments need to be involved in the activities. It will be of prime importance to develop consensually the legal framework – for example, procedures that define the ownership of specific dumped ammunition, and that determine whether, and if so, when and how it would be possible to charge a given country with relevant costs, etc.

9. What are your views on a call for a voluntary, multinational donor fund to launch an "Ocean Munitions Clearance Initiative"?

This is a good idea provided that it will be effective. This is a great challenge and requires that stakeholders take sustained actions, hence the need for stable and multiannual financing. I believe that this should be financed from several sources – such diversification gives prospects of stability and strengthens the cooperation.

Sincerely Yours,

/- Sławomir Rybicki
Moscow, 28 June 2021

INFORMATION

on the activities of the Russian Federation in relation to the problem of chemical weapons submerged in the Baltic Sea

The Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation on the issue of chemical weapons sunk in the Baltic Sea during the Second World War (1941-1945), in its activities it is guided by the documents of the Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Region (hereinafter - HELCOM). As it follows from the adopted in 2013 HELCOM report the dumped chemical weapons do not cause significant harm to the environment of the Baltic Sea, since against the background of a large number of industrial, transport and agricultural pollutants, the chemical weapons impact into the current ecological state of the Baltic Sea is not considerable.

The Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of the Consequences of Natural Disasters carries out the prevention and liquidation of emergency situations at underwater potentially dangerous objects (hereinafter referred to as PDO) in the internal waters and territorial sea of the Russian Federation. It also maintains the register of PDO in the internal waters and territorial sea of the Russian Federation (except for underwater crossings of pipeline transport) (hereinafter referred to as the Register).

Currently, according to the data of the Register, there are 40 objects containing explosive objects in the Baltic Sea (hereinafter referred to as EO) (ships and submarines sunk during the World War II of 1941-1945).

The most dangerous object is a self–propelled dry cargo barge (hereinafter referred to as the barge) sunk at a depth of 17 meters on the outer roadstead of the port of Baltiysk in the Kaliningrad region. During the planned work on the barge, since 2010, more than 10 thousand tons of EO were raised to the surface and destroyed. In 2021, the Ministry of Emergency Situations of Russia plans to continue work on the barge and survey 7 objects located in the Baltic Sea in the area of responsibility of the Kaliningrad maritime rescue and coordination center.
### 14.8.3. Sweden

**Sea-dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea**

**Questionnaire in preparation of the BSPC-rapporteur’s report:**

1. **Do you have any recent remarks on the implementation of No. 15 in the 29th BSPC resolution?**

   The Swedish delegation has received a response from the Swedish Government in respect to recommendation number 15 in the 29th BSPC resolution, where the Swedish government communicates its support to the German HELCOM chairmanship and their efforts to monitor and to treat the problem of dumped munitions, wrecks and ghost nets. The Swedish government has also worked on national programmes where several wrecks have been identified for which a decontamination programme has been initiated. Other examples of actions taken is an ambitious programme for decontamination of contaminated soil, mostly related to historic industrial activities, that also include harbour and marine areas and financial support to the fishing industry in their work to retrieve lost fishing gear. Regarding sea mines from WW1 and WW2, Swedish naval units continue to support the Baltic states in underwater mine clearance. This support is conducted both for environmental reasons and to secure the sea lines of communications in the Baltic Sea. The delegation supports the government’s efforts in this field and has no other further comments at this point.

2. **Do you have any comments on the proposals listed in chapter 11, ”Next steps”, of the Interim Report on Sea-dumped Munitions? (link)**

   The Swedish delegation to the BSPC supports a safe, efficient and environmentally friendly destruction of the dumped munitions as well as the proposal of seeing the Baltic Sea Region as a pilot region.

3. **Which current or planned national/regional activities/initiatives from your country/region in the field of sea-dumped munitions in politics, science, economy and industry do you know?**

   Chalmers University of Technology is a participant in the research project DAIMON II. The project aims to increase the knowledge base on how to evaluate the risks and benefits of various management options and is focused on how to strengthen expert support in how to assess and manage the risk of dumped ammunition.

   The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management is involved in a project close to the Island Mäseskär in Skagerrak. In 1992, low concentrations of sulphur mustard were detected in the sediments in the area, and in 2016 and 2017, low concentrations of the chemical warfare agent (CWA) Clark I was found in Norwegian lobster, flatfish and shrimps. The ongoing project aims to investigate which wrecks contain chemical warfare agents, the extent of the contamination and their potential impact on the environment and if they are a source of the spread of chemical munition substances. Other aspects are if and how to limit the maritime activities, like fishing, in the area to prevent the spread of the hazardous substances.

4. **Are you in contact with representatives from government, research or industry on that?**

   The Swedish Delegation has had one meeting with experts from the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and from the Swedish Armed Forces to discuss the issue with dumped ammunition, ongoing projects and priorities and research in the area.
5. Do you know about cases/hazardous events with explosive ordinance in the territorial waters of your country since the 29th BSPC?

One recent case is from June 17 this year, a drifting sea mine was observed outside the Coast of Härnösand. The mine was found by a sailor and were destructed at the site. Another reported case was a grenade found by people cleaning the beach in Fjällbacka on the West Coast in Sweden last year. The Police detonated the grenade. They concluded that it was an American hazardous phosphor grenade.

6. Do you have any comments on the measures mentioned in the attached decision of the European Parliament from 27 April 2021 from your point of view? (link)

No.

7. How forceful should the role of the BSPC, the CBSS, HELCOM, the EU and other international institutions be in dealing with sea-dumped munitions in the future?

The Swedish delegations support the effort taken by the BSPC rapporteur. Chemical and conventional ammunition dumped in the Baltic Sea is a serious problem, and a problem that demands cross-border cooperation to be handled. The Delegation therefore supports cooperation and coordination in the area.

8. Do you have any concrete proposals for a multinational approach to dealing with sea-dumped munitions?

No.

9. What are your views on a call for a voluntary, multinational donor fund to launch an "Ocean Munitions Clearance Initiative"?

No specific opinion.
Motion

of the CDU/CSU and SPD parliamentary groups

Responsible handling of munitions in the North and Baltic Seas – using technologies from the maritime industry

The Bundestag is requested to adopt the following motion:

I. The Bundestag notes:

According to current estimates, there are still at least 1.63 million tonnes of munitions, including conventional ordnance and at least 300,000 tonnes of chemical agents, in the German waters of the North and Baltic Seas. In the Baltic, the estimated amounts are at least 300,000 tonnes of conventional ordnance and at least 50,000 tonnes of chemical agents. Over and above this, 170,000 tonnes of chemical ammunition were sunk in the North Sea (Skagerrak, Norwegian Sea, German Bight), including around 90 tonnes in the German waters off Heligoland. Some 50,000 tonnes of chemical ammunition were sunk in the Baltic Sea (Bornholm Basin, Gotland Basin, Little Belt), including some 5,000 tonnes in German waters. Not least as a result of advancing corrosion, these dangerous remnants of war represent an increasing and considerable hazard to the marine ecosystem and, consequently, to people. They moreover pose a risk to the maritime industry – to shipping, fisheries and offshore infrastructure – as well as to tourism in coastal areas.

Our knowledge of the presence of legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas, and of the significant environmental and economic damage and dangers resulting from them, is not new. In various countries’ historical archives, the locations where munitions were sunk from the end of the 19th century onwards, and what type they were in each case, are in part very well documented. Archives of military history and naval archives are an important source. Naturally, however, not everything has been fully and correctly documented throughout the course of history, particularly since the legacy munitions were not all deliberately dumped, many of them being unexploded ordnance, sea mines or the remains of ammunition in wrecked vessels, whose precise cargoes are in some cases classified. Through the Baltic Ordnance Safety Board, the NATO Allies as well as Sweden and Finland regularly discuss recent finds and developments. However, additional measures to detect and document the ordnance are essential, especially in the area of amalgamating national data.
Over the past several decades, the national players in the countries on the North Sea and Baltic coasts have gained a lot of experience in dealing with legacy munitions, thereby developing high levels of expertise. This applies not only to a large number of researchers, institutes and nationally as well as internationally funded projects but also to numerous private enterprises offering specialist solutions. There is also more of a network of ties among the various players. Of particular note is not only the outstanding expertise of Germany’s scientific community but also the research and development conducted by Germany’s maritime industry, which are world-leading when it comes to legacy munitions in the sea. They include various German and multinational research programmes with German involvement examining the dangers and conducting risk assessments, securing evidence of the detrimental effects on humans and the environment in relation to trade and business, and issuing recommendations for action.

The findings of the EU-funded Interreg Baltic Sea Region research project Decision Aid for Marine Munitions (DAIMON) were presented in February 2019. The participating researchers came from Poland, Germany, Sweden, Finland and Norway. The extension project DAIMON 2 is currently under way (2019–2021). Another prominent multinational research project is that of the HELCOM Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED), which is expected to produce its final report soon.

Likewise with German involvement from the scientific and business communities, BASTA, a project financed by the European Commission from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), is placing a stronger focus on the methods available to detect munitions and the chemicals that leach from them.

Under German leadership, the initial national findings were incorporated into the relevant work of HELCOM back in 1993. In 1995, an ad hoc working group set up to address the topic submitted the CHEMU report. The HELCOM CHEMU report was updated until 2013, then superseded by HELCOM MUNI. In the same year, the HELCOM Expert Group SUBMERGED was deployed as part of the RESPONSE Working Group, which has been continuing the work ever since. These efforts were flanked by research conducted by or with the involvement of HELCOM, such as CHEMSEA, and the publication of guidelines on the risks and how fishermen should deal with them.

Another pivotal contribution to what we currently know was the UDEMM research project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, which was brought to a successful conclusion in August 2019. The RoBEMM project, funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy to develop and test a robotic underwater salvage and disposal process including technology for the disassembly of ammunition in the sea, especially in coastal and shallow waters, is also particularly worthy of note.

On 1 July 2020, Germany assumed the Chairmanship of HELCOM for two years, with the Länder Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania co-chairing for one year each. The Federal Government has made legacy munitions one of its priorities. The main aims here are to improve the available data and the basis on which assessments are made, including by stocktaking, monitoring and modelling, and estimate the toxic effects of typical munitions compounds on the marine environment of the Baltic Sea as well as accumulation via the food chain and possible consequences for humans. The use of bioindicators is also being investigated.

Further options for action are to be drawn up on that basis in combination with socio-economic analysis. Following joint observation, priority setting and risk assessment with subsequent identification of hotspots, those options will include measures, pilot projects at first, for salvaging and destroying legacy munitions.
In tandem with this, information is to be made available to the public, and interdisciplinary as well as regional dialogue on procedure and approaches is to be held among the HELCOM Contracting Parties with regard to best monitoring practice. An additional risk assessment and recommendations for further measures are also to be submitted. For Germany, the foundations for addressing the key topic of legacy munitions are the report Munitions in German Marine Waters – Stocktaking and Recommendations first published in 2011, and its annual updates, which are produced by the expert group on munitions in the sea of BLANO, the federal-Länder working group for the North and Baltic Seas.

The research findings, like those produced by DAIMON and in conjunction with the initiative, instigated by Germany, to seek a resolution at the 28th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC), unleashed a fresh and welcome impetus to tackle the problem of legacy munitions with renewed vigour. In Germany alone, there were around fifty reports on the subject in regional and supra-regional print and online media between the beginning of 2019 and the middle of 2020. Public interest reached a temporary peak in the late summer of 2019, when 39 British sea mines on the seabed within the Fehmarn Belt marine protected area had been detonated prior to a NATO exercise. After the detonations, autopsies were carried out on 24 porpoises that had been found dead and environmental concerns, particularly regarding the effects on porpoises and the allocation of responsibilities, became a matter of public discourse.

It remains to be noted that the field has been a subject of international research for several decades, which has resulted in numerous important findings particularly with regard to the deleterious effects of toxic munitions on the marine ecosystem. Detection and salvage technologies have also improved greatly in recent years, especially with the use of digital processes. Germany is a world leader in this area. These impressive advances are generally not known outside specialist circles. Isolated incidents or accidents, with beach-goers on the Baltic coast mistaking white phosphorus for amber and suffering severe injuries, shine a spotlight onto the dangers of legacy munitions. In such incidents as mentioned, which reach a wider audience, it becomes clear that the public do have an awareness of the existing risks and fundamentally want the situation to be resolved.

It is safe to assume that the public will become increasingly conscious of the dangers if toxic substances that could significantly affect our fisheries are more frequently found in fish and shellfish stocks. Protected areas and shipping routes are under threat, and the expansion of offshore wind farms and pipelines, so vital to the pursuit of climate goals, is being severely hampered.

A strategy to clear the North and Baltic Seas is needed without delay. The endeavour to clarify financial and organisational responsibilities must not be scuppered by a debate about who bears historical responsibility for placing legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas. That endeavour, shared by the affected coastal states and other players on and in the North and Baltic Seas, is nonetheless a complicated task which will take some time to complete. A swift outcome is not to be expected. The avoidance of risks to people must therefore remain the top priority. When munitions have been discovered and there is a danger, the response often required is swift, environmentally sound and in every way sustainable action.

However, it is not just emergency action for public safety that requires a sound basis. Known locations where munitions have been found, particularly in the larger dumping grounds, need an organised approach to prevent potential environmental damage in the long term. Following triage of the environmental ramifications of such hotspots, the response needs to be coordinated not only at the national but also at the regional level, without foregrounding national interests. A voluntary donor conference of coastal states could serve to break the impasse and facilitate the first joint steps towards salvaging legacy munitions.
Until that stage is reached, Germany should undertake national measures and demonstrate to its international partners that munitions in the sea can be salvaged and rendered harmless in an environmentally friendly and affordable manner. For one thing, the new technological possibilities can contribute to the protection of the marine environment. In previous underwater detonations, the toxic substances that had been enclosed within the corroding munitions were abruptly dispersed into the marine environment and marine lifeforms were injured or even killed by the explosions. The new technological options make it possible to safely remove legacy munitions from the sea floor and, using a platform, disassemble them out of the water. For another thing, the current technological possibilities can and will considerably cut the costs of salvaging and disassembling legacy munitions. Therefore, the private sector in the field of marine technology has to be commercially involved in the process via regular procurement procedures for the proposed necessary measures. This will support the steady continuation of technological development and corresponding value creation in Germany.

The North and Baltic Sea area can thus become a pilot region for the sustainable, scientific, technological, market-based and value-creating resolution of the legacy problem of munitions and other hazardous substances dumped or lost at sea around the world.

II. The Bundestag welcomes

1. the decision taken at the 96th Conference of Environmental Ministers on 23 April 2021 to continue and update the stocktaking of munitions pollution in German marine waters;
2. the activities of BLANO, the federal-Länder working group for the North and Baltic Seas, and its expert group on munitions in the sea;
3. the outcomes of the UDEMM research project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the RoBEMM project funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy;
4. Germany’s participation in the international research project DAIMON;
5. the building of ties between various players in the public sector as well as in science, business and industry via platforms like the Munitect network for the development of economical underwater munitions detection systems and BASTA, the research project to boost applied munitions detection by means of smart data integration and AI workflows;
6. the deployment of a working group on 11 March 2020, following interministerial coordination among the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the Federal Ministry of Defence and the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, with the involvement of all affected federal and Land authorities, to swiftly conclude guidelines, under the leadership of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, on the legal and technical requirements of nature conservation that apply to the clearing of legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas;
7. the assumption by the Federal Government of the HELCOM Chairmanship on 1 July 2020 for a period of two years with the co-chairmanship for one year each of the Schleswig-Holstein and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Land Governments – and their prioritisation of legacy munitions;
8. the initiatives of the Bundestag delegation to the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) in 2019 and 2020 and the BSPC Interim Report on Sea-dumped Munitions of August 2020;
9. the fact that the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs raised the subject of legacy munitions at the May 2020 Ministerial Meeting of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) and underscored the importance of close cooperation among all the coastal states;
10. Germany’s involvement in the JPI Oceans knowledge hub on munitions in the sea.

III. The Bundestag calls on the Federal Government, within the parameters of the relevant funding remit and the available budget, at the national level,
1. to work throughout the Federal Republic of Germany to generate lasting awareness of the problem in order to draw attention to the urgent need to resolve it, importantly taking a realistic approach grounded in scientific data and analysis;
2. to bring about federal-Länder agreement on first collating a detailed situation report;
3. to align its actions with the requests of the Conference of Environment Ministers of 14 November 2019 (agenda item 27) and investigate to what extent national remits and financial resources can be pooled in order to make use of synergies;
4. to push for the swift conclusion of the work of the working group deployed, following interministerial coordination among the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, the Federal Ministry of Defence and the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure with the involvement of all affected federal and Land authorities, to draw up guidelines, under the leadership of the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, on the legal and technical requirements of nature conservation that apply to the clearing of legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas;
5. to fund the development and implementation of technological solutions, such as largely automated, cost-efficient underwater area clearance, and the construction of a waterborne unit, with which conventional munitions can be salvaged without risk to humans or ecosystems and rendered harmless while still at sea – which will mean examining suitable models for their operation in a manner open to different solutions and ultimately implementing the model selected with due regard for the economic feasibility study;
6. in addition to funding the waterborne units, to expand the capabilities of the existing land-based disposal facilities and, if necessary, adapt the Ordinance on the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Sea (Gefahrgutverordnung See) for the possible movement of legacy munitions disposed of on land;
7. on the basis of the latest research findings and recommendations for action, to develop a procurement procedure for the detection and salvaging of legacy munitions in national waters;
8. to establish that, because of the blast impact unleashed by underwater detonations of munitions as well as the subsequent marked increase in the distribution of toxic substances due to exposed explosives, underwater detonations are to be avoided wherever possible and only to be used as a last resort, i.e. when the endangerment of humans cannot otherwise be ruled out;

9. in view of the large quantity of legacy munitions, to examine the possibility of differentiating between different priority levels and accordingly start with the most dangerous or most badly eroded legacy munitions;

10. to report to the German Bundestag at regular intervals on developments regarding levels of danger and progress on technological and environmental development, detection and salvaging as well as national and international cooperation;

11. to support research as well as the growth of national and international ties, including collaboration between science and industry on the subject of legacy munitions in the sea;

12. to enable Germany’s maritime industry to explore new lines of business by means of suitable procurement procedures and support structures and to uphold its leading position in the technological sphere by means of research and development, thereby safeguarding and/or creating jobs;

at the international level,

13. to campaign for lasting awareness of how to deal with legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas safely in all the countries on their coasts;

14. to champion alternatives to underwater detonation of munitions in the relevant international bodies;

15. in collaboration with the NATO Allies and the NATO Science and Technology Organization to develop joint procedures in such a direction that it becomes reasonable no longer to spontaneously detonate large munitions discovered in the sea;

16. to campaign for all current research, findings and outcomes relating to legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas to be collated multinationaly and for databases to be standardised;

17. to advocate for the establishment and management of comprehensive and joined-up monitoring of the affected marine areas and objects in the North and Baltic Seas, the necessary aim being the capability to produce well-founded risk assessments that are recognised by all involved, with the extensive spectrum of technologies to be used supplemented by bioindicators and toxicological ceilings;

18. to campaign for the establishment of a joint multinational group of experts for science and technology/processes which will, drawing on constant evaluation, issue regular recommendations for dealing with legacy munitions strategically – on the basis of which the most hazardous objects and the most severely endangered areas in the North and Baltic Seas can be identified as priorities and, step by step, rendered harmless in an environmentally and ecologically sound manner using the proposed measures;

19. as a preliminary to the measures and with the involvement of the EU, to advocate for the creation of a permanent fund fed by coastal states on a voluntary basis, which would finance the group of experts, the monitoring and the procurement procedure for the detection and ecologically responsible salvaging of legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas and would follow the example of international donor funds like the development funds under the aegis of the United Nations which have proven to work well – with a stable framework for legacy munitions provided by the EU institutions or preferably by the HELCOM structures and the measures proposed by the group of experts put out to tender internationally and financed flexibly from that donor fund;
20. by funding technological and scientific development, to support the capabilities of Germany’s maritime businesses and, as an international contribution, to put those achievements out onto the world stage – including via knowledge transfer – as part of Germany’s export industry.

Berlin, 4 May 2021

Ralph Brinkhaus, Alexander Dobrindt and the CDU/CSU parliamentary group
Dr Rolf Mützenich and the SPD parliamentary group

Explanatory memorandum

The risks posed by legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas can be significantly reduced by means of suitable measures. While it is fundamentally desirable for as many munitions as possible to be salvaged from the sea and rendered harmless as quickly as may be, it is imperative, in view of the large quantities of hazardous substances and the expected costs, to take an approach grounded in sensible prioritisation based on scientific methods. Scientific risk assessments can serve to identify those objects which represent the greatest potential danger, and their removal can already significantly diminish the threat to humans and the environment. Salvaging legacy munitions is of relevance to security, as the possibility cannot be ruled out that they could fall into the hands of extremists.

The historical responsibility is multifaceted and does not lie with Germany alone. Since 1870, various states and belligerents have dumped munitions in the North and Baltic Seas, deliberately mined marine areas and shipping routes, and dropped large amounts of unexploded ordnance. Added to this is the ammunition that remained on board vessels when they were wrecked. Many objects have been detected and catalogued in recent times, while others are well documented in historical archives. Matters become most difficult in places where possible dumping grounds are kept secret because of a lack of transparency in international cooperation.

Amid these complexities, the objective must be, on the basis of the precautionary principle and without protracted attempts to attribute historical responsibility among the coastal states, to take the first steps to safely salvage and render harmless legacy munitions in the North and Baltic Seas. Germany should assume a leading role on this. Alongside the positive effects of easing environmental pollution and preventing possible health hazards, this approach will also address and include the maritime industry and disposal specialists. This will result not only in steadily rising efficiency and falling prices but also in the creation of greater capabilities and jobs in the field.