



## **30<sup>TH</sup> BSPC: THIRD SESSION**

Climate change and biodiversity

Speaker: **Ms Svenja Schulze**, *Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany (notes for the video message)*

Chair,  
Commissioner,  
Members of the Baltic Parliamentary Conference,  
Colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Climate change and biodiversity loss threaten the natural foundations of our lives. Both challenges are tightly linked, onshore and at sea.

That is why I am pleased by your intense focus on the interactions between climate change and biodiversity. It is also why Germany has made this link a focus of our HELCOM Presidency.

The seas play a key role in combating climate change. They absorb heat and CO<sub>2</sub>. However, the sea and its wildlife pay a price. Acidification occurs that affects more than just mussels and snails. The extra heat makes numerous species move northwards. It changes breeding patterns and food chains.

*[Blue Carbon]*

Marine ecosystems are heavily affected by climate change. However, at the same time, some of them make a very effective contribution to climate action. Blue carbon ecosystems, for example seagrass beds and salt marshes. They store carbon in soil over long periods. My ministry is currently supporting research on the worldwide potential of blue carbon. And also on the factors that benefit or impair these valuable ecosystems.

In November, the German Environment Ministry will host a HELCOM workshop on the topic with policy-makers and scientists. The goals are to:

- develop a common understanding of blue carbon,
- clarify blue carbon's potential in the Baltic Sea,
- and establish the role it can and should play in future in marine policy.

However, we should not allow the hope we place in nature-based solutions like blue carbon to cloud our thinking. Climate change can only be stopped if we sharply reduce

greenhouse gas emissions, both globally and here at the Baltic Sea. The latest IPCC report illustrates how important this is.

*[Meeresschutzgebiete]*

Improving marine protected areas is another focus of the German HELCOM Presidency. My goal here is to make the existing network of protected areas larger and more coherent. I also want to ensure that all of these areas are managed effectively. They should not just be protected on paper. They need targeted measures.

This is why I am in favour of no-take zones in the German marine protected areas. These zones are meant to help the recovery of fish stocks. This is a transboundary endeavour that calls for cooperation among all of the Baltic Sea countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Marine ecosystems are under enormous pressure. The aim of the German HELCOM Presidency is to help reduce this pressure.

I am pleased about the progress that we have made so far under our HELCOM Presidency. The next HELCOM ministerial meeting will be held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October in Lübeck. My goal for the meeting is to build on this progress and adopt an ambitious HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan. It will not succeed without cross-party *political* support from the Baltic Sea area. My thanks to you for your constructive attention to the work of HELCOM. I am counting on your support in future.

Thank you very much.