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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Our Baltic Conference (Palanga, Lithuania, 29 September 2023)
- Information from the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 16 October 2023.

**Our Baltic Conference
(Palanga, Lithuania, 29 September 2023)**

- Information from the Commission -

The Baltic Sea is severely affected by the global threats like biodiversity loss and climate change, and by specific local pressures such as eutrophication, overfishing, elevated levels of contaminants such as pharmaceuticals, and litter, in particular plastic waste. Concerned by the poor state of the Baltic Sea and its marine environment, Commissioner Sinkevičius organised the first edition of the Our Baltic Conference in 2020 in order to discuss actions to redress the situation.

As an outcome of this conference, a Ministerial Declaration¹ was adopted, signed by Ministries of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment of the Baltic Sea EU Member States. In this declaration they committed to enhanced efforts to bring the Baltic to a good environmental status. As shown in the Progress Report² published in September 2023, the implementation of the Our Baltic Declaration has advanced well.

As a follow-up to the 2020 conference, Commissioner Sinkevičius organised the second edition of the Our Baltic Conference on 29 September 2023 in Palanga. The purpose of the event was to:

- a) discuss the progress made in the implementation of the Our Baltic Ministerial Declaration;
- b) exchange on sustainable blue economy opportunities and challenges; and
- c) announce joint commitments regarding unexploded ordnances (UXO) in the Baltic Sea.

¹ [Our Baltic Ministerial Declaration DRAFT v0 \(europa.eu\)](#)

² [Our Baltic declaration - Publications Office of the EU \(europa.eu\)](#)

The conference gathered ministers and high-level officials in charge of fisheries, agriculture, and environment from 8 EU Baltic countries: Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Sweden.

This second edition of the Our Baltic Conference marked yet another step forward in addressing the environmental challenges faced by the Baltic Sea. The Our Baltic initiative has clearly contributed to improving collaboration across silos, amongst agriculture, environment and fisheries domains. In addition to its role for fostering the debate at EU level, in particular in the context of the European Green Deal, it has played an important role also at regional and national levels, by enhancing cooperation between the countries and different ministries within the countries.

As a novel feature, the event also marked the adoption of a joint statement³ addressing the issue of dumped hazardous munitions that lie in the Baltic Sea. The European Commission is supporting these efforts through an open call for proposals of about 2 million euros launched on 29 September 2023, which aims to identify key geographical areas and to conduct appropriate risk assessments.

³ [Our Baltic Conference 2023 commitments \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)