

Wadden Sea Board

**WSB 20
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Agenda Item: 7.1

Subject: Statement of the Wadden Sea Team to the Wadden Sea Board on the preparation of the 2018 Trilateral Governmental Conference on the protection of the Wadden Sea

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Submitted by: Wadden Sea Team

Proposal: The meeting is requested to take note of document

Statement of the Wadden Sea Team to the Wadden Sea Board on the preparation of the 2018 Trilateral Governmental Conference on the protection of the Wadden Sea

The year 2018 marks the 40th anniversary of the trilateral cooperation on the protection of the Wadden Sea. This is proof that the three countries take their responsibility for the protection of this unique area seriously – indeed, almost the entire Wadden Sea in all three countries is protected. This long-standing cooperation has not been in vain. The whole Wadden Sea has been recognized as a true natural world heritage, which is the highest award achievable.

Actually, this conference is the first in which this status can be celebrated by all three partners together.

But this does not mean the work is done. While we, Nature NGO's from the three countries, commend the governments and the society as a whole for the work that has been done already, we feel that the momentum must be kept. Much time and effort have been spent in getting the Wadden Sea recognized as a world heritage site. Now we need to make sure that the status is maintained and improved where necessary.

We would like to point out four areas where not only much still needs to be done but where also the right time for decisions would be at the Trilateral Governmental Conference in 2018:

1. The whole concept of all parts of the Wadden Sea together being ONE Wadden Sea, one world heritage site, needs to be further strengthened. We must ensure that the whole is much more than the sum of its constituent parts. To those who visit it as much as to those who live and work there. A sense of common ownership of and pride for the Wadden Sea as a whole needs to be further developed. This should take advantage of the new partnership center as part of a functioning network in which all regions cooperate equally effective. Among the issues to be explored should also be the inclusion of appropriate components of the large estuaries in the site, as well as inclusion of those exclaves where the obstacles to become part of the site had been lifted. Also "beauty" should be added as a 4th criterion for the Wadden Sea being inscribed in the World Heritage list.
2. While much is still unknown about the status of the unseen underwater world of the Wadden Sea, there is enough known to require some immediate action. Fish stocks have undergone changes, some species even have gone, and the composition of age-groups seems to be changing. While the precise extent and nature of these changes are often not yet fully understood, it is clear that among the relevant impacts which can be influenced with measures in the Wadden Sea region are fisheries and the obstacles in the swimways between the North Sea, the Wadden Sea and the freshwater ecosystems. Our 'Call for Action' of 2014 has not gone unheeded, but more work is necessary, which must include measures on the fishery side and the further development of the swimway initiative towards the implementation of actions.
3. There is a growing concern about both a proper conservation along the flyways of our migrating coastal waterbirds and whether the status of such birds breeding in the Wadden Sea would be still favourable. Much has been done for the protection of birds in the Wadden Sea, which is to be acknowledged. However, there are negative trends for many migratory species which use the Wadden Sea as a staging site. There is also a serious decrease in breeding success for many species that breed in the Wadden Sea, which is often caused by predation induced by human influences. As the coastal birds are an asset of enormous importance for the Wadden Sea, appropriate measures need to be continued and increased. This must include first of all support for conservation along the flyway both in Africa and the Arctic in line with the flyway strategy. It must also include the protection of breeding sites with a

naturally low influence of land based predators and disturbances, in line with the breeding bird action plan while also developing it further.

4. The impact of climate change should be of even more importance in the future work in the region. Concerning climate policies and the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Wadden Sea Region is clearly in a position to contribute even more than it does already. The implementation of renewable energies in the surroundings of the Wadden Sea in a way which complies with nature protection and the interest of the people living there is of great importance. At the same time the “old energies” need to be phased out on all levels to achieve the goal of CO2 neutrality for the region by 2030, as decided by the Trilateral Cooperation in 2010. In addition, climate adaptation needs to be prepared in line with the strategy which has been agreed upon by the Trilateral Cooperation in 2014. For this purpose we strongly suggest for the years to come to learn from positive examples of well-developed regional strategies and from experiences gained with local pilot projects in the entire region.

We urge the three governments to take clear decisions on the issues mentioned above at the 2018 Conference, and agree on concrete measures and their implementation. The Nature NGO's represented in the Wadden Sea Team are prepared to continue their involvement in and support of the trilateral cooperation and we urgently request the governments to join us in our efforts to create a world heritage site that is truly ecologically healthy and can be enjoyed by all.