

**14th Trilateral Governmental Conference
on the Protection of the Wadden Sea
“Together for ONE Wadden Sea World Heritage”**

Wilhelmshaven, 28 November - 1 December 2022



Trilateral Governmental Council Meeting

29 November 2022

**JOINT STATEMENT BY DENMARK, GERMANY,
AND THE NETHERLANDS**

As an important part of the Trilateral Governmental Conference in Wilhelmshaven, convened under the slogan “Together for ONE Wadden Sea World Heritage”, on 29 November 2022, German Minister for the Environment Steffi Lemke hosted the Trilateral Governmental Council Meeting; the Ministers of Environment from Lower Saxony, Christian Meyer, and Schleswig-Holstein, Tobias Goldschmidt, and Senator Jens Kerstan from Hamburg also participated. From the Netherlands, Minister for Nature and Nitrogen Policy Christianne van der Wal participated. Denmark participated via Head of Department, Ministry for the Environment, Ms Charlotte Brøndum.

The Trilateral Governmental Council Meeting aimed to agree on the Wilhelmshaven Declaration with a series of political agreements and activities to be taken up in the next four years by the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation under Danish Presidency, including “The SIMP Integrated Management Plan for ONE Wadden Sea World Heritage” as a tool for joint management. The Danish representative informed the ministers that, due to the current parliamentary situation, Denmark is not able to sign the Wilhelmshaven Declaration. The Danish representative assured the Trilateral Governmental Council that Denmark remains firmly committed to the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation. It was therefore decided that the signing of the “Wilhelmshaven Declaration” is to be done at the earliest possible date after a new government is in place in Denmark.

The delegations thanked the German Presidency for chairing the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation in the foregoing period, with special thanks to the chair of the Wadden Sea Board, Prof Karin Lochte and welcomed the Danish Presidency in taking over this role and agreed to install the new Danish Chair of the Wadden Sea Board, Ms Anne-Marie Rasmussen.

The German Minister for the Environment, the Dutch Minister for Nature and Nitrogen Policy, the Ministers for the Environment from Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony, and the Senator of Hamburg afterwards continued discussions and:

- Expressed their concern about the increasing pressure on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site from the global triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, as well as from increasing human activities.
- Reiterated their strong commitment to address these challenges together in order to strengthen the resilience of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site towards climate change integrating natural, social, and cultural aspects while ensuring the safety of inhabitants and visitors, to prevent negative impacts of human activities on the OUV, and to restore ecosystems where necessary and possible. They underlined that the Wadden Sea plays an important role in the global network of natural World Heritage Sites.

- Also stressed the need to act jointly to safeguard the function as a vital stopover for migratory birds.
- Acknowledged that the adoption and implementation of the “The SIMP Integrated Management Plan for ONE Wadden Sea World Heritage will play an important role in protecting the OUV for the upcoming years. The draft version of the plan was developed in a broad consultative process together with site managers and stakeholders in the regions and had been adopted by the Wadden Sea Board.

An exchange of thoughts was held on the main issues in the current draft “Wilhelmshaven Declaration”. The German Minister for the Environment, the Dutch Minister for Nature and Nitrogen Policy, the ministers for the Environment from Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony, and the Senator of Hamburg stated their unity in their willingness to continue and increase the level of ambition in protecting the UNESCO Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. They agreed on a series of important matters where work should be started immediately, including:

- Jointly adopt and implement “The SIMP Integrated Management Plan for ONE Wadden Sea World Heritage” to further improve coordinated management across the whole World Heritage Site tackling the challenges deriving from climate change, biodiversity loss, and increased human activities. Strengthen cooperation with strategic partners from the Wadden Sea region to address these in a joint and cooperative way, e.g., by intensifying the exchange of site managers and stakeholders from the regions.
- Work together on solutions towards a climate resilient Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.
- Pre-announcing a jointly coordinated research call in the first quarter of 2023. A budget of at least 13 million Euro will be made available to develop more knowledge on the (cumulative) ecological effects of climate change and human activities in the Wadden Sea;
- Work together to address the challenges of a sustainable and most nature friendly energy transition such as offshore grid connections and pipelines with regard to impacts on the OUV, as well as planning processes and stakeholder participation. As a first step, by exploring, in collaboration with the shipping authorities, the double usage of fairways for both shipping as well as for offshore wind energy cables and hydrogen pipelines to minimise impacts on the World Heritage Site;
- Perform, with the responsible shipping authorities and relevant stakeholders, an evaluation and review of existing safety measures to the Particular Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA) Wadden Sea.

The German Minister for the Environment, the Dutch Minister for Nature and Nitrogen Policy, the ministers for the Environment from Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony, and the Senator of Hamburg are looking forward to signing the Wilhelmshaven Declaration and invite Denmark to adopt the SIMP after a new Danish government has been appointed.