BSPC

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

Report on the Exercise of the Observer Status of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) at the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission – HELCOM)

2020

Report
Eutrophication of the Baltic Sea

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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.

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List of Abbreviations

AIS	Automatic Identification System
BALTFISH	Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum
BEAT	HELCOM Biodiversity Assessment Tool
BFR	Brominated Flame Retardants
BMVI	German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure
BSAP	Baltic Sea Action Plan
BSAP UP WS-BIO	BSAP UP Workshop on Biodiversity
BSAP UP WS-EUTRO	BSAP UP Workshop on Eutrophication
BSAP UP WS-HZ	BSAP UP Workshop on Hazardous Substances
BSAP UP WS-SEA	BSAP UP Workshop on Maritime Activities
BSH	the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany
BSPC	Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States
CHASE	HELCOM Hazardous Substances Assessment Tool
CSPD/BSR	Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region
DG BSAP	Drafting Group for the Updated BSAP
EN CLIME	Expert Network on Climate Change
ESA	Economic and Social Aspects
EU	European Union
EUSBSR	EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
GEAR	Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach

GES	Good Environmental/Ecological Status
HEAT	HELCOM Eutrophication Assessment Tool
HELCOM	Helsinki Commission
HOD	Heads of Delegations
HOLAS	Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea
IWGAS	Informal Working Group on Aerial Surveillance
MPA	Marine Protected Areas
MSFD	Marine Strategy Framework Directive
MSP	Maritime Spatial Planning
OSPAR	Oslo Paris Commission
PBC	Dioxins and Polychlorinated Biphenyls
PFOA	Perfluorooctanoic Acid
PFOS	Perfluoroctane Sulfonate
PIA	Development and Assessment Institute in Waste Water Technology
PRF	Port Reception Facilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SOM	Sufficiency of Measures
STW	SeaTrackWeb
UBA	German Environment Agency
UN	United Nations
VASAB	Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea

I. Introduction

Ms Beate Schlupp

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission – HELCOM) is an intergovernmental organisation constituted on the basis of the 1974 Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (Helsinki Convention) and currently counting ten Contracting Parties, namely Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Sweden. In the four decades following its founding, the Commission has established itself as a platform for environmental policy-making at the regional level, a supervisory body dedicated to the implementation of environmental standards throughout the Baltic Sea area, an environmental focal point providing information and assessment of the state and trends in the Baltic Sea marine environment, and a coordinating body for multilateral response in case of major maritime incidents.

HELCOM is guided by a common vision of a healthy Baltic Sea environment with diverse biological components, good ecological status, and sustainable economic and social activities. The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) shares HELCOM's vision and has applied for and obtained observer status back in 2002, leading to almost two decades of close and successful cooperation. In November 2019, the BSPC Standing Committee has appointed me as BSPC Observer at HELCOM after the untimely passing of Ms Sylvia Bretschneider, who had continuously held the mandate since its establishment in 2002. The State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is honoured and grateful for the opportunity to carry on with the engaged and passionate work of Sylvia Bretschneider towards the goals and objectives common for both BSPC and HELCOM.

To begin with, I would like to share a brief personal impression. Being new to the role of HELCOM Observer, I first had to come to terms with the restrictions imposed by the mandate. This role is, by nature, limited to acting as BSPC's eyes and ears at the meeting of the executive – but not as the voice of the constituents, which we are accustomed to as parliamentarians.

The present report provides an overview of the most important decisions and developments from August 2019 to September 2020 with a specific focus on the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) update process and primarily concentrates on the decisions of the 41st HELCOM Meeting as well as the 57th and 58th Heads of Delegations Meetings. The structure of the current report slightly differs from the previous ones in that it focuses on central ongoing processes, such as the BSAP update, the preparation of the Third Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS III), the development of the HELCOM Science Agenda with a special view to climate change on one hand, and notable events and publications on the other. In addition, the report includes an updated overview of the current HELCOM Working and Expert Groups as well as ongoing projects in the Annex. In order to avoid replicating the 2019 HELCOM annual report, which provides an overview of the Commission's activities in HELCOM's main areas of work, such as agriculture, fisheries, shipping, Marine Protected Areas, Maritime Spatial Planning, marine litter as well as species and biotopes, this report adopts a different thematic approach – with a focus on ongoing processes and project outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has induced severe limitations on the Commission's work in the most crucial of times – with the BSAP update process in full swing and the deadline for the adoption of the final text set for autumn 2021. In line with the Finnish government's pandemic-related measures and regulations, the HELCOM Secretariat premises in Helsinki have been closed since 17 March 2020 until further notice, while all scheduled HELCOM activities were moved online. Despite this disruption, HELCOM has continued its professional and intensive work achieving significant progress in key areas, most notably on the revised Baltic Sea Action Plan – which is HELCOM's main programmatic document and therefore a high-priority issue on HELCOM's working agenda. The Drafting Group for the Updated BSAP (DG BSAP), a time-limited ad-hoc group aimed at supporting the Heads of Delegations (HOD) in the final stages of the update process, has assumed its work in June 2020 and held its second meeting in September. The BSAP UP workshops on the evaluation of new actions to be included in the updated BSAP took place at the end of August–beginning of September and submitted their outcomes and recommendations to the HELCOM Working Groups for further elaboration and endorsement and to be further discussed by the Heads of Delegations in December 2020. The results of the sufficiency of measures (SOM) analysis were successfully presented at the BSAP UP workshops and will further provide background information on the existing gaps in reaching good environmental status as well as the actions needed to the Working Groups', SOM Platform and HOD meetings.

Although the BSAP update process has been a central area for HELCOM throughout 2019–2020, regular work has continued regardless. The 41st Meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM 41-2020) held on 4 March 2020 deliberated on such topics as HELCOM

international commitments and outreach as well as the development of the HELCOM Science Agenda. In order to increase the safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment given the increase of Baltic Sea traffic, the 41st Meeting further adopted recommendations on deep-sea pilotage and enhancing the use of pilots in Route T and Sound. In addition, it revised the recommendation on the protection of harbour porpoise in view of increased human activities and the critical status of harbour porpoise populations. In July 2020, Germany took over the two-year HELCOM Chairmanship from Finland. The relevant section of the report lists the announced priorities of the German Chairmanship Team.

The BSPC continues to closely follow the engaged work of HELCOM and has expressed strong support for the new Chairmanship's focus on the BSAP update and implementation in its 29th resolution. With a view to the presidency's priorities and objectives, the BSPC Rapporteur mandate on Sea-Dumped Munitions as well as the newly established BSPC Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity open further opportunities and fields for fruitful cooperation and partnership between the BSPC and HELCOM.

Beate Schlupp
First Vice President of the State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
BSPC Observer at HELCOM

II. Main Developments in 2019/2020: Update of the BSAP in Focus

1. Update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)

The Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), initially adopted in 2007, represents an ambitious and comprehensive regional programme to achieve good environmental/ecological status (GES) of the Baltic Sea by 2021. The Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health (HOLAS II) conducted throughout 2014–2018 has shown that this goal was unlikely to be fulfilled by the target year 2021. Against this backdrop, the Brussels Ministerial Declaration from March 2018 mandated an update process to be concluded with the adoption of the updated BSAP at a Ministerial Meeting in October 2021. It has been agreed that the updated BSAP would retain the general structure of the current Plan, preserving its focus on eutrophication, hazardous substances, maritime activities and biodiversity, while also including new aspects in order to ensure the Action Plan's relevance in the upcoming decade. Thus, increased attention will be given to such topics as marine litter, underwater noise, seabed integrity, and climate change as a cross-cutting issue. Given the centrality of the BSAP for HELCOM, it is no surprise that the update work has been high on the Commission's agenda throughout 2019–2020. This work has mainly concentrated on two aspects: ***review and reassessment of current actions*** and ***consideration of proposals for new ones***.

In his address to the 41st HELCOM Meeting, HELCOM Executive Secretary, Mr Rüdiger Strempel, reminded that while about 70 percent of the joint BSAP regional actions had been completed, only 26 percent of national actions had been fully implemented by the Contracting Parties as of March 2020. He underscored in this regard that the 2018 Ministerial Meeting stated that existing actions should be implemented regardless of the update, and that all pending actions would be carried over into the new Plan. As far as ***existing actions*** to be transferred to the updated BSAP are concerned, HELCOM Working Groups have reviewed the 177 actions contained in the current BSAP. Based on the progress systematically reported on by the Contracting Parties, the relevant HELCOM bodies have identified those actions that are likely to be implemented by the target year 2021, as well as those that are unlikely to be implemented by that time. Consequently, HELCOM Working Groups proposed to transfer 23 actions related to eutrophication, 20 actions related to hazardous substances and litter, 34 actions in the area of sea-based activities, 28 actions in relation to the ecosystem, as well as 10 horizontal actions. A number of these actions will be

transferred to the updated BSAP as they are, whereas a more significant amount of commitments would need to be rephrased as concrete tasks in order to ensure that their implementation can be assessed and measured. Based on this rough and preliminary estimate, around 115 out of 177 actions would be carried over to the updated BSAP.

In regard to ***new actions***, a call for proposals from Contracting Parties, HELCOM subsidiary bodies, and observers as well as international projects was announced in the spring of 2019. By spring 2020, the relevant HELCOM bodies received over 120 proposals that were later presented and discussed at the **2020 HELCOM Stakeholder Conference** ahead of the 41st HELCOM Meeting in March 2020. The Stakeholder Conference included a number of thematic sessions that ran in parallel with the aim of discussing and prioritising the received proposals and putting forward additional ones. Thus, the Biodiversity session prioritised spatial protection measures. More specifically, it underlined the need for increasing the coverage of the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network as well as developing a common understanding of the ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities at sea. The Sea-based activities session stressed the importance of a holistic perspective for all BSAP measures from a social-ecological systems point of view, incorporating cross-sectoral and multi-level governance approaches. The Eutrophication session emphasised that the new BSAP measures should be cost-effective, while pointing out that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, but rather that a variety of different measures could be applied in different areas depending on the given conditions. The session on Hazardous substances and marine litter highlighted the need for a holistic approach to the advancement of wastewater treatment technologies, which should not only focus on hazardous substances but also consider the whole treatment process. As a result, the Stakeholder Conference yielded further 56 actions proposals from the relevant thematic sessions. Overall, HELCOM received around 176 new action proposals for the updated BSAP ahead of the annual meeting in March.

Unsurprisingly, the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan was high on the agenda of the **41st HELCOM Meeting 2020**. In this regard, the Meeting stressed:

- the need for regional cooperation in tackling the challenges facing the Baltic Sea;
- the need for adopting a *participatory, multi-stakeholder* approach in the update process;
- the importance of maintaining strong links between the updated BSAP and other *international and regional processes and commitments*;
- the need for a holistic approach in viewing and addressing the effects of human activities and the subsequent pressures affecting the Baltic Sea;
- that the targets, actions and measures within the updated BSAP should be *practical, realistic, concrete and result-oriented*, while at the same time *ambitious*, and should focus on the *sources of the*

problems (i.e. human activities) – rather than on dealing with the *symptoms*;
- the importance of recognizing *climate change* as a cross-cutting topic, with a view to developing the BSAP as a climate change adaptation instrument, among other things;
- the need for *evaluating the effectiveness* of existing measures as well as the *cost-efficiency* of new ones;
- the importance of enhanced reporting and data-sharing to support and improve decision-making;
- the need for additional financial resources from the local to regional levels in order to ensure the implementation of the updated BSAP;
- the need for more clear coordination between the different HELCOM work strands;
- the need for further improvements in the area of implementation reporting.

At the **58th Heads of Delegations Meeting** in June 2020 it was once again underlined that the updated BSAP should be a short, concise and easily accessible document written in clear, simple language, while ensuring that it retains political interest. In addition, HOD 58-2020 agreed on the year 2030 as the plan's target year and set the aim for the full updated BSAP to be approved by the 60th Heads of Delegations Meeting in June 2021. The meeting also supported the inclusion of actions related to monitoring of the marine environment, climate change, awareness raising, financing, and economic and social analysis.

At the end of August 2020, the **BSAP UP Workshop** series was launched with the aim of evaluating the combined contributions to support the selection of new actions and measures for the updated BSAP. The series included four thematic workshops in HELCOM's main working areas: the BSAP UP workshop on hazardous substances (BSAP UP WS-HZ), the workshop on maritime activities, including underwater noise, non-indigenous species and response actions (BSAP UP WS-SEA), the workshop on biodiversity, including extraction of species and spatial measures (BSAP UP WS-BIO), and the workshop eutrophication (BSAP UP WS-EUTRO). Key background information for the thematic workshops was provided by the results of the **sufficiency of measures (SOM)** analysis, which is carried out to support the BSAP update process, as well as the synopses on new actions for the updated BSAP that have been submitted to HELCOM following a call for proposals and formulated at the 2020 Stakeholder Conference. Based on the Criteria for Evaluation of New Actions developed by the SOM Platform and endorsed by the Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR), the workshops gave their recommendations on new actions for inclusion in the updated BSAP. The proposals would further be submitted to HELCOM Working Groups for evaluation and discussed at the 59th Heads of Delegations meeting in December 2020.

Overall, as far as the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan is concerned, 2019–2020 marked a departure from plans to concrete actions. HELCOM has been working on a tight schedule despite the

pandemic-induced limitations and has achieved significant progress in its current key issue area. In June 2020, the Drafting Group for the Updated BSAP (DG BSAP) commenced its work and has taken note of the outcomes and recommendations of the BSAP UP workshops as well as the results of the SOM analysis. The DG BSAP will further serve to support the Heads of Delegations in the final stages of the update process and political negotiations. According to the Updated Plan for the BSAP Update, discussed by HOD 58-2020, the revised BSAP is expected to be approved by the Heads of Delegations in June 2021 and adopted by the Ministerial Meeting in autumn 2021. HELCOM is working on a tight schedule and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought additional limitations and challenges. Nonetheless, the intensive work has continued – albeit online.

2. Progress on the Analysis of Sufficiency of Measures (SOM)

The HELCOM Sufficiency of Measures (SOM) Platform was established by the 55th Heads of Delegations Meeting in 2018 as a tool for assessing the gaps in existing BSAP measures and identifying new actions for the updated Action Plan. It is constituted of experts drawn from various regions across the Baltic Sea. The sufficiency of measures analysis is carried out in close collaboration with the **HELCOM ACTION project**, which is co-funded by the EU and designed to assist in the review of the BSAP and support the EU HELCOM Contracting Parties in updating and implementing their Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) Programme of Measures. The project specifically focuses on the evaluation of the effectiveness of measures in areas such as by-catch of mammals and birds, impacts on the seabed, marine protected areas, and eutrophication, which were recognised as priority topics based on the main pressures on the Baltic Sea ecosystem identified in the 2018 HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report. However, the project's methodological framework could also be made applicable for other marine regions, in particular OSPAR.

Since its initiation in 2018, the HELCOM SOM Platform held four meetings, which served to develop and finalise the SOM methodology and prepare the results of the SOM analysis. The HELCOM SOM Platform held its third meeting at the end of March 2020 and discussed the first interim results of the effectiveness of measures analysis based on exemplary data from online expert surveys in two areas: benthic habitats and non-indigenous species. The fourth meeting, which took place on 15 September 2020, then discussed the first results of the SOM analysis for all nine topics included in the analysis, including hazardous substances, litter, input of nutrients, birds, mammals, fish as well as noise, and provided comments on the draft of the final report. An important outcome of the SOM ongoing work: the first results of the

SOM analysis on all topics were submitted to the HELCOM BSAP UP Workshops, which took place in August–September 2020, as background information for the evaluation of new actions to be included in the updated BSAP. The evaluation of proposed new measures and actions at the workshops was then conducted in accordance with the set of criteria developed by the SOM Platform. The outcomes of the BSAP UP workshops will further be elaborated and endorsed by HELCOM Working Groups before submission to the 59th Heads of Delegations Meeting in December 2020.

Meanwhile, the 58th Heads of Delegations Meeting held in June 2020 acknowledged that the results of the SOM analysis would have to be considered in more detail once available – with a view to the possibility that its outcomes could serve as a contribution to the process of identifying new targets. It was also noted, however, that setting environmental targets is always a demanding political process.

3. HOLAS III – Preparations for the Third Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea

The Holistic Assessment of the State of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS) follows up on the goals of the Baltic Sea Action Plan and serves as a tool for the comprehensive overview of the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea. The initial assessment was conducted based on the data and expert knowledge gathered throughout 2003–2007 and resulted in the HOLAS I Assessment Report published in 2010. This initial assessment showed that none of the open-water basins in the Baltic Sea was in a good environmental state. According to the report, eutrophication and hazardous substances negatively affected most sub-basins, and human communities linked to the sea had been negatively affected by the deteriorated state of the Baltic Sea. It was concluded that given the impaired status of the ecosystem, pressures from agriculture, fisheries, industries, and the maritime sector should be managed more effectively. The second holistic assessment covered the 2011–2016 period and was carried out throughout 2014–2018 with the final "State of the Baltic Sea" report published in 2018. It concluded that the environmental objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan were unlikely to be achieved by 2021, the BSAP target year. Based on the findings of HOLAS II, the 2018 Ministerial Meeting launched the BSAP update process to be concluded with the adoption of the revised Baltic Sea Action Plan at the Ministerial Meeting in 2021 – with measures and actions set for the target year 2030.

HOLAS II not only gave a comprehensive data-based assessment of the ecosystem health, but also provided a solid framework for future evaluations covering more aspects than had ever been covered in the

region previously. Thus, the HELCOM integrated assessment tools for eutrophication, hazardous substances and biodiversity (HEAT, CHASE and BEAT) had been significantly advanced for the second assessment round. In addition, the assessment of cumulative effects and socio-economic aspects has been improved. HELCOM pledged to continue developing indicators for the purpose of future assessments and policy evaluation in the next holistic assessment. In 2019, a review of the HELCOM indicators was launched in order to carry out policy matching (with a view to e.g. the BSAP and EU MSFD), gap analysis and consider possible linkages with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Within the framework of the indicator update process, two workshops were held in 2019 with the aim of elaborating policy priorities for future development and considering the technical work required to achieve operational indicators in the identified policy areas.

The preparation of the Third Holistic Assessment (HOLAS III) started in 2019 and notable progress on planning was achieved in 2019–2020. Within the initial planning phase and based on the lessons learned from HOLAS II, it was highlighted, among other things, that overlaps between indicator development, data collection and assessment should be avoided, frequent and regular data flows should be established, while ad hoc data calls should be circumvented. The 41st Meeting approved the provisional timeline and preliminary plan for HOLAS III in March 2020, whereas the 58th Meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegations agreed on the elaborated timeline for the assessment process in June 2020. Accordingly, HOLAS III will cover the assessment period 2016–2021, while the final results are expected to be published by the end of 2023. According to the provisional plan, the assessment work will be carried out in two main phases: preparatory work and holistic assessment. The preparatory phase is structured along three inter-linked projects focusing on the development of indicators (HELCOM Indicators), establishment and ensuring of data flows (HELCOM DataFlow) as well as refinement and further development of assessments (HELCOM MetDev), and should run from the beginning of 2020 until the first quarter of 2022. The assessment phase will include task work strands (data collection, evaluation and analysis, integrated assessment, preparation of supplementary information, and the summary report) and action work strands (approval processes), which will run in parallel from the end of 2021 to the end of 2023.

As of August 2020, the HELCOM Indicators and DataFlow projects had continued and the work on the drafting of the project plan for the HELCOM Holistic Assessment Methodology Development (MetDev) Project has commenced. The MetDev project is expected to run throughout 2021 and aims at improving the BSAP-indicator driven integrated assessment tools – the HELCOM Eutrophication assessment tool (HEAT), the HELCOM Biodiversity assessment tool (BEAT), and the Hazardous substances assessment tool (CHASE) – as well as cumulative impacts tools and methods used for the analysis of economic and social aspects (ESA).

4. Development of the HELCOM Science Agenda

The development of the HELCOM Science Agenda was agreed by the 40th HELCOM Meeting in 2019. It is conceptualised as a supportive instrument in the BSAP update and assessment processes and as a tool for outlining and communicating existing and future HELCOM regional science needs. It also aims at supporting the implementation of HELCOM objectives and recommendations as well as guiding future HELCOM activities. In addition, it should serve to inform external funding mechanisms about HELCOM's research demands. Ultimately, the Science Agenda will help identify knowledge gaps, which prevent the achievement of good environmental status in the Baltic Sea, and concentrate research efforts in HELCOM's areas of interest, including through the stimulation of joint regional research projects. Moreover, the HELCOM Science Agenda links to the strategic objectives under the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021–2030) and will contribute to the identification of vulnerabilities and building knowledge in order to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

In the initial step, a survey meant to support the development of the Science Agenda was circulated among HELCOM Working and Expert Groups in order to identify short- and long-term knowledge needs. Based on these contributions, the newly established HELCOM Science Agenda Task Group is actively working to prepare and finalise the draft of the Science Agenda report by the end of 2020. The preliminary report features fifteen topics covering three broad issue areas: biodiversity, human pressures and activities as well as overarching topics directed at the implementation of the ecosystem approach.

In line with the HELCOM 2018 Brussels Ministerial Declaration, which emphasised the need to strengthen the scientific understanding of the impact of climate change on the Baltic Sea marine environment, the Science Agenda Task Group highlighted the following climate change-related science needs:

- continued work on regionalised scenarios of the impact of climate change on the hydrography, sea level, sea ice, surface waves, and other physical environment characteristics of the Baltic Sea;
- continued work on scenarios that take into account how global changes impact human activities and quantify the effects of the resulting pressures on the Baltic Sea;
- integration of climate change aspects into the HELCOM Nutrient Reduction Scheme in order to ensure the achievement of BSAP eutrophication objectives under changing climate change-driven conditions;
- research on the impact of climate change-related effects such as temperature increase, oxygen decline, and sea level rise,
- assessment of risks posed by invasive species in connection with climate change-induced changes in habitats.

III. HELCOM Reports, Recommendations, and Guidelines

1. HELCOM Annual Report 2019

In June 2020, HELCOM published its annual activities report providing an overview of the Commission's environmental work in 2019. Traditionally, the report is structured around HELCOM's main activities in the spheres of: agriculture, Marine Protected Areas (MPA), species and biotopes, underwater noise, marine litter, dredging and seabed, industrial and municipal releases, maritime spatial planning, fisheries, response to spills, shipping, monitoring and assessment, international cooperation, and last but not least – the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan.

In addition, a separate section is dedicated to HELCOM's work in the area of climate change. Thus in 2019, HELCOM established a joint Climate Change expert network (EN CLIME) together with Baltic Earth. The network is currently preparing a Baltic Sea climate change fact sheet, which would provide key messages on the expected and observed impacts of climate change in the region, such as the influence of increased rainfall on seabirds and marine traffic, and support policy- and decision-making on the issue – both regionally and internationally. According to the preliminary timetable, the fact sheet is expected to be published by the end of 2021.

Among other important highlights in the year 2019, the report named:

- the finalisation of the "Advanced manure standards for sustainable nutrient management and reduced emissions" (Manure Standards) project;
- the establishment of the HELCOM Marine Protected Ares (MPA) Management Network; the revision and update of the Baltic Checklist on Macro Species and its complementation with the first regional Biodiversity Database;
- the publication of the "Noise sensitivity of animals in the Baltic Sea" report, the development of the first draft of the HELCOM Action Plan on Underwater Noise;
- the establishment of a working group on developing a regional assessment framework for the measures to manage internal nutrient reserves in the sea, the initiation of a policy dialogue on the revision of national input ceilings for nutrients, the development of a regional policy document on

the update of the HELCOM framework for hazardous substances, as well as the removal of one of the oldest HELCOM hotspots – the wastewater works in Kaliningrad from the hotspot list;
- intensifying cooperation between HELCOM and the Baltic Sea Fisheries Forum (BALTFISH), finalisation of the draft Roadmap on collection of fisheries data in order to assess accidental bycatches and fisheries' impact on benthic biotopes in the Baltic Sea;
- continued cooperation in the area of joint assistance in response to spills (the annual BALEX DELTA exercises), as well as the commencement of work on the revision of HELCOM Response Manual volumes 2 and 3;
- progress on the revision of the Joint Harmonised Procedure for the Contracting Parties of OSPAR and HELCOM on granting of exemptions under the Ballast Water Management Convention against the backdrop of the first results from the HELCOM GREEN TEAM reporting mechanism aiming to identify the challenges to the development of green technologies and alternative fuels in Baltic Sea shipping.

In addition, the BSAP update process featured prominently in the 2019 annual report, which specifically highlighted the BSAP UP and HELCOM ACTION projects, as well as the SOM Platform.

2. HELCOM Recommendations

While the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan has been the central element of HELCOM's work in 2019–2020, regular work on pressing issues had to continue regardless. In order to increase the safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment given the increase of Baltic Sea traffic, the 2020 HELCOM Meeting adopted recommendations on deep-sea pilotage (HELCOM Recommendation 41/1) and enhancing the use of pilots in Route T and Sound (HELCOM Recommendation 41/2). In addition, it revised the recommendation on the protection of harbour porpoise (HELCOM Recommendation 17/2) in view of increased human activities and the critical status of harbour porpoise populations. These recommendations were agreed on by the Maritime Working Group and later approved by the 57th Heads of Delegations Meeting in December 2019.

3. HELCOM Report on Aerial Surveillance of Discharges at Sea 2018

In August 2019, HELCOM published its 2018 "Report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea". Cooperation on aerial surveillance of spills started in the 1980s with the purpose of detecting spills of oil and other harmful substances in order to prevent violations of the existing HELCOM regulations on the prevention of pollution from ships. The surveillance of spills is coordinated by the HELCOM Informal Working Group on Aerial Surveillance (IWGAS); the HELCOM Secretariat annually compiles data gathered through national and joint surveillance activities and publishes an overview of detected discharges. The current report concluded that, in general, the number of detected oil spills in the Baltic Sea has been constantly decreasing throughout 2000–2018. Despite growing shipping density and improvements in aerial surveillance activities, the number of confirmed spills dropped from 472 in the year 2000 to 62 in 2018. However, oil spills constituted only 40% of total spill observations; the remaining 60% represented spills of unknown or other substances, such as fish oil and greywater. Yet the estimated volume of oil spills has also been steadily decreasing throughout 1998–2018 with a record low in 2016–2017. At the same time, in a vast majority of cases the polluters remained unidentified. The identification of suspected ships is facilitated by the SeaTrackWeb (STW) oil drift forecasting system developed by HELCOM. Together with the Automatic Identification System (AIS) this tool is used to backtrack possible perpetrators based on forecasting simulation of detected spills and recorded ship tracks. According to Markus Helavuori, HELCOM Professional Secretary for maritime affairs, "aerial surveillance has proven to be an effective deterrent for illegal discharges at sea."

4. Handling of Wastewater in Ports of the Baltic Sea

Untreated wastewater has been identified as an important source of both hazardous substances and nutrients, the main cause of eutrophication leading to unwanted growth of blue-green algae that upset the Baltic Sea's biodiversity. Following the proposal prepared and supported by the HELCOM Maritime Working Group and submitted by the Baltic Sea riparian States, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) designated the Baltic Sea as a special area for sewage discharges from passenger ships under Annex IX of the MARPOL-Convention in 2011. Under the IMO regulations, all passenger ships built after June 2019 are required to comply with stricter rules on wastewater discharges, while older passenger ships will have to comply with the new rules by June 2021. The rules require that passenger ships discharge their sewage into Port Reception Facilities (PRF) or alternatively at sea, but only after treatment with advanced

on-board sewage treatment plants capable of reducing the nutrient input into the sea in accordance with Resolution MEPC.227(64). Given the lack of experience with sewage handling in ports and provided the need for developing innovative approaches to manage new challenges, HELCOM published the first "Technical Guidance for the handling of wastewater in Ports of the Baltic Sea Special Area under MARPOL Annex IV". The Technical Guidance was developed by the Development and Assessment Institute in Waste Water Technology at RWTH Aachen University (PIA) on behalf of the Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency of Germany (BSH) and in collaboration with the German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure (BMVI). It aims at filling the existing knowledge gap and offer a wide range of possible options in several scenarios that ships and ports may face. Based on data from Baltic Sea ports and shipping companies on the composition and handling of sewage from passenger ships, the document offers recommendations, including information on how to avoid potential problems with the acceptance of wastewater, options for pre-treatment in ports as well as mobile solutions.

5. HELCOM Review of Existing Policies and Research on Microplastics

The EU INTERREG Baltic Sea Region project FanpLESStic-sea, aimed at decreasing and removing microplastics in the Baltic Sea, was launched in January 2019 and will run until the middle of 2021. As a project partner, HELCOM is responsible for reviewing existing research on microplastics in the aquatic environment. In line with this task, HELCOM released the first "Review of existing policies and research related to microplastics – Summary for Policy Makers" in October 2019, followed by the full report in December 2019. These publications offer a common baseline on the existing policies related to microplastics on the global, Baltic Sea, EU, and national levels for both policy-makers and researchers.

According to the review, the lack of commonly agreed methodologies for monitoring, sampling and analyses of microplastics is a major concern. Currently, microplastics are not directly addressed through any global instrument, even though several existing instruments cover some aspects related to marine litter and hence microplastics. However, the European Union is working towards restricting the use of intentionally added microplastic particles to consumer or professional use products. In the Baltic Sea area, actions on microplastics are contained in the HELCOM Action Plan on Marine Litter. Also highlighted by the report are the impacts of microplastics on humans through the food chain or other means, still largely unknown and calling for more research. In addition to providing an overview of the existing regulatory frameworks as well as useful information on topics such as sources and types of microplastics, the pub-

lications can be used as a database of concluded research on various topics around the issue.

The publications also offer a number of key suggestions, underlining, among other things. The need for:

- developing harmonised, cost-efficient, and sufficiently robust monitoring methodologies for microplastics;
- a focus on prevention and reduction of secondary sources of microplastics by addressing the products in their early life-cycle, i.e. before they become microplastics or marine litter;
- a focus the research on secondary sources and plan measures addressing those sources based on the evidence;
- additional research on the effects and impact of microplastics on the ecosystem and biosphere.

6. HELCOM Reports on Chemical Contaminants

As part of the ongoing work on the update of the BSAP, HELCOM, in collaboration with Stockholm University Baltic Sea Centre, has published four reports providing a compilation of the latest research on selected chemical contaminants and their effects on the Baltic Sea. The series covers four hazardous substances: dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyls (PBCs), brominated flame retardants (BFRs), perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), and diclofenac. The reports describe the sources and pathways of the addressed substances into the sea, provide information on how their concentrations have changed over time and draw up scenarios relating to the achievement of good environmental status in the Baltic Sea based on data relating to the substances in question. Information from the reports should support the evaluation of the efficiency of implemented measures under the present BSAP, and assist in the formulation of additional measures needed to improve the Baltic Sea's state in view of the needed reduction of hazardous substances' concentration.

IV. Interregional and International Cooperation

Interregional and international cooperation and global frameworks, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), have traditionally constituted an important part of HELCOM's efforts to contribute to the conservation of the global marine environment. HELCOM's international and interregional work forms part of efforts to strengthen regional and global governance of the marine environment.

1. HELCOM Voluntary Commitments to the UN Ocean Conference 2020

Although the 2020 UN Ocean Conference, initially scheduled to take place on 2–6 June 2020 in Lisbon, was postponed per decision of the UN General Assembly due to the COVID-19-pandemic, the 2020 HELCOM Meeting supported the proposed HELCOM voluntary commitments to the Ocean Conference and highlighted the benefits of cooperation for the protection of the marine environment at the global level. Voluntary commitments constitute one of the core elements of the UN Ocean Conference, aiming to accelerate the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 ("Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, sea and marine resources for sustainable development") and its seven targets. In 2017, HELCOM pledged to strengthen the fulfilment of the BSAP to support ocean-related SDGs, which included speeding up the implementation of the marine litter regional action plan, elaborating on a regional action plan on underwater noise, supporting sustainable agriculture practices, and ensuring close cooperation on maritime spatial planning.

In 2020, HELCOM undertook five voluntary commitments ranging from integrating ocean-related SDGs into the updated BSAP, contributing to the UN Decade of Science for Sustainable Development through the development of the HELCOM Science Agenda, to sharing experience within the framework of the UN Regional Seas Programme.

2. HELCOM-OSPAR Joint Workshop on Incidental Bycatch

The Baltic and North Seas share a number of bird and marine mammal species, which are endangered by incidental bycatch in both areas. In order to pave the way for a proposal for common conservation objectives on incidental bycatch in the two sister seas, HELCOM and its partner organisation, the OSPAR Commission, held a joint workshop on 3–5 September 2019. This proposal could further provide the foundation for a common regional indicator on bycatch. The workshop discussed data requirements, sources and monitoring; identified areas of increased and low risk of incidental bycatch; methodologies for indicator assessment – with a view to possible synergies and existing differences between the two regions.

The workshop formulated a number of proposals with a specific focus on overcoming existing data gaps and enabling both short- and long-term assessments of incidental bycatch. For HELCOM, the findings will further contribute to the preparations of the next holistic assessment (HOLAS III) which, according to preliminary planning, should be concluded by 2023.

3. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG Meetings 2019–2020

The joint Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP) Working Group was launched in 2010 by HELCOM and the "Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea" (VASAB) Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR) in order to foster cooperation among the Baltic Sea states for coherent maritime spatial planning. The Working Group meets up to three times a year to promote coordination between national MSP efforts to avoid incompatibilities of plans between countries within the Baltic Sea region. In addition, the HELCOM-VASAB MSP Group acts as the Steering Committee for the Horizontal Action Spatial Planning within the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Within the reporting period, the group held two regular meetings and two additional meetings to review the proposed actions for the updated BSAP. Given that MSP was only briefly reflected in the current BSAP, one of the Group's tasks consisted in elaborating proposals to reflect MSP as a feature of the updated BSAP. More specifically, the group was tasked with selecting MSP-related measures to be proposed for the next stages of the BSAP update and reviewing the draft texts of the BSAP segments after their elaboration by the Drafting Group.

Closely linked to the BSAP update is the group's work on the new MSP Roadmap. The Regional Baltic Maritime Spatial Planning Roadmap was adopted in 2013 and aimed at drawing up and applying coherent, ecosystem approach-based maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea region by 2020. The work on the update of the MSP Roadmap 2021–2027 is scheduled for 2020–2021 with the final document to be adopted by the end of 2021. The 58th Heads of Delegations meeting supported the proposal to coordinate the development of the regional MSP and the BSAP update to ensure coherence and synergy between the two documents.

Another important work strand has been the update of the EUSBSR Action Plan. The updated Action Plan has been forwarded to the European Commission in July 2020 and currently includes two actions within Policy Area Spatial Planning: strengthening territorial cohesion in the BSR through land-based spatial planning and ensuring coherent maritime spatial plans throughout the Baltic Sea. The update of the Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap as well as the reflection of MSP in the updated BSAP are listed as constitutive projects within the latter action for the Policy Area.

4. HELCOM at the Maritime Spatial Planning Forum in Riga

The Maritime Spatial Planning forum was held in Riga on 19–21 November 2019 and included three MSP events: the 4th International MSP Forum, the 3rd Baltic MSP Forum, and the final conference of the Pan Baltic Scope Project. Within the EU-funded Pan Baltic Scope project on advancing MSP in the Baltic Sea region, HELCOM led the work on economic and social analysis and cumulative impacts. In addition, HELCOM collaborated on data sharing to facilitate data exchange and cooperation under MSP consultations. At the forum, HELCOM presented BASEMAPS – a digital tool to access decentralised Baltic Sea maritime spatial planning relevant national data – developed by HELCOM in cooperation with national experts from HELCOM-VASAB MSP data action group.

V. Prospects for 2020 and Beyond: German HELCOM Chairmanship 2020-2022

June 2020 marked the end of Finland's two-year presidency at HELCOM. As of July 1 2020 Germany has taken over HELCOM's presidency and appointed Ms Lilian Busse from the German Environment Agency (UBA) as its Chair at HELCOM. In addition, Germany has appointed two Vice-Chairs from two federal states bordering the Baltic Sea: Mr Johannes Oelerich (Schleswig-Holstein) and Mr Andreas Röpke (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern). The German Chairmanship Team has identified **six strategic priorities,** which will further be summarised in more detail.

1. Working Together for our Sea – the Baltic Sea

The protection of the Baltic Sea is identified as the presidency's top priority. In view of the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is stressed that sustainable economic recovery must also lead to progress on environmental protection, including marine protection.

2. Strengthening Ocean Governance

One of the goals is to closely connect the planned HELCOM Science Agenda and the Baltic Sea Action Plan with the UN 2030 Agenda and other international processes. Another is to step up cooperation between HELCOM and other important stakeholders for marine protection, e.g., through the active participation in the UN Ocean Conference in 2021. In this regard, it is also suggested to highlight the economic consequences of major stresses on marine ecosystems and the management of the Baltic Sea.

3. *Updating and Implementing the BSAP – Making Progress on Specific Requirements*

The German presidency stresses that it is important not only to update the Baltic Sea Action Plan but also to visibly accelerate and intensify its implementation. One particularly urgent task is to further reduce the high nutrient pollution in the Baltic Sea. Analysing barriers to implementation, updating nutrient hotspots, and assessing local tailor-made approaches are seen as the main options for action to reduce nutrient inputs. The presidency also highlighted the need to work together on driving forward the implementation of the Regional Marine Litter Action Plan. In addition, the presidency signals its support for the development of regional solutions to the problem of ghost nets.

4. *Trying New Solutions for Well-Known, Pressing Challenges*

Warfare material in the sea as well as underwater noise are long-known threats that require urgent solutions. Munition containers are corroding, and their toxic munition compounds are increasingly entering the marine environment. The German presidency therefore advocates for regular exchanges of expertise, information sharing and technology tests with the goal of gaining a better overview of the scale of munition compounds and their potential impacts. The ultimate aim is to ensure the safe and environmentally sound removal of munitions from the Baltic Sea.

Commercial and recreational shipping, the expansion of offshore wind power and other technical infrastructures are examples of noise pollution sources in the sea. On this issue, the Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise is seen as an innovative step for HELCOM in its endeavour to move forward on avoiding and minimising noise inputs.

5. Strengthening Marine Biodiversity

The German presidency strives for the completion and development of the HELCOM network of marine protected areas and their management with effective protection and conservation measures. It wants to step up efforts and measures to protect and conserve endangered species and habitats in the Baltic Sea and, for example, to contribute to improving the status of the harbour porpoise populations in the Baltic Sea. It also calls to make progress on the reintroduction of sturgeon and support the tracking of migratory birds' routes in the Baltic Sea region. In addition, it is suggested to test marine mammals for pollutants in order to help assess the state of their health.

6. Understanding and Responding to Climate Change and the Baltic Sea

Given that climate change is one of the most pressing environmental problems worldwide and already affects the Baltic Sea and its coasts, the German presidency aims to further consider climate aspects in all of HELCOM's activities and to establish and strengthen HELCOM's role in explaining the interactions between climate action and marine protection to a wide audience. In addition, it is suggested to further sound out the potential and relevance of blue carbon as natural carbon sinks in the Baltic Sea and assess possible options for action.

VI. Strengthening Cooperation between the BSPC and HELCOM

On 2 July 2020 the start of the German HELCOM Chairmanship was celebrated with a kick-off event featuring such distinguished speakers as the German Federal Minister for the Environment, Ms Svenja Schulze, the Finnish Ambassador to Germany, Ms Anne Sipliäinen, the Minister-President of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Ms Manuela Schwesig, the Minister-President of Schleswig-Holstein, Mr Daniel Günther, HELCOM Executive Secretary, Mr Rüdiger Strempel, as well as renowned researchers and environmental activists. BSPC Secretary General, Mr Bodo Bahr, wished the German HELCOM Presidency every success and support in order to achieve significant and ground-breaking progress during its tenure. He underlined that the BSPC has been closely working with HELCOM throughout the past thirty years and has formulated concrete demands in its recent resolutions – be it in relation to the update of the BSAP, eutrophication, plastic waste, or sea-dumped munitions. He extended his gratitude to the German Foreign Minister, Mr Heiko Maas, for explicitly highlighting the sea-dumped munitions issue in his address to the 19th CBSS Ministerial meeting and underscored the efforts undertaken by the BSPC. These include the establishment of the BSPC Rapporteur mandate on sea-dumped munitions as well as the intensive exchange on the current state of research on underwater unexploded ordnance in the Baltic Sea during the BSPC Standing Committee meeting on 19 November 2019 in Berlin and during consultations with DG Mare on 2 March 2020 in Brussels. This exchange has sensibilized the Baltic Sea parliamentarians to the need for determined political action. The failure to act now would, Mr Bahr stressed, result in a catastrophe with long-term consequences in thirty years. He therefore closed his address by once again wishing the German presidency success in fulfilling the envisioned priorities and contributing to the protection of the marine environment regionally and globally.

In her address to the 29th BSPC, Ms Svenja Schulze, German Federal Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, expressed her gratitude that the Baltic Sea parliamentarians have clearly signalled their support for the German HELCOM Chairmanship's goal to ensure the **safe and environmentally sound removal of munitions** from the Baltic Sea. The resolution of the 28th BSPC, specifically its item point 24, called upon governments to work together with HELCOM and develop a cross-border sustainable strategy for dealing with the issue of buried/deposited ammunitions present in the Baltic Sea. Consequently, the BSPC Standing Committee has appointed Mr Peter Stein, Member of the German Bundestag, as BSPC Rapporteur on Sea-dumped Munitions in November 2019. The interim report, presented by Mr Peter Stein at the 29th BSPC, highlighted the positive results of the initial discussions between Mr Stein and HELCOM's Secretary General, Mr Rüdiger Strempel. In accordance with the

governments' statements on the implementation of the 28th resolution, HELCOM's existing structures should be built on to take upon the role as a coordinating body for the management of sea-dumped munitions. Even though Mr Stein's planned visit to the HELCOM Secretariat in Helsinki had to be postponed due to travel restrictions adopted in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the first exchange of views has shown that the existing HELCOM RESPONSE structures – more specifically, the Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects (SUBMERGED) – are suited for the task. The report reminds, however, that HELCOM SUBMERGED expert group's mandate will expire in 2020 and stresses the need for an extension in order to ensure the regular reassessment of the situation with sea-dumped munitions in the Baltic Sea.

Following the impulse provided by the 28th resolution, the resolution of the 29th BSPC calls upon the governments of the Baltic Sea region, the CBSS and the EU, in acknowledgement of Germany's HELCOM Chairmanship priorities, to "intensify efforts to monitor and to treat the problem of dumped munitions, wrecks, and ghost nets and in the Baltic Sea." These efforts should be based on a common international approach taking into account the existing international efforts and responsibilities and strengthening existing political structures and scientific projects. The ambition is to make the Baltic Sea region a global leader in the field of solving problems associated with dumped munitions and unexploded ordnance located underwater. The recommendations and calls to action contained in item 24 of the 28th BSPC resolution and item 15 of the 29th BSPC resolution together with the BSPC Rapporteur's mandate on sea-dumped munitions open space for further deeper cooperation between the BSPC and HELCOM.

Another issue, which both the BSPC and HELCOM have a high interest in, is **climate change and biodiversity**. The 29th BSPC approved the new two-year Working Group on Climate Change and Biodiversity with Ms Cecilie Tenfjord-Toftby from the Swedish Parliament as Chairwoman. The Group is tasked with the preparation of a preliminary report to be presented at the 30th BSPC and focussed on the need for joint regional solutions to preserve biodiversity and mitigate the effects of climate change in the Baltic Sea region. Moreover, special emphasis should be placed on existing regional policies, strategies, innovations and best practices in relation to climate change and biodiversity as well as on climate change adaptation and the resulting challenges for science, technology, and the economy. Consideration should also be given to efficient and environmentally friendly transport and energy supply solutions. Given the current HELCOM Chairmanship's priorities in the area of strengthening marine biodiversity as well as understanding and responding to climate change on the one hand and the BSPC Working Group's thematic focus on the other, closer collaboration between HELCOM structures and the Working Group could prove especially useful and beneficial.

In addition, the resolution of the 29th BSPC once again signalled its support for the work of HELCOM in safeguarding the marine environment of the Baltic Sea. Specifically, item 14 highlighted the new Chairmanship's objectives to explicitly consider sustainability, climate change and biodiversity in the Baltic Sea Action Plan update process, to focus on the acceleration and intensification of its implementation as well as on joint efforts to further reduce the excessive nutrient load in the Baltic Sea.

Sources and Useful Links

Primary Decisions and Outcomes

Outcome of the 57th Meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation (HOD 57-2019), *https://portal.helcom.fi/meetings/HOD%2057-2019-620/MeetingDocuments/Outcome%20of%20HOD%2057-2019.pdf*

Outcome of the 41st Meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM 41-2020), *https://portal.helcom.fi/meetings/HELCOM%2041-2020-679/MeetingDocuments/Outcome%20of%20HELCOM%2041-2020.pdf*

Outcome of the 58th Meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation (HOD 58-2029), *https://portal.helcom.fi/meetings/HOD%2058-2020-738/MeetingDocuments/Outcome%20of%20HOD%2058-2020.pdf*

HELCOM Publications 2019–2020

HELCOM activities report for the year 2019,
https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/HELCOM-Activities-Report-2019.pdf

A Technical Guidance for the handling of wastewater in Ports of the Baltic Sea Special Area under MARPOL Annex IV,
https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Technical-guidance-for-the-handling-of-wastewater-in-ports.pdf

HELCOM Annual report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea 2018,
https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/HELCOM-Aerial-Surveillance-Report-2018.pdf

FanpLESStic-sea 2019. Review of existing policies and research related to microplastics,
https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FanpLESStic-sea-Microplastics-Policy-and-Research-Review.pdf

Review of existing policies and research related to microplastics – Summary for Policy Makers,
https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/fanpLESStic-microplastics-summary-report.pdf

ANNEX

Annex 1. List of Current HELCOM Working Groups and Expert Networks

1. Gear – Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach
   - 1.1. Economic and Social Analyses (ESA) network

2. Maritime –Maritime Working Group
   - 2.1. AIS EWG – Expert Working Group on Mutual Exchange and Deliveries of AIS Data
   - 2.2. Green Technology and Alternative Fuels Platform for Sustainable Shipping
   - 2.3. Safe NAV – Group of Experts of Safety of Navigation
   - 2.4. TG Ballast – The Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on Ballast Water Management Convention Exemptions

3. Pressure – Working Group on reduction of Pressures from the Baltic sea Catchment area
   - 3.1. EN Marine Litter – HELCOM Expert Network on Marine Litter
   - 3.2. EN Noise – HELCOM Expert Network on Underwater Noise
   - 3.3. REDCORE DG – Reduction Scheme Core Drafting Group
   - 3.4. CG PHARMA – HELCOM Correspondence Group on Pharmaceuticals

4. Response – Response Working Group
   - 4.1. EWG OWR – Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response
   - 4.2. IWGAS – Informal Working Group on Aerial Surveillance
   - 4.3. SHORE Network – HELCOM Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore
   - 4.4. SUBMERGED – Expert Group on Environmental Risks of Hazardous Submerged Objects

5. State and Conservation – Working group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation
   - 5.1. EG MAMA – HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals
     - 5.1.1. HELCOM SEAL – HELCOM ad hoc SEAL Expert Group
   - 5.2. EG STUR – HELCOM Expert Group on Sturgeon Remediation
   - 5.3. EN-HZ– HELCOM expert network on hazardous substances
   - 5.4. EN BENTHIC – HELCOM Expert Network on Benthic Habitats and Biotopes
   - 5.5. IN Eutrophication – HELCOM Intersessional Network on Eutrophication
   - 5.6. JWG Bird – HELCOM-OSPAR-ICES Joint Working Group on Seabirds
   - 5.7. MORS EG – HELCOM Expert Group on Monitoring of Radioactive Substances in the Baltic Sea

6. Agri Group – Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices

7. Fish Group – Group on Ecosystem-Based Sustainable Fisheries
   - 7.1. CG Aquaculture – Correspondence Group concerning a draft document on Best Available Technology/Best Environmental Practices (BAT/BEP) descriptions for sustainable aquaculture in the Baltic Sea region
   - 7.2. FISH-M – Task Force on Migratory Fish Species

8. HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG – Joint Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning
   - 8.1. MSP Data Expert Sub-Group – Baltic Sea Region Maritime Spatial Planning Data Expert Sub-Group

Annex 2. List of Ongoing HELCOM Projects

1. ACTION – Actions to Evaluate and Identify Effective Measures to Reach GES in the Baltic Sea Marine Region (2019–2020)

2. BSR WATER – Platform on Integrated Water Cooperation (2018–2021)

3. COMPLETE – Completing Management Options in the Baltic Sea Region to Reduce Risk of Invasive Species Introduction by Shipping (2017–2020)

4. CSHIPP – Clean Shipping Project Platform (2018–2020)

5. EMERGE – Evaluation, Control and Mitigation of the Environmental Impacts of Shipping Emissions (2020–2024)

6. FanpLESStic-sea – Initiatives to Remove Microplastics Before they Enter the Sea (2019–2021)

7. FISH-PRO III – Project for Baltic-Wide Assessment of Coastal Fish Communities in Support of an Ecosystem-Based Management (2018–2023)

8. HASPS 3 – Horizontal Action "Spatial Planning" Support 3 (2018–2020)

9. PEG – Quality Assurance of Phytoplankton Monitoring in the Baltic Sea (PEG QA) (2020–2022)

10. PLC-7 – Seventh Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation (2017–2019)

11. RETROUT – Development, Promotion and Sustainable Management of the Baltic Sea Region as a Coastal Fishing Tourism Destination (2017–2020)

12. SuMaNu – Sustainable Manure and Nutrient Management for Reduction of Nutrient Loss in the Baltic Sea Region (2018–2021)

Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
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