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Background

The implementation of actions under the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and the Ministerial commitments have been followed up on a number of occasions, and the last report was prepared for the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting. The Secretariat has developed a proposal on how the current follow-up system could be revised and improved, and a draft was presented to GEAR 8-2014 and HOD 47-2014.

The proposal is two-phased with a simple “indicator-based system” of agreed actions, to be firstly developed by mid-2015 and implemented by end of 2015. In the second phase a detailed follow-up system for the reporting on measures taken and the effectiveness of their implementation is proposed to be developed (e.g. by 2018).

This document contains a description of the basic principles of the proposed follow-up system and a timetable of the steps for its further development. The annexes to the document listed below contain the agri-related actions which are suggested for follow-up:

- **Annex 1:** Actions with a clear target and deadline for which the accomplishment can be followed up,
- **Annex 2:** Actions identified as having general objectives or overlapping with the commitments of the other HELCOM agreements; proposed not to be follow-up in terms of level of accomplishment,
- **Annex 3:** Proposed follow-up of HELCOM Recommendation 28E/4
- **Annex 4:** Further delineation of actions

An example of the indicators to follow up the implementation of the actions as well as the justification of the accomplishment level is given in the **Annex 5**.

Reporting by the Contracting Parties according to the BSAP follow-up system is scheduled to take place in the third quarter of 2015.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to consider and advise on the list of the agriculture-related actions to be followed up and suggest a suitable way to evaluate the progress in implementation.

Proposal on new follow-up system on implementation of actions agreed in HELCOM

Background

One of the duties of the Helsinki Commission is to keep the implementation of the Helsinki Convention under continuous observation.

The implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and other HELCOM agreements have been followed-up on a number of occasions; the [last overview](#) was prepared for the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting. The overview provides an exhaustive list of different actions mentioned in the BSAP and the 2010 Ministerial Declaration, in total more than 100 actions. The description of progress was based on national information, resulting in a narrative interpretation of progress and designation of status of “accomplishment” based on three levels; accomplished, partly accomplished, not yet accomplished.

The next planned follow-up of the implementation of the BSAP and other HELCOM agreements will be carried out during 2015, to complement the ongoing process to identify scope for coordination of national measures and the development of regional measures and joint actions. The ‘Joint document on regional coordination of Programmes of Measures’ that is being developed by the Gear group and its Intersessional Group on Programmes of Measures (IG PoM) by the end of 2015 will include the results of the follow up. The joint document will, i.a., be used as a component in the reporting of MSFD Article 13 (Programmes of Measures), for those HELCOM Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States.

A lesson learned from previous progress reports is that while assessment of accomplishment gives a clear and communicable result, it also requires that the actions have a clear and measurable target. Many of the agreed HELCOM actions are however of a more general character or are open-ended processes and therefore not suited to concluding on in terms of accomplishment. Also, there is currently no agreement on what to report or when an action is to be considered as accomplished, resulting in a challenge to interpret disparate country reporting.

These shortcomings in reporting have resulted in the development of a proposed new follow-up system, led by the Secretariat. The aim is to develop a system where Contracting Parties make a **self-evaluation** of the level of accomplishment using **unified indicators/questions**. The proposal is focused on the BSAP and actions agreed by HELCOM Ministerial Declarations while selected recommendations are also addressed.

In a first phase, and to be finalized in 2015, the development of a follow-up system focuses on:

- defining which **actions that can be assessed in terms of level of accomplishment**,
- defining **indicators/questions** to assess the level of accomplishment of these actions,
- defining **rules for assigning level of accomplishment** at the regional level,
- and with the guiding principle to keep it **as simple as possible**.

This first phase thus focuses on assessing whether **agreed actions have been carried out** or not. When the actions are primarily to be taken at the national level, it requires that countries report on each action according to the agreed indicators/questions. However, from a HELCOM perspective, the level of accomplishment is always **assessed at the regional level**. The document also identifies actions that are not considered as suited for follow-up in terms of level of accomplishment but that are proposed to be regularly followed-up by HELCOM Working Groups.

In a second phase, the system is proposed to be expanded in order to provide a more detailed **follow-up of measures** taken to improve the status of the Baltic Sea and to evaluate the **effectiveness of those measures**. The second phase is proposed to be developed by 2017/2018. This background document focuses on the first phase.

Basis for the proposed follow-up system

Actions to be followed-up in terms of level of accomplishment need a clear measurable target. All agreed actions that have not yet been assessed as accomplished have therefore been screened and their objectives have been categorized as being specific, general, or overarching. It is proposed that the level of accomplishment should be assessed only for the first category of actions.

Specific objectives: Actions with a clear target and deadline. Proposed indicators/questions to assess their accomplishment have been formulated (**Annex 1**).

General objectives: Actions that lack a specific target but still have clear objective, e.g. to 'model of distribution of habitat forming species' or to 'promote and advance annual nutrient accounting at farm level'.

If the accomplishment of these actions is to be followed-up, a more specific target needs to be formulated. Alternatively the progress of these actions can be followed-up over time by the relevant Working Group, e.g. by reporting on their progress (**Annex 2**), thereby providing the basis for a narrative description of progress in future follow-up reports.

Overarching objectives: Some agreed actions are expressed as visions or high level ambitions, e.g. "the Baltic Sea shall become a model of good management of human activities". Such actions have been categorized as having an overarching objective and are considered too wide for regular follow-up activities (**Annex 2**). In principle, implementation of the specific and general objectives should lead to the achievement of the overarching objectives.

Level of implementation: national or regional

All actions have been categorized to separate those to be taken nationally from those to be carried out on a regional level (**Annex 1**).

National actions: Examples of national actions are the designation of MPAs, or implementation of a specific recommendation. Reporting by Contracting Parties is required in order to assess the level of accomplishment.

Regional actions: Examples of regional actions include e.g. to carry out an assessment of the network of HELCOM MPAs or to develop a HELCOM recommendation. The level of accomplishment can in this case be assessed by the Secretariat, with the support of relevant Working Groups.

Indicators and agreed rules of aggregation

Reporting

For each action that has been categorized as having a specific objective and target (i.e. those actions proposed to be followed-up in terms of level of accomplishment), indicators have been proposed (**Annex 1**). Note that there is no need for national reporting if the actions are to be implemented at the regional level.

In the simplest cases, countries are asked to respond whether the action is a) accomplished, b) ongoing c) not started. In other cases countries may be asked to report on the number or percentage of relevant parameters. In all cases the assessment is based on a self-evaluation by the Contracting Party.

If an action is reported as accomplished, the Contracting Party will be asked to provide a short summary of how the action has been implemented and provide link to relevant documentation (national language acceptable).

If an action is reported as ongoing Contracting Parties will be asked to provide a short summary of ongoing activities and to provide information on when the action is expected to be accomplished.

Assessment of accomplishment at the regional level

Presentation of results will be provided from a regional perspective. The aim is to provide a simple assessment of the level of accomplishment using the same categories as previously; accomplished, partly

accomplished, not accomplished. In the simplest case, the number of countries reporting an action as “accomplished” is proposed to be taken into account e.g.

- Accomplished: ALL CPs should have implemented the action,
- Partly accomplished: SOME CPs have implemented the action,
- Not accomplished: NO CP has implemented the action.

Other variants are however also proposed when appropriate; see **Annex 1**.

There is also potential to aggregate the implementation of individual actions to the level of topics; i.e. to aggregate actions related to inputs of nutrients, MPAs, or protection of specific species. How such aggregation could take place needs further consideration.

Follow-up of HELCOM Recommendations

At present, some HELCOM Recommendations are specifically addressed in the BSAP. Furthermore, actions agreed in Ministerial Declarations sometimes overlap with HELCOM Recommendations. In this case it is proposed to follow-up the recommendations directly (**Annex 3**) rather than through scattered actions in the BSAP or Ministerial Declaration. Although this approach would be desirable for all recommendations, it can only be proposed for a sub-set of recommendations at this time.

Presentation of results

For the follow-up of actions a simple summary presentation of the implementation of actions will be used (e.g. traffic light colours **Annexes 1 and 3**). If an action is partly accomplished a summary of the number of countries that have implemented the action can be provided. If available, information on when the action can be expected to be accomplished could also be provided.

If there is no ongoing work to implement the action, an explanation on the reasons should be provided. It is also important for Working Groups to define if some existing actions are considered as redundant or otherwise no longer relevant i.e. if there are reasons to exclude them.

Further delineation of actions

To support a variety of uses of the results, the actions have been further specified in terms of type of action and the pressures and/or elements that are addressed by the action (**Annex 4**). They can thereby be sorted according to the purpose of presenting the results.

Timetable

The proposed follow-up of agreed actions will be

- **discussion and amendment of the follow-up template by HELCOM Working Groups during the 2nd quarter of 2015.**
- endorsement at HOD 48-2015
- Contracting Parties to provide information on implementation of actions during 3rd Q 2015
- results to be aggregated and finalized by end of 2015.

With this time table, a simplified BSAP follow-up with updated information could be included in the final version of the planned joint document on Programmes of Measures by end of 2015.

Further development of the follow-up system

As indicated in the background, the plan is also to develop a more detailed follow-up of the measures that have been taken and the results and effectiveness of those measures (measured or calculated). This would be particularly relevant for the more concrete measures e.g. those related to reduction of pressures or to spatially protect the marine environment.

As an example, a system presenting nutrient reduction measures taken by Contracting Parties could be linked to the tool which is currently being developed to follow-up on progress towards the MAI/CART. Such detailed

reporting could form the basis for assessing sufficiency of measures taken to reach the objectives of the BSAP and other HELCOM agreements.

To initiate the development of the more elaborate follow-up of measures, **HELCOM Working Groups are also asked to identify those actions that are relevant to follow-up from point of “results” and “effectiveness” of measures taken.**

Annex 1. Actions related to reduction of negative environmental impact of agriculture on the Baltic Sea **proposed to be followed-up in terms of level of accomplishment.**

Action (nr from 2013 follow-up)	Origin/Deadline	Level	Indicator for national reporting	Indicator for aggregation at regional level	Accomplished (Regional)	Partly accomplished (Regional)	Not accomplished (Regional)
Initiate activity to identify/verify areas critical to N and P losses, utilizing the available data and as a starting point, to enable directing targeted and cost-effective measures where they can bring the greatest environment effect, e.g. compulsory measures on manure handling (storage and application) for installations of intensive rearing of cattle, poultry and pigs	MD 2010 MD 2013	National					
Measures to bring all installations for the intensive rearing of cattle, poultry and pigs as well as other agricultural activities in compliance with part 2, Annex III of the Helsinki Convention (and thus remove all agricultural hot spots from JCP list)	MD2010 MD 2103	National					
Apply as a minimum the updated EU's BREF document and Conclusions on BAT for intensive rearing of poultry and pigs, especially for the facilities located within areas critical to nutrient losses	MD 2013						
Establishment of a list of hot spots concerning animal farms for extensive rearing of cattle, poultry and pigs not in compliance with part 2, Annex III of the Helsinki Convention	BSAP MD 2010						

Review and update part II of Annex III of the Helsinki Convention, in order to better serve the purposes of reaching GES	MD 2013						
Aim for elimination of remaining agricultural Hot Spots under the HELCOM JCP	MD 2013						
HELCOM Palette of optional agro-environmental measures to be implemented through corresponding international and national instruments	MD 2013						
Agreement on national level on measures to reduce nutrient surplus in fertilization practices to reach nutrient balanced fertilization	MD 2013						
Promote and advance annual nutrient accounting at farm level, in areas critical to nutrient losses as a first step	MD 2013 2018						
Establish national guidelines or standards for nutrient content in manure and guidelines/recommendation on the use of such standards	MD 2013 2016/ 2018						
Apply innovative water management measures, in particular under difficult soil conditions, to ensure that upgrading and renovation of the agricultural drainage systems aim at reducing nutrient concentrations in the outlets of the adjacent catchment	MD 2013						

Annex 2. Actions identified as having General objectives or overlapping with the commitments of the other HELCOM agreements; proposed **not to be follow-up in terms of level of accomplishment**. Progress is proposed to be followed up over time by HELCOM Working Groups (or a more precise target needs to be expressed).

Action	Origin	Comment
Follow-up and exchange experiences and ideas for potential development of policy instruments and measures for improved farm nutrient management	MD 2013	The action could not be followed due to unmeasurable target
Make use of appropriate policy and economic instruments as well as economic levies and incentives, in order to minimize nutrient losses in agriculture	MD 2013	The action could not be followed due to unmeasurable target
Facilitate enhanced transfer of knowledge and technology and exchange of good examples as well as development of co-operation projects to reduce agricultural impact on the Baltic Sea;	MD 2010 MD 2013	The action could not be followed due to unmeasurable target
Enhance the recycling of phosphorus (especially in agriculture and waste water treatment) and to promote development of appropriate methodology	MD 2013	The action could not be followed due to unmeasurable target
Designation of relevant parts of agricultural land as zones vulnerable to nitrogen	BSAP	The action overlaps with "Initiate activity to identify/verify areas critical to N and P losses, utilizing the available data..."

Annex 3. Proposed follow-up of HELCOM Recommendation 28E/4 "Amendments to Annex III "Criteria and Measures Concerning the Prevention of Pollution from Land-Based Sources" of the 1992 Helsinki Convention" implementation.

Action	Deadline	Implementation	Indicator of national implementation	Indicator of regional implementation	Accomplished (Regional)	Partly accomplished (Regional)	Not accomplished (Regional)
The Contracting Parties shall integrate the following basic principles into national legislation or guidelines and adapt them to the prevailing conditions within the country to reduce the adverse environmental effects of agriculture.		National					
The amount of livestock manure applied to the land each year including by the animals themselves should not exceed the amount of manure containing: 170 kg/ha nitrogen; 25 kg/ha phosphorus		National					
The manure storage capacity should comply the requirements of the Recommendation 28E/4		National					
The environmental permitting system is organized according to the Regulation 4 of the Recommendation 28E/4	2012	National					
The Contracting Parties shall promote systems for education, information and extension (advisory service) on environmental issues in the agricultural sector.		National					

<p>The maximum number of animals should be determined with consideration taken of the need to balance between the amount of phosphorus and nitrogen in manure and the crops' requirements for plant nutrients</p>		<p>National</p>					
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Annex 4. Further delineation of actions

Type of action

HELCOM actions contain a mix of concrete measures to reduce pressures or protect the marine environment, with the development of guidelines, ratification of protocols, carrying out assessments, etc. To support the development of Programmes of Measures, the actions have been categorized to separate concrete measures from other types of actions.

The following categories have been used based on an interpretation of the MSFD CIS definition of measures¹, and taking into account HELCOM measures such as recommendations and core activities of HELCOM e.g. monitoring and assessment, and data and information.

a. Measures [directly aimed at reducing pressures or improving the state of the environment]

- i. Reduction of pressures
- ii. Spatial protection
- iii. Restoration/Reintroductions of habitats and species
- iv. HELCOM Recommendations that require implementation through measures
- v. Joint actions with the aim of influencing international regulations

b. Management coordination [aimed at establishing joint HELCOM principles for management of the marine environment]

- i. HELCOM Recommendations not included under Measures
- ii. Plans, guidelines and manuals
- iii. Assessment tools
- iv. Classification systems, reporting systems
- v. Follow-up/assessments of agreed actions and plans

c. Monitoring and assessment [i.e. the implementation of]

- i. Monitoring and surveillance
- ii. Assessments

d. Data and information

- i. Data
- ii. Databases

e. Knowledge

- i. Promotion of research
- ii. Reviews and evaluations
- iii. Development of supporting information [e.g. modelling]

Pressure/Measure that is addressed

Actions are also categorized in terms of the pressure (or specific measure) they address according to the themes used in the Joint document on regional coordination of Programmes of Measures.

- Inputs of nutrients and organic matter
- Inputs of synthetic and non-synthetic contaminants and systematic and/or intentional release of substances
- Accidental pollution from maritime activities
- Spatial protection measures
- Conservation, restoration and reintroduction of species
- Physical loss and damage of seabed habitats
- Selective extraction and incidental by-catch of species
- Introduction of non-indigenous species
- Inputs of litter
- Inputs of energy including underwater noise

¹ “any action on a national, European or international level with a view to achieving or maintaining GES and with reference to the environmental targets.”

Annex 5. Examples of the national and regional indicators as well as level of accomplishment to follow up implementation of the BSAP and Ministerial meeting commitments and HECLM recommendations.

Action (nr from 2013 follow-up)	Origin/Deadline	Level	Indicator for national reporting	Indicator for aggregation at regional level	Accomplished (Regional)	Partly accomplished (Regional)	Not accomplished (Regional)
Assess potential significant sources of nutrient pollution on land e.g. industries, fur- and fish-farming, and when needed address them with abatement measures and/or emission limits	MD 2013	National	National implementation of abatement measures and/or setting up emission limits for significant sources of nutrient pollution on land	Nr. of CPs reported on the implementation and/or setting up emission limits for significant sources of nutrient pollution on land	All the CPs with significant sources of nutrient pollution on land implemented of abatement measure and/or set up emission limits for them.	Some CPs with significant sources of nutrient pollution on land implemented of abatement measure and/or set up mission limits for them.	No CPs with significant sources of nutrient pollution on land implemented of abatement measure and/or set up mission limits for them.
Early ratification of the UNEP 2013 Minamata Convention on Mercury.	MD 2013	National	The Minamata Convention on Mercury is ratified Yes/No	Nr of CPs ratified The Minamata Convention on Mercury.	All the CPs ratified The Minamata Convention on Mercury.	CPs have lunched ratification procedures for the Minamata Convention on Mercury.	CPs have not lunched ratification procedures for the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
Urban (municipal) wastewater deriving from households (domestic wastewater) or industrial enterprises should be collected and treated before being discharged into waterbodies; by-passes may only be used in emergency cases	Rec. 28/5	National	Proportion of direct discharges of wastewater deriving from households (domestic wastewater) or industrial enterprises in the country	Proportion of direct discharges of wastewater deriving from households (domestic wastewater) or industrial enterprises in the region	No direct discharges of wastewater from households (domestic wastewater) or industrial enterprises	Most of wastewater from households (domestic wastewater) or industrial enterprises are treated	Most of wastewater from households (domestic wastewater) or industrial enterprises are discharged without treatment