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Background

This document presents information on the outcomes of recent HELCOM meetings relevant to the work of the Expert Group on Wildlife Response (EG WILDLIFE) and not reflected in other documents submitted to the Meeting. The document includes information on key decisions of [HELCOM 42-2021](#), [RESPONSE 29-2021](#) and [HOD 61-2021](#).

Upcoming meetings of HELCOM groups relevant to EG WILDLIFE will be held as follows:

- HELCOM 43-2022 on 3-4 March 2022 in Helsinki, Finland;
- SHORE Network 6-2022 on 14 March 2022 in Helsinki Finland;
- RESPONSE 30-2022 on 15-18 March 2022 in Helsinki, Finland;
- HOD 62-2022 on 14 and 17 June 2022, online.
- RESPONSE 31-2022 tentatively in October or early November 2022 in Estonia.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and make use of it as appropriate.

Outcomes of recent HELCOM meetings

HELCOM 42-2021

The 42nd Meeting of the Helsinki Commission ([HELCOM 42-2021](#)) was held on 17-18 March 2021 as an online meeting in line with the HELCOM policy on COVID-19. Matters of specific interest to the EG WILDLIFE are outlined below.

Agenda Item 5 Matters arising from the subsidiary bodies

Response Working Group

5.48 The Meeting adopted the revised HELCOM Recommendation 31E/6 on integrated wildlife response planning in the Baltic Sea area (document 5-2 and Annex 4).

5.49 The Meeting withdrew HELCOM Recommendation 17/12 on measures to abate pollution by oil and other harmful substances in cases of grounding, collision, sinking of a ship or other maritime casualty (document 5-1).

5.51 The Meeting adopted the revised [HELCOM Response Manual](#) as contained in document 5-12, which will replace the current Volumes 1 and 3 of the Manual.

5.53 The Meeting adopted the draft [Multi-regional Marine HNS Response Manual](#) as contained in document 5-13, which will replace the current HELCOM Response Manual Volume 2.

RESPONSE 29-2021

The 29th Meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group ([RESPONSE 29-2021](#)) was held on 28-30 September 2022 as an online meeting in line with the HELCOM policy on COVID-19. Matters of specific interest to the EG WILDLIFE are outlined below.

Agenda Item 3 Risk assessments and safety of navigation

3.3. The Meeting recalled the discussions at RESPONSE 26-2019 and RESPONSE 27-2020 regarding the need for an updated risk analysis for oil and HNS pollution in the Baltic Sea, given that the BRISK results are based on 2007-2008 data and are now outdated. The Meeting took note of the action “Conduct a feasibility study by 2022 for, and as appropriate, undertake a risk analysis for oil and hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) pollution of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea area by 2025” in the draft updated BSAP.

3.4. The Meeting reiterated that there is a need for an updated risk analysis of oil and HNS spills in the Baltic Sea, especially since the validity of the BRISK risk analysis, which was based on data from 2007-2008, has expired in 2020.

3.5. The Meeting considered document 3-1, setting out a proposed way forward for conducting a feasibility study and prepare a full risk analysis for oil and HNS pollution. The Meeting noted that the document had been prepared by a “informal small group” consisting of the Chair of the Response Working Group, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Secretariat.

3.6. In discussing the way forward to conducting the feasibility study, the Meeting agreed that the work should be led by the “informal group”. The Meeting appreciated the confirmation by Denmark, Finland and Sweden that they are willing to continue lead this work, with support by the Secretariat. The Meeting invited other Contracting Parties to also join the work.

3.7. The Meeting agreed one of the aims with the feasibility study should be to determine the scope of the risk analysis by weighing the needs and the funding possibilities. The Meeting further agreed that in preparing the feasibility study, the “informal group” should inter alia also consider the role of Contracting Parties in the project, the need to include drift modelling, Contracting Parties’ response capacities and how the project could support other BSAP actions related to response issues, such as monitoring and pollution risk assessment regarding species and habitats in the Baltic Region.

3.8. The Meeting agreed that RESPONSE 30-2022 should be extended by one day and that the first full day of the meeting should be a thematic day for further developing the feasibility study based on a draft to be prepared by the “informal group”. The Meeting recognized that the thematic day will be crucial in planning the way forward.

3.9. The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to inform the “informal group” about consultant companies or research institutions in their countries, that may be able to undertake the envisaged risk analysis. The Meeting invited the “informal group” to contact those companies with the view of inviting those with the most potential to be able to undertake a risk analysis, to the thematic day at RESPONSE 30-2022.

3.10. The Meeting, however, noted that legal advice may be needed before inviting consultants to the thematic day at RESPONSE 30-2022, in order to ensure that involvement of consultants early in the process. The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to liaise with legal departments of their organization in this regard.

3.11. The Meeting noted that no Contracting Parties are in the position to confirm funding for the risk analysis project. Consequently, the Meeting agreed that external funding should be sourced, e.g. from an appropriate EU funding mechanism.

3.12. The Meeting invited the “informal group” to look into the various EU funding mechanism as they are suitable to fund different types of work with different timeframes.

3.13. The Meeting noted that there may be possibilities for synergies with risk analysis work being undertaken in other organizations, e.g. Bonn Agreement. The Meeting invited the “informal group” to consider this in their work, taking also into account the Bonn Agreement Strategic Action Plan. The Meeting welcomed the offer by Denmark to keep the “informal group” and the Response Working Group informed of relevant developments in that regard. The Meeting agreed that representatives of Bonn Agreement and other regional agreements could be invited to the thematic day during RESPONSE 30-2022.

3.14. The Meeting noted that a dedicated session on risk analysis may also be organized in the context of the Inter-Secretariat Meeting organized by EMSA, likely to be organized in February 2021, and that this would facilitate planning of the thematic workshop before RESPONSE 30-2021.

Agenda Item 4 Matters related to recent response operations

4.1. The Meeting took note of the draft HELCOM report on shipping accidents in the Baltic Sea 2019 (document 4-2-Corr.1) which will be submitted to MARITIME 21-2021 for approval for publication on the HELCOM website. The Meeting noted that Russia had not reported any accidents in 2019, but that Figure 7 in document 4-2 Corr.1 nevertheless depicts two accidents in Russian waters. The Meeting took note of a clarification by the Secretariat that these accidents had been reported by the flag states of the involved ships.

4.2. The Meeting took note of the draft HELCOM report on shipping accidents in the Baltic Sea 2020 (document 4-4), which will be submitted to MARITIME 21-2021 for approval for publication on the HELCOM website. The Meeting noted that two groundings of ROPAX vessels in 2020 around the Åland Islands, Finland, are not included in the report although they were widely reported in media. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to look into the matter and make necessary corrections before submission of the draft report to MARTIME 21-2021 for approval.

4.3. The Meeting took note of the information on significant response operations in 2020 as reported by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden (document 4-1). The Meeting noted that no significant response operations at sea nor on the shore took place in 2020 in Germany. The Meeting further noted that no information had been received prior to the Meeting from Russia.

4.4. The Meeting noted an editorial error in the data from Finland (West-Uusimaa instead of East-Uusimaa) and invited the Secretariat to correct the error before submission of the data on significant response operations in 2020 to MARITIME 21-2021 as part of the 2020 accidents report.

Agenda Item 5 National preparedness at sea and on shore

5.1. The Meeting noted that Estonia, Finland and Germany had reported on national developments regarding response at sea, on shore and for oiled wildlife response using the template provided in document 5-1 (documents 5-1, attachment 4 (Germany), 5-3 (Finland) and 5-3 Add.1 (Estonia)). The Meeting noted that for the other Contracting Parties, previously reported developments were available in attachments 2, 3 and 5-8 of document 5-1.

Agenda Item 7 Response on the shore and wildlife response

7.2. The Meeting noted that not all Contracting Parties have attended meetings of SHORE Network and further that some Contracting Parties have not provided updated information on recent national and regional developments of relevance for SHORE Network. The Meeting encouraged all Contracting Parties to attend future meetings of the SHORE Network, to nominate contacts for the group and to provide relevant information using the agreed template as requested in the annotations to SHORE Network Meetings. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to circulate the list of nominated contacts of SHORE Network to the Response HODs of all Contracting Parties. The Meeting further invited HOD 61-2021 to also consider this matter and to encourage all Contracting Parties to attend and contribute to the SHORE Network.

7.3. The Meeting considered and approved the draft Work Plan for 2022-2023 for the SHORE Network as set out in Annex 2 to the Outcome of SHORE Network 5-2021.

7.5. The Meeting took note that Germany was elected as lead country of SHORE Network and that Jens Rautenberg, Germany, was elected as the Chair for SHORE Network.

7.6. The Meeting took note of the introduction by Sea Alarm to documents 7-2, 7-2 Add.1, 7-3 and 7-4 related to oiled wildlife response (**Presentation 5**).

7.7. Specifically, the Meeting took note of the Outcome of 17th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 17-2021) was held online on 9 February 2021 (document 7-3).

7.8. The Meeting took note that EWG OWR 18-2021, scheduled for 14 September 2021, was cancelled due to only five Contracting Parties having registered to the Meeting. According to the decision by RESPONSE 27-2020, two thirds of the Contracting Parties (6 of 9) are to be registered to attend a EWG OWR meeting for the meeting to be held (c.f. Outcome of RESPONSE 27-2020, paragraph 8.3). A new date for the next meeting of the Group will be decided via correspondence.

7.9. The Meeting expressed concern regarding the low participation in meetings of EWG OWR and encouraged all Contracting Parties to attend future meeting and to nominate contacts for the group if not already done. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to circulate the list of nominated contacts, together with the SHORE Network contacts (c.f. paragraph 7.2 above), to the Response HODs of all Contracting Parties. The Meeting further invited HOD 61-2021 to also consider this matter and to encourage all Contracting Parties to attend and contribute to the future meetings.

7.10. The Meeting considered and approved the draft Terms of Reference (document 7-2) and Work Plan (document 7-2-Add.1) for 2022-2023 for the renamed HELCOM Wildlife Response Group (WILDLIFE) with the view to their subsequent adoption by HOD 61-2021 (December 2021).

7.11. The Meeting took note of the report of an online seminar on euthanasia organized by Sea Alarm on 20 April 2021 (document 7-4).

7.12. The Meeting took note of information provided on the EUROWA-2 project (document 7-5).

7.13. The Meeting considered the invitation to two EUROWA-2 authority workshops on integrated management for dealing with wildlife challenges during pollution emergencies in January and March 2022. The workshops will familiarize participants with the integrated management aspects of a wildlife incident and will explore which tools and processes can be used to optimise an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach to marine wildlife emergency management. The Meeting noted that the workshops support implementation of the action “*Strengthen mutual assistance for oiled wildlife response in the Baltic Region by 2025.*” in the draft updated BSAP. Consequently, the Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to consider attending the workshops and to register as per the instructions in the invitation.

7.14. The Meeting discussed the need to synchronize efforts regarding the oiled wildlife response exercise guideline with the HELCOM Response Manual and the HELCOM Response Exercise Plan (HREP).

7.15. The Meeting noted that Finland had faced challenges when trying to mobilize European Oiled Wildlife Assistance (EUROWA) in the context of BALEX DELTA 2021, as it is not a module under the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The Meeting noted that for this reason, mobilization is done through contacting Sea Alarm directly.

Agenda Item 9 Remote Sensing

9.1 Aerial surveillance

9.6. The Meeting approved the draft HELCOM Annual report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea in 2020 for publication on the HELCOM webpage (document 9-1).

Agenda Item 11 Exercises

11.1 BALEX

11.7. The Meeting took note of the information by Germany on preparations for HELCOM BALEX 2022 to be held in the last week of August in the Mecklenburg Bay, Germany (document 11-2). It was noted that the exercise will be scenario based and consist of three main elements: 1) oil response at sea, 2) oil response in shallow water and on shore, and 3) HNS response at sea.

Agenda Item 15 Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

15.1. The Meeting elected Torben Iversen, Denmark, as the Chair of the Response Working Group for the next two-year period (2022-2023).

15.2. The Meeting elected Johan Genestig, Sweden, as the Vice-chair of the Response Working Group for the next two-year period (2022-2023).

HOD 61-2021

The 61st Meeting of the HELCOM Heads of Delegation ([HOD 61-2021](#)) was held on 8-9 December 2021 as an online meeting. Matters of specific interest to the EG WILDLIFE are outlined below.

Agenda Item 6 Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups

Response Working Group

6.11 The Meeting endorsed the draft revised Recommendation 12/7 on special cooperation in case of a chemical tanker accident in the Baltic Sea with a view to its adoption by HELCOM 43-2022 (Annex 3 of the Outcome of RESPONSE 29-2021).

- 6.12 The Meeting took note of the fact that RESPONSE 29-2021 approved the updated draft Work Plan for 2022-2023 of the SHORE Network.
- 6.13 The Meeting took note that RESPONSE 29-2021 approved the HELCOM Annual Report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea in 2020 for publication on the HELCOM webpage.
- 6.14 The Meeting took note of the progress in planning a feasibility study and full risk analysis for oil and HNS pollution.
- 6.15 The Meeting encouraged all Contracting Parties to nominate experts to the SHORE Network and EWG OWR/EG WILDLIFE, to attend meetings and contribute to the work of the groups.
- 6.18 The Meeting took note of the draft Terms of Reference for the Expert Group on Wildlife Response (EG WILDLIFE) for 2022-2023 (document 6-6) and adopted the Terms of Reference as contained in Annex 2 to this Outcome, including amendments proposed by Denmark.