



Document title	Extracts from meetings of relevance for the Gear Group
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Agenda Item	2- Matters arising from other meetings of relevance to GEAR
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Reference	

Background

This document contains extracts from relevant HELCOM meetings held since the last meeting of the Gear group:

1. [HOD 48-2015](#), 10-11 June 2015, Tallinn, Estonia
2. [Biodiversity tool WS 1-2015](#), 15 June 2015, Gothenburg, Sweden
3. [HOLAS II 3-2015](#), 16-17 June 2015, Gothenburg, Sweden

Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Extracts from meetings of relevance for the Gear Group

1. HOD 48-2015, 10-11 June 2015, Tallinn, Estonia

Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups

Marine litter

- The Meeting considered and endorsed the proposed Annex with regional actions and voluntary national actions as part of HELCOM Recommendation 36-1 “Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (RAP ML)” (Attachment 1 of document 3-1) as included in **Annex 2** to this Outcome.
- The Meeting agreed on the reporting formats and definitions to the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (Attachment 2 of document 3-1).
- The Meeting encouraged the Contracting Parties to consider leading additional actions in the Annex and requested nomination of national contact points for different actions.
- The Meeting emphasized the role of information exchange between OSPAR and HELCOM to coordinate activities on RAP ML implementation as well as took note of the information by EU regarding the relevant ongoing activities at the European level, including on microplastics.
- The Meeting noted that PRESSURE 3-2015 is planned to devote part of its meeting to marine litter, among other topics, which will be an opportunity to look into the implementation plan for the RAP ML.

Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (Fish)

- The Meeting took note of the outcome of the First Meeting of the Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (doc. 3-11) presented by Mr. Marcin Ruciński, Chair of the Fish group, and noted that discussions have progressed on a few topics such as recreational fisheries, in addition to the main issue of finalizing the Recommendation on aquaculture.
- The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties, if they wish so, to provide further input to the work plan of the Group as well as to contribute to scoping of the work of the task force on migratory fish species, and took note of the suggestion by Sweden for the Fish group to enhance cooperation with OSPAR and ICES.
- The Meeting noted that the next meeting of the Group is planned to focus, among others, on by-catch, follow-up of the ICES Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) advice on fisheries intensity, and recreational fisheries.
- The Meeting approved holding the next meeting of the Group (FISH 3-2015) on 26-27 November 2015 in Warsaw, Poland.

HELCOM Recommendation on sustainable aquaculture

- The Meeting considered the proposed new HELCOM Recommendation on sustainable aquaculture (document 3-18) and proposals by Denmark to the Recommendation (doc. 3-18-Add.1).
- The Meeting decided to set up a drafting group, consisting of Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden and EU, led by the Chair of the Fish group, to discuss and propose solutions to the open issues.
- The Meeting considered the outcome of the drafting group (doc. 3-18-Rev.1), noted that this final version of the Recommendation represents a compromise and balanced proposal and invited the Contracting Parties to confirm their readiness to adopt it at HELCOM 37-2016. The study reservation by all Contracting Parties should be clarified **by 14 August 2015** by notifying the Secretariat (dmitry.frank-kamenetsky@helcom.fi). The Chair plead the Contracting Parties to make their utmost to lift the study reservation.

Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (Gear)

- The Meeting took note of the outcomes of GEAR 10-2015 and GEAR 11-2015 in general (doc. 3-14).
- The Meeting noted that a workshop led by the Intersessional Group on Programmes of Measures (IG PoM) will be held on 28 October 2015 to finalize a proposal on topics in need of further regional

coordination of measures and that the outcome will be included in the 'Joint HELCOM document on regional coordination of Programmes of Measures' that will be finalized by the end of this year. HELCOM Working Groups have been asked to provide technical input to the list of proposed topics, and Chairs of Working Groups will be invited to the Workshop.

- The Meeting supported the Gear conclusion regarding future HELCOM work on environmental targets to be focused, as a first step, on joint principles for environmental targets related to damage to seafloor.
- The Meeting approved organizing the IG PoM Workshop on 28 October and GEAR 12-2015 on 29-30 October 2015, in Warsaw, Poland.
- The Meeting welcomed the information on the financing opportunity for the Secretariat to apply for a direct grant from the EU to support HOLAS II and agreed that the Secretariat will develop an application to apply for the grant focusing on those components of HOLAS II that have not sufficient resources yet.

Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area (Pressure)

- The Meeting noted the willingness of a number of Contracting Parties to support the work on HELCOM Recommendation on sustainable handling of sewage sludge.
- The Meeting approved arranging the next meeting of the WG to focus on hazardous substances, and marine litter and underwater noise on 7-9 October 2015. The Meeting welcomed the offer by Denmark to host the Pressure group meeting. Denmark will confirm the hosting of the meeting as soon as possible.
- The Meeting approved arranging PRESSURE 4-2016 in the period 18-21 April 2016 (in Sweden).
- The Meeting agreed in general on the approach to the future production of PLC data and assessment products so that they are timely and complementary to each other and meet policy needs (doc. 3-2) with the understanding that the frequency of assessment products is still an open issue. The Meeting noted that the Pressure WG will continue discussing the target year for PLC-7 in its next meeting.
- The Meeting considered the draft assessment on progress towards fulfilment of CART (doc. 3-15) and thanked DCE Denmark and BNI Sweden as well as the Secretariat for this work.
- The Meeting noted that Germany, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Russia have requested some clarification on the data before the assessment can be published on the website. The Meeting requested these Contracting Parties to submit detailed questions for clarifications to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) **by 25 June 2015**.
- The Meeting took note of the remark by Poland recalling that the Polish Country Allocated Reduction Targets were accepted as indicative due to the ongoing national consultations to be finalized as soon as possible, which Poland requests to be reflected in the CART assessment. The Secretariat will check that this footnote from the Ministerial Meeting is included in the assessment.
- The Meeting requested the Secretariat to inform the Contracting Parties on the status of the clarifications with a view to seek approval of the CART assessment for publishing by HOD via correspondence.
- The Meeting considered the project proposal to operationalize the MAI-CART follow-up assessments (documents 3-3 and 3-29) and agreed on the future operationalization in principle.
- The Meeting agreed on the next update of MAI and CART to be based on data up to 2014 to be able to benefit from some synergies in work under PLC-6.
- The Meeting considered the proposed work plan on preparing a roadmap to building a knowledge base on underwater noise (doc. 3-6).
- The Meeting took note of the information by Russia regarding consideration of the underwater noise issues by IMO, including adoption by MEPC 66 of non-mandatory voluntary guidelines to reduce noise from commercial shipping and that within IMO setting future targets for underwater sound levels emanating from ships was considered premature and difficult to evaluate at that time. The Meeting also took note of the information by Finland that in their view the Baltic Sea countries could in the future provide input to the IMO work through a joint regional approach.
- The Meeting agreed on the work plan, however, decided that it should be amended so the focus should be given first to the work on monitoring, review of existing knowledge and investigating the significance of difference sources of noise as well as HELCOM indicators, while the work on mitigation options and environmental targets should be started with preparing an overview of measures in IMO, OSPAR and

other relevant forums. The Meeting requested the roadmap to be presented to Pressure, Maritime and State&Conservation groups with a view of endorsing it at the HOD 49-2015 meeting in December 2015.

Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri)

- The Meeting took note of the outcome of the Second Meeting of the Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri) in general (doc. 3-22), and more specifically:
 - noted the considerations by the Group regarding the revision of Part II of Annex III to the Helsinki Convention (paragraph 3.8);
 - approved organizing a workshop on nutrient content in manure on 19-20 November 2015, to be hosted by Finland;
 - approved organizing the next meeting of the Group (AGRI 3-2016) in early April 2016 in Estonia.

Core indicators

- Taking note of the study reservations from Denmark and Germany, the Meeting agreed on indicators and GES- boundaries and further development of the set of indicators as contained in **Annex 4** to this Outcome, including their use in HOLAS II assessment according to the recommendation by the Gear Group (document 3-17), and the publication of agreed core indicator reports at the HELCOM website as they become ready for publishing.
- The Meeting considered and agreed that the further indicator development in HELCOM (doc. 3-13 and 3-21) will be based on a Lead Country approach and appointed national experts and that the development should be taken forward using HELCOM expert groups, projects and networks as a platform for the development of the indicators. The Contracting Parties were invited to inform the Secretariat on their possibility to take on the lead or co-lead in the indicator development and to appoint national experts **by 30 June 2015**, also including any confirmation of the same experts continuation as in CORESET II.
- The Meeting requested HELCOM groups, projects and networks to prioritize their role as platform for development of indicators and providers of support for HELCOM assessments and to make arrangements for the work as necessary. The Meeting noted that to improve communication on a national level, information on the ongoing work and tasks of the groups in HELCOM would be useful.
- The Meeting agreed to establish a new HELCOM expert network on hazardous substances. The Meeting agreed to seek opportunities for cooperation with OSPAR as well as to investigate the possibility for a project related to hazardous substances in cooperation with the EUSBSR PA Hazards.
- The Meeting requested nominations of experts to the hazardous substances network as well as expert contacts on underwater noise and birds and update the list of contacts of HELCOM Groups as indicated in document 3-21.

Working Group on State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (State and Conservation)

- The Meeting took note of the outcome of State and Conservation 2-2015 in general (doc. 3-8), and more specifically:
 - noted that the Contracting Parties have been requested to take the lead for developing guidelines for those monitoring programmes that are not covered by existing HELCOM expert groups and projects or leadership;
 - noted the need for developing data arrangements for future updating of core indicators and to support the holistic assessment and supported the steps agreed by State & Conservation to improve data flow in HELCOM;
 - noted that Attachment 4 of the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy will be revised according to the proposed modification of the division of Åland Sea and Western Gotland Basin;
 - noted the progress with establishment of the modernized HELCOM MPA database and encouraged the Contracting Parties to update the information in the database **by 1 September 2015** to cater for the planned analysis of ecological coherence of the MPA network that will be carried out by the end of 2015;

- agreed that the next meeting of the State and Conservation group will be held on 9-13 November 2015 in Helsinki, Finland.
- The Meeting considered the draft HELCOM Recommendation on conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List (doc. 3-7) that was adopted at HELCOM 36-2015 pending a study reservation by Denmark.
- The Meeting welcomed the offer of the Lead Country Germany to seek a solution together with Denmark and other interested countries and that an amended version of the Recommendation should be presented to State and Conservation 3-2015 with the view of endorsing the Recommendation at HOD 49-2015 for adoption at HELCOM 37-2016.
- The Meeting welcomed the draft HELCOM Recommendation on 'Co-operation and coordination of research vessel based monitoring in off-shore areas and procedures for granting permits for monitoring and research activities' (doc. 3-16).
- The Meeting noted that Denmark and Germany could not provide a national view on the Recommendation at this time and will inform the Secretariat on their position **by 10 July 2015**.
- The Meeting noted that the aim to grant permits to monitoring and research vessels, addressed under paragraph d) of the "Recommends" part, needs further consideration. The Meeting invited the Co-Chair of State and Conservation and the Secretariat to develop paragraph d) with the view of presenting the new proposal at State and Conservation 3-2015 and adoption at HELCOM 37-2016.

Maritime Working Group (Maritime)

- The Meeting endorsed the revisions of the HELCOM-OSPAR Joint Harmonized Procedure for BWMC A-4 exemptions (doc. 3-19).
- The Meeting took note of the report of the HELCOM ad hoc Correspondence Group on Ballast Water Management (CG BALLAST) (doc. 3-30). The Meeting took note that the ad hoc Correspondence Group has come to an agreement on the interpretation of the IMO Resolution A.1088(28) and accordingly, no additional measures are needed in the Baltic Sea area before the D-2 regulations will be enforced and there is no need to establish ballast water exchange areas in the Baltic Sea.

BSAP follow-up

- The Meeting considered the follow-up system for HELCOM agreements (doc. 3-27) and noted that actions related to State and Conservation, Pressure and Response Group have already been reviewed and supported by these Working Groups and for other Groups the review has been initiated to be finalized in September 2015.
- The Meeting noted that since it was a late document, the Contracting Parties had not been able to consult the document nationally and it was agreed that comments should be provided to the Secretariat **by 10 September 2015**.
- The Meeting concluded that it would not be possible for the Contracting Parties to accomplish reporting by October 2015 as indicated in the proposed timetable. The Meeting noted that the intention of the proposed timetable has been to use the new follow-up system for producing a status of the implementation of HELCOM commitments for the 'Joint document on regional coordination of Programmes of Measures' and for this purpose it would have to be finalized by March 2016 and would require reporting by the end of 2015 at the latest.
- The Meeting requested the next meeting of the Gear Group to consider the updated proposal based on the comments from Contracting Parties.
- The Meeting stressed the importance of communication of results and noted that the Secretariat will present a proposal for presentation of results to HOD 49-2015.

2. Biodiversity tool WS 1-2015, 15 June 2015, Gothenburg, Sweden

- The aim of the workshop was to support the development of a tool for integrating indicator based status assessments with particular reference to biodiversity as defined by the BSAP and the MSFD.
- The overall aims of the HOLAS II biodiversity assessment were presented and discussed. The requirements of a HOLAS II biodiversity assessment tool in order to meet these aims were evaluated and compared to

the capacities of existing tools for biodiversity assessment, focusing on the BEAT, the Marmoni and the developing DEVOTES tools. The workshop noted that the existing tools in the Baltic Sea region have strong potential to support the new tool. It was however also seen that none of the tools could be readily available for the HOLAS II use and that development of a HOLAS II tool is required. The workshop noted that the features of the needed tool could be available but that a programmer would be needed to set the tool into testing and operational use.

- The main conclusions from the workshop were summarised as a list of requirements of the HOLAS II biodiversity assessment tool (see [Workshop outcome](#)).

The outcome of the Workshop has been synthesized into a draft guidance for the work to develop a biodiversity assessment tool for use in HOLAS II, which will be presented for further consideration by HOLAS II 4-2015.

3. HOLAS II 3-2015, 16-17 June 2015, Gothenburg, Sweden

Matters arising from other meetings of relevance to HOLAS II

- The Meeting took note of the information on a meeting “Cooperation between EEA, OSPAR, HELCOM, UNEP/MAP and Black Sea Commission for the benefit of Regional and European marine assessments’ held in April 2015 at the European Environment Agency. The meeting had its background in MSFD Article 20.3 b, which states that by 2019 the European Commission should make: “a review of the status of the marine environment in the Community, undertaken in coordination with the European Environment Agency and the relevant regional marine and fisheries organisations and conventions”.
- The Meeting noted the interest of the Contracting Parties to get more clarity about the scope and purposes of the planned European assessment and about the expectations on the coordination involving HELCOM and its Contracting Parties. To this end, the Meeting expressed the wish to establish a cooperation framework that would ensure that the Contracting Parties are kept informed and actively contributing, e.g. to the further identification of commonalities in the regional assessments that could serve a European assessment. The Meeting noted that EEA has been invited to attend the next Gear meeting to communicate about plans and activities on this topic, and agreed to follow the outcome of that meeting and to keep the issues related to the EEA assessment, as far as relevant for HOLAS II, on the agenda of the core group.
- The Meeting noted that the comparison of the outlines of the HELCOM, OSPAR and EEA assessments, as presented to WG DIKE to be held 19 June 2015, shows a high level of similarities on a heading-level. The Meeting took note of the comment by the EU that WG DIKE will provide a common outline that will build on the HELCOM and OSPAR outline in order to provide a more harmonized approach across the assessments of the member states, and that this may lead to adjustments in the further work. However, the Meeting pointed out that this level of analysis does not compare similarities in the technical content, and substantial differences can already be foreseen between the content of the RSC assessments that has been agreed on by the Contracting Parties to the respective RSCs.
- The Meeting found it necessary to discuss the contents of the assessments as well and was of the view to focus the future cooperation regarding regional and European assessments on few selected topics, in addition to a wider and overall coordination, for which it could be possible to achieve better coherence to be demonstrated through-out regional and European level. Such selected topics could be, for instance, marine litter and underwater noise, and eutrophication.

Indicators and indicator-based assessments

- The Meeting took note of the outcome of the adoption of GES boundaries and indicators and the agreement on further development of indicators as agreed at HOD 48-2015 and documented as Annex 4 of the outcome, including links to the most recent versions of the indicator reports, based on the recommendation by GEAR 11-2015 and STATE & CONSERVATION 2-2015.

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- The Meeting took note of the recommendation by Gear, agreed by HOD 48-2015, that a coherence check for GES-boundaries will be made within the HOLAS II framework, noting that the practical arrangements for this task still need to be agreed on, and that a review of the use of indicators will be arranged for after the completion of the HOLAS II project. GEAR 11-2015 considered the following aspects:
 - i. application of proposed indicators and the HOLAS II assessment is a learning process and may result in the need for adjustments. In particular, a coherence check of GES boundaries across indicators will be undertaken as part of the HOLAS assessment. The coherence check should be expert-driven and aim at ensuring compatibility between the indicator assessments in the context of the ecosystem.
 - ii. data may not be available from each Contracting Party for each indicator.
 - iii. after the finalization of the HOLAS II project, and in the light of progress in scientific knowledge, MSFD CIS and other relevant policy implementation processes, review of the GES boundaries should be arranged for.
 - The Meeting was of the general opinion that the current set of core and pre-core indicators will provide a good basis for the HOLAS II assessment.
 - The Meeting was of the view that the further development of indicators should prioritize the development of GES-boundaries for the core indicators currently lacking boundaries and additionally pre-core indicators in those elements and descriptors that lack core indicators with GES boundaries at this time, so that at least one core indicator is available for each element or descriptor, i.e. developing the pre-core indicators for seafloor integrity, noise and litter to a stage of core indicator. Also, the pre-core indicators on phytoplankton could be prioritized to be developed to the level of core within the planned resources.
 - The Meeting agreed on the need to prioritise work on the indicators related to the status of benthic biotopes and seafloor integrity, and furthermore noted that the assessments should be coordinated with other relevant assessments.
 - The Meeting noted that there are no core indicators proposed for MSFD descriptor 7, and agreed that Contracting Parties will compile information on the national approaches of the 2012 reporting by **15 September 2015** to [lena.bergstrom@helcom.fi](mailto:lana.bergstrom@helcom.fi). The Meeting furthermore noted the views that expertise on the theme is available in Contracting Parties, and that information on man-made constructions and effects on hydromorphology could be included in the report, however noting the general view that the aim is not to strive for any great detail for this theme at this time.
 - The Meeting discussed the potential use of indicators in addition to the HELCOM core indicators in the holistic assessment, and was of the general opinion that including national indicators may be problematic and that the HELCOM core indicators are the major basis that the HOLAS II assessment is to be built on, and agreed on the following:
 - i. if national indicators are included they are to complement the set of core indicators and not be conceptually redundant,
 - ii. development of assessment tools will not be carried out with the aim of enabling the use of national indicators,
 - iii. indicators shared by several countries around one sub-basin could be used, currently such indicators have not yet been identified and this issue could be taken forward through bilateral discussions.
 - The Meeting agreed to come back to the discussion on including information from national indicators in the next meeting and to continue considering whether national indicator information will be included in the HOLAS II assessment or in the national reports.
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- The Meeting was of the opinion that it is important that information on national indicators is transparent and considered whether English fact sheets on national indicators should be developed, invited Sweden to share their national fact sheet as an example and agreed to further consider the use of the fact sheet approach for national indicators in the next meeting.

– **Assessment of the Kattegat and the Sound**

- The Meeting took note of the further elaborated proposal by Sweden, supported by Denmark, on the assessment of the Sound and the Kattegat in the Integrated Assessment of OSPAR (document 3-5) as presented by Karl Norling, Sweden (Presentation 4). The two sub-basins are part of the HELCOM area but in the context of the MSFD belong to the Greater North Sea sub-region.
- The Meeting noted the proposal that the Kattegat and Sound assessments would be fully integrated in the North Sea Region assessment of the OSPAR 2017 Intermediate Assessment, but that this assessment should be prepared in such a way that the assessment of these areas can be referred to in the HELCOM HOLAS II assessment.
- The Meeting noted the intention of Denmark and Sweden to use the Kattegat and Sound area as an opportunity of making the OSPAR and HELCOM assessments comparable, and their view that applying the HELCOM integrative assessment tools in this area will not be appropriate, however it would be possible to complement the common assessment with HELCOM indicators in national assessments.

Assessment of pressures

- The Meeting took note of a first overview of data sets on pressures and human activities available e.g. at the HELCOM map and data service and potential development of new data layers as contained in Table 1 of document 4-1 (**Presentation 6**).
- The Meeting supported that the HELCOM working groups should be involved in preparing pressure layers and that pressure data should be used from verified data sources as far as possible. In the case new data layers need to be compiled, it was proposed that this is done in a structured way, with the use a common reporting format.
- The Meeting tasked the Secretariat to update the table on human activities and pressures, as far as known, with information indicating if the data layer is existing or otherwise planned to be compiled, or if a separate attempt would have to be made for data collection, to guide further prioritization by the Contracting Parties.

– **Further development of the HELCOM pressure and impact indices**

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by Ms. Lena Bergström, on the further development of the Baltic Sea pressure and impact indices in HOLAS II (document 4-2, **Presentation 7**).
- The Meeting noted points that could be improved in the impact index compared to the approach used in HOLAS I, including the aspects of the sensitivity scoring, the displayed resolution in relation to point-sources and the selection and integration of the ecosystem components.
- The Meeting agreed that the preferred approach to take the development of pressure- and impact indices further is to organize for support of a group of dedicated experts to take active part.
- The Meeting considered and agreed on the proposed activities in the HOLAS II roadmap (**Annex 3**), including a workshop to support the development of the pressure and impact indices, perform test runs based on available data layers and provide detailed guidance and draft descriptions of the assessments to be carried out preferably in the fourth quarter of 2015.

– **Further planning of the social and economic component**

- The Meeting noted that a planning meeting for the social and economic component of HOLAS II was held at the HELCOM Secretariat on 13 May 2015 to outline a more detailed plan for the further work, and the proposal that this should focus on developing a conceptual framework for socio-economic analyses, as presented by Ms. Lena Bergström (**Presentation 8**).
- The Meeting took note of the presentation on the more detailed outline of the social and economic work of HOLAS II including the proposed hybrid model that would combine the water accounting approach with the ecosystem services approach within the DPSIR framework, as presented by Ms. Soile Oinonen, Finland (document 5-1, also **Presentation 8**).
- The Meeting agreed to convene a workshop to develop a conceptual framework for carrying out economic analyses, around **30 September - 1 October 2015** (tentatively in Helsinki), and that this workshop should be open to experts on economic analyses and also to experts on status and pressure assessments as well as the HOLAS II core group, and encouraged all Contracting Parties to participate. The outcome of the workshop is to be used in a section in the planned HOLAS II report.
- The Meeting noted that carrying out the assessment using data would require additional work, possibly through an additional workshop.

Update of the roadmap

- The Meeting considered the Roadmap for the HOLAS II project (document 6-1), and amended it as contained on **Annex 3**.
- The Meeting noted that developing the conceptual issues for hazardous substance assessment has been planned to be initiated in late 2015, and that this issue needs to be considered at the next Core team meeting and invited Contracting Parties to provide input on further development of the CHASE tool **by mid-September 2015**.

Any other business

- The Meeting agreed to convene the next meeting of HOLAS II on **24-25 November 2015**, and thanked Germany for the invitation to hold the meeting in Berlin.