



## Outcome of the 21st Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (HELCOM GEAR 21-2019)

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## Outcome of the 21st Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (HELCOM GEAR 21-2019)

### Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the outcome of HELCOM GEAR 20-2019 (par. 7.7), the 21st Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 21-2019) was held on 6-8 November 2019 in Helsinki, Finland, at the premises of the Ministry of Interior Affairs.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by delegations from Denmark, Estonia, EU, Finland, Germany, Latvia (on-line), Lithuania, Poland and Sweden. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

0.3 Mr. Jan Ekeboom welcomed the meeting participants on behalf of the Finnish Ministry for the Environment.

0.4 The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Andrea Weiss, Germany, Chair of the GEAR Group. Ms. Jannica Haldin, Professional Secretary and Ms. Marta Ruiz, Associate Professional Secretary acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

### Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda as contained in **document 1-1**.

1.2 The Meeting agreed to consider late documents submitted to the Meeting noting that it will not be possible to make decisions on them.

### Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from other meetings of relevance to GEAR

2.1 The Meeting took note of the information on meetings of relevance for the GEAR Group (**document 2-1**).

2.2 The Meeting considered and agreed on the proposal of presenting this type of document in a more concise format in upcoming GEAR meetings. The document will consist of a list of relevant meetings and provide hyperlinks to the outcome. A short presentation outlining the most relevant issues will be prepared and presented at the GEAR meetings.

### Agenda Item 3 Regionally coordinated implementation of MSFD

3.1 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 20-2019 agreed on a general work plan on MSFD coordination for GEAR 21-2019 and GEAR 22-2020 ([Outcome of GEAR 20-2019](#), para. 3.27-3.30). GEAR 20-2019 agreed to establish a drafting group (DG MSFD) to prepare documentation and discussion points for the GEAR meetings ([Outcome of GEAR 20-2019](#), para. 3.31). Input for discussions under this agenda item has been prepared by DG MSFD.

3.2 The Meeting took note of the initiative by Finland to prepare joint reporting, to be presented by Finland on behalf of the Baltic Sea EU Member States, on the level of implementation of the revised Commission Decision at the EU MSCG meeting held this week.

3.3 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 20-2019 agreed to dedicate one half meeting day at GEAR 21-2019 to regional MSFD coordination for those Contracting Parties who are also EU Member States, including an informal session focused on information exchange.

3.4 The Meeting took note of the online meeting of the DG MSFD on 9 October 2019 focused on preparing the discussions under agenda item 3. In its meeting, DG MSFD elaborated

questions and issues to facilitate preparation for and guide the discussion under the agenda for the informal session at GEAR 21-2019.

3.5 The Meeting recalled that at GEAR 21-2019, HELCOM EU Member States discussed ideas on how to consider Art. 14 and Art. 15 MSFD, the preparation of a joint documentation in support of HELCOM EU Member States MSFD Art. 13 reporting on PoM, EU MSFD CIS reporting guidance on PoMs, experiences / best practices relating to measures adopted under the MSFD-PoM 2016-2021 and strategic follow-up questions in implementing Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848.

3.6 The Meeting noted that EU Member States had been requested at EU MSCG 25-2019 to inform MSCG of their priorities and timelines for completing the regional or subregional-level requirements of Commission Decision (EU) 2017/848. This should identify any synergies and conflicts with EU-level work. Member States were requested to provide a coordinated response per region. The Meeting tasked DG MSFD to facilitate a regionally coordinated response to WG GES 23-2020 by drawing on the forthcoming conclusions by HOD on priorities for HELCOM indicator development work. DG MSFD should also sketch other MSFD related work strands. GEAR WG will approve any contribution to the EU MSFD CIS process by written procedure prior to WG GES 23-2020.

3.7 The Meeting noted that Work Package 5 of the ACTION project (see also agenda item 5) will support coordination at criterion basis for eutrophication, hazardous substances and selected issues of biodiversity. A literature study should provide a range of estimations by when good environmental status could be achieved for the selected topics and help identifying the natural conditions in the Baltic Sea which may delay the response of the ecosystem to measures (possibly to be used as background for a regional position on Art. 14 1 a). Climate change will be considered as a separate confounding factor influencing the natural conditions and timelines for achieving good status as defined based on current conditions. The Meeting noted that coordination for other topics than those covered by the ACTION project will be tackled through exchanging and coordinating national approaches topic by topic.

3.8 The Meeting agreed that the current limitation of the DG MSFD mandate to programmes of measures was too narrow and should be broadened in order to allow HELCOM EU Member States to respond to other coordination needs on MSFD matters (e.g. on Art 14 and 15). Timing of future meetings of DG MSFD and GEAR should allow preparing inputs, if needed, to the EU MSFD CIS process, in particular to EU MSCG.

3.9 The Meeting took note of the state of discussion on the preparation of a joint documentation on measures as contained in **document 3-1**.

3.10 The Meeting took note that at its online meeting on 9 October 2019, the DG MSFD exchanged views on approaches for the next Joint Documentation and as the results of the SOM and BSAP-UP processes will only be seen early in 2020, the DG MSFD recommended to start detailed discussions on its structure and contents at GEAR 22-2020.

3.11 The Meeting exchanged their views on the following questions as proposed by the DG MSFD:

- how has the Joint Documentation 2016 been used by EU Member States?
- which direction should the Joint Documentation 2022 take?
- would Joint Documentation 2022 be an update / adjustment of Joint Documentation 2016 or are rather a new structure/contents required?
- which parts of the Joint Documentation 2016 could be reused?
- what contribution can be expected from SOM/ACTION and BSAP-UP for the Joint Documentation 2022?

3.12 The Meeting agreed with the proposal by DG MSFD to start detailed discussions on the structure and contents of the Joint Documentation at GEAR 22-2020.

3.13 The Meeting reviewed the overall tasks for DG MSFD for GEAR 22-2020 ([Outcome of GEAR 20-2019](#), para. 3.29) and agreed that in, or prior to, GEAR 22-2020 the DG MSFD will:

- continue the exchange on the application of Art. 14 and 15 of MSFD;
- compile and analyse updated national environmental targets reported under Art. 10 MSFD;
- exchange initial ideas for measures;
- start identifying possibilities for joint measures, which can possibly feed into the BSAP update;
- start preparing a HELCOM joint documentation in support of HELCOM EU Member States MSFD Art. 13 and Art. 14 reporting on POMs;
- identify and prepare exchange on EU MSFD CIS matters in need of regional coordination.

3.14 The next online-meeting of DG MSFD should take place in March 2020 (before the meeting of the SOM Platform). In support of DG MSFD work for GEAR 22-2020, the Meeting invited the Secretariat to:

- provide to DG MSFD a brief overview of HELCOM follow-up work on the action for further consideration proposed in the Joint Documentation 2016 and existing links with the BSAP review by 2 December 2019;
- submit existing overview by State&Conservation over which Contracting Parties are concerned to act on which threatened and declining species in their waters and to request State&Conservation in spring 2020 to highlight any species which warrant (sub)regional measures. This information should facilitate DG MSFD to identify opportunities for transboundary coordination of measures.

3.15 The Meeting agreed also that in, or prior to, GEAR 23-2020 the DG MSFD will facilitate:

- exchange of information on planned additional national measures and opportunities for regional coordination;
- discussion of transboundary impacts of the planned additional measures under Art. 13 MSFD and any exceptions under Art. 14 MSFD;
- the procedural approach to transboundary strategic environment assessment;
- the finalisation of the HELCOM joint documentation in support of HELCOM EU Member States MSFD Art. 13 and Art. 14 MSFD reporting on POMs;
- start exchanges on the preparation of the next reporting round under Art. 8, 9 and 10 MSFD and linkages with HOLAS III; and
- the identification and preparation of exchange on EU MSFD CIS matters in need of regional coordination.

3.16 The Meeting took note that the topics will be reviewed and confirmed by GEAR 22-2020.

3.17 The Meeting took note that the ACTION project has been informed about the usefulness of their outputs in relation to GEAR work and its strategic planning for MSFD purposes.

3.18 The Meeting took note that the information has been shared with the SOM platform to ensure that they are aware of the relevance of their work to improve synergies with national PoMs work.

3.19 The Meeting took note of the overview of national timetables for MSFD implementation as contained in **document 3-3**.

3.20 The Meeting took note that additional updates to the document 3-3 will be provided by **20 November 2019** to the Secretariat ([marta.ruiz@helcom.fi](mailto:marta.ruiz@helcom.fi)) and a revised version of the document will be made available by **27 November 2019**.

3.21 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 20-2019 agreed that the overview of national timetables for MSFD implementation is regularly updated with national information prior to GEAR meetings. The Meeting invited

- Contracting Parties to update their national timetables and submit them to the Secretariat three weeks before GEAR meetings
- the Secretariat to facilitate CP updates by making available regularly adapted tables (delete previous year, provide a monthly overview for running and next year).

3.22 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 20-2019 discussed possibilities for providing coordinated HELCOM input to INSPIRE data model process based on the two options presented by EU TG DATA and agreed that more consideration by TG DATA is needed to identify the correct approach for how to involve the RSCs, as well as the legal implications of delegating the services, including regarding data ownership, obligations, and accountability and invited the EU to bring the concerns of the CPs for consideration at TG DATA ([Outcome of GEAR 20-2019](#), para. 3.6-3.8).

3.23 The Meeting took note that EU is not in a position to provide any updated information on this topic to the Meeting.

3.24 The Meeting invited the EU to provide information and guidance to HELCOM Contracting Parties who are also members of the EU on the implications of making the datasets used for the MSFD assessments available, and in compliance with the INSPIRE Directive Implementing Rules, through RSC to the next GEAR meeting.

3.25 The Meeting did not consider the comments to Strategic follow-up to Commission Decision 2017/848/EU based on the Document 5-4 to GEAR 19-2018 as contained in **document 3-2** due to time constraints. The Meeting agreed to postpone the discussion on the topic and to come back to it following the WG GES workshop on crosscutting assessment issues to be held 31 March-1 April 2020, in Brussels, Belgium.

3.26 The Meeting took note of the information provided by the EU that the guidance for Article 11 for the EU MSFD reporting in 2020 were agreed by MSCG 22-2019 as the basis to move to the testing phase of the tools (**Presentation 12**). It is anticipated that the guidance will be put to MSCG for adoption next May, after accounting for any issues raised during the testing process.

3.27 The Meeting did not consider national approaches for updating monitoring programmes due to time constraints, but took note of the information that State and Conservation WG will initiate the review of the HELCOM monitoring manual and associated programs at STATE&CONSERVATION 11MA-2019 on the 27 November 2019, in Gothenburg, Sweden. The work will take into account the Art. 11 Guidance developed at EU level.

#### **Agenda Item 4 Implementation and update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan**

4.1 The Meeting took note that HOD 56-2019 endorsed the revised work plan for the BSAP update (Annex 2 of the [Outcome of HOD 56-2019](#) and para. 2.1).

4.2 The Meeting recalled the provisional agreement by HOD 56-2019 ([Outcome of HOD 56-2019](#), para. 2.23) to adjust the BSAP structure.

4.3 The Meeting took note of the review and revision of HELCOM objectives as contained in **document 4-3 Rev. 1** and noted that the proposals have been considered by all HELCOM Working Groups and twice by State and Conservation and Pressure Working Groups.

4.4 The Meeting considered the proposals on ecological and management objectives by HELCOM Working Group (Annex 1, Table A1.1 of document 4-3 Rev. 1 and **Presentation 1**) and noted the request to GEAR to propose adjustments, as found relevant, to harmonize the terminology of objectives across segments.

4.5 The Meeting took note of the view that the EU that the terms 'unaffected' and 'undisturbed' as used in the goals of Eutrophication and Hazardous substances should be harmonized, with the proposal to use 'unaffected' for both goals.

4.6 The Meeting recognized that the revision of objectives needs to strike a balance between continuity between the current and updated BSAP, that the existing objectives should be easy to communicate, and that there should be a consistency between the objectives across segments. The Meeting noted that State and Conservation, Pressure and Maritime Groups have considered continuity between the current and updated BSAP as an important aspect when reviewing the existing objectives for Eutrophication, Hazardous substances and the existing Maritime segment.

4.7 The Meeting recalled that the objectives are meant to be linked with indicators and it is the associated threshold values or pressure targets that will define whether the objectives have been met.

4.8 The Meeting made the following comments and proposed revisions:

- Eutrophication; no proposed revisions to the ecological objectives but the proposals to change the wording 'minimize' to 'minimized' in the management objective and use this approach consistently across segments;
- Hazardous substances and litter:
  - the objective 'Healthy sea life and food webs' was viewed as overlapping with the objective under the Biodiversity segment reading 'Functional healthy and resilient food webs'. It was noted that to add the word food web was proposed by STATE&CONSERVATION 10-2019 to cover potential effects of bio-accumulation of hazardous substances in the environment;
  - it was noted that an ecological objective on the amount of litter was missing, however that this aspect is reflected in the management objectives on litter;
  - alternative phrasing to the management objectives 'Prevent input of litter' was discussed e.g. 'Input of litter is prevented' or 'Prevent the input of litter';
- Seabased segment:
  - consider adding an overarching ecological objective with the tentative wording: 'No or limited disturbance on marine communities and ecosystem services';
  - consider adding an overarching management objective reading 'Sustainable shipping and offshore activities' or 'Ensure sustainable use of the marine environment';
  - clarify how the cross-referencing to ecological objectives on eutrophication and hazardous substances and litter will take place;
  - consider slimming down the number of objectives related to maritime activities, including to consider if some of the existing objectives are expressed as actions rather than objectives;
  - consider exchange the word 'stocks' with population or to rephrase the objective so that it reads: 'Noise levels do not adversely affect stocks [population] of noise sensitive species and do not injure or significantly disturb sea life';
- Biodiversity:
  - consider including more precise objectives i.e. on % coverage of MPAs;
  - for consistency; cross check the use of the words viable/viability across segments.

4.9 The Meeting was of the view that the objectives have developed in a good direction but that harmonization of terms between segments is still required. The Meeting recognized that the proposals have been discussed and supported by the technical Working Groups and that therefore there is a need to understand the reasoning behind proposals in order to propose possible adjustments. The Meeting agreed to convene an online meeting on **20 November 2019** to continue

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the harmonization and tentative adjustment of objectives (13.00 CET-16.00 CET), inviting also the Chairs of HELCOM Working Groups. The current proposals together with proposals from GEAR will be submitted to HOD 57-2019 by the document deadline clarifying that a revised document will be submitted based on the outcome of the online meeting.

4.10 The Meeting took note of the discussion on exchanging the word 'wild life' which has resulted in different proposals by State and Conservation (Baltic Sea life or Baltic Sea biodiversity) and Pressure Working Group (sea life). The Meeting noted that the appropriate use of term may differ between segments and agreed to come back to the issue at the online meeting.

4.11 The Meeting proposed to clarify the role of the biodiversity segment by emphasizing the aim of reaching goals and objective of biodiversity in the updated BSAP and by possibly placing biodiversity as the first segment in the updated BSAP. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to provide an example illustration of the interlinkages between the segments.

4.12 The Meeting recalled the proposal by GEAR 19-2018 to change the term 'ecological objective' to 'environmental objective' The Meeting concluded not to propose any changes to the term but considered that the term ecological should be considered in a broad sense to include all aspects of ecosystem health.

4.13 The Meeting took note that the HELCOM Explorer is updated as part of the strategic plan for the BSAP update (**document 4-4** and **Presentations 2** and **3**).

4.14 The Meeting considered the proposals for interactive design and supported the presented proposals on having 1) a front page with brief introduction, figures, overview of all actions, 2) specific pages for the respective BSAP segment, and 2) one page where it will be possible to filter and download all information included in the database.

4.15 The Meeting addressed the questions raised in the document and agreed to use table option 2 for overview tables, i.e. to display joint actions implemented cooperatively in HELCOM separately from actions that are implemented nationally. On the tab with national actions, the implementation will be displayed for both national level and from regional perspective. The regional perspective reflects how the action has been implemented overall by the Contracting Parties.

4.16 The Meeting agreed that the most relevant information to show in the columns in the overview tables, in addition to action title and status assessment, are:

- segment of the BSAP (although only relevant on the front-page overview table, not on the segment pages;
- topics addressed by the actions;
- origin of the action (e.g. BSAP, Ministerial Declaration, HELCOM Recommendation);
- target year for the implementation;
- regional status for the national actions tab;
- information on the countries for which it is relevant to implement the action.

4.17 The Meeting noted that it will likely be feasible to add columns with additional attributes at a later stage if found relevant.

4.18 The Meeting proposed that the titles and content of the columns could be explained by use of a 'mouse over' function.

4.19 The Meeting recommended that the recently reported HELCOM Recommendations should be included in the updated Explorer.

4.20 The Meeting took note that countries will have the opportunity to update the supporting information that is associated to the national implementation status in autumn 2020 when the reporting of the BSAP and Ministerial Declarations 2010 and 2013 is updated.

4.21 The Meeting discussed the proposed information and features that were identified in the user interviews but that are not likely possible to be implemented as part of the current update process:

- the proposal to link the BSAP actions to national environmental goals or SDGs: the Meeting was of the view that it would be a priority to link the BSAP actions to UN SDGs, but not to national environmental goals”;
- to be able to follow evolution of implementation over time: the Meeting did not find this a priority issue but proposed to add information on when the latest reporting has taken place, so that information on changes over time can be added in the future if desirable;
- to indicate when a national action was completed: it was proposed that the year of accomplishment could be included when countries are providing supporting information to the reporting but that it is not a priority issue;
- for countries to report on why an action has not been implemented or who is responsible for the implementation: the Meeting was of the view that such questions could possibly be posed to the Contracting Parties and that HOD could be asked to consider the issue;
- to display information on the Working Group responsible for the implementation on overview tables, noting that such information is included in the ‘all data page’: the Meeting did not consider this as a priority.

4.22 The Meeting took note of the proposal to check alignment or compatibility with existing databases for which it could be desirable to exchange and transfer data, i.e. WISE marine, POMESA database, OSPAR-MAP.

4.23 The Meeting took note of the clarification by the Secretariat that if there is a defined target data model, i.e. WISE, the data from the HELCOM Explorer can be converted to the required outputs, however, the technical compatibility requirements have to be defined as soon as possible.

4.24 The Meeting took note of the Outcome of HELCOM SOM Platform 2-2019 as contained in **document 4-2** and of the progress on BSAP update activities and the analysis of sufficiency of measures as contained in **document 4-1 (Presentations 5 and 6)**.

4.25 The Meeting took note that the template for synopses on potential new HELCOM actions has been submitted to HELCOM subsidiary bodies including Observers to the Groups, as agreed by HELCOM 40-2019, and also distributed to BONUS projects. As outlined in the work plan, the synopses are to be submitted to the Secretariat by the end of 2019 and will be reviewed by HELCOM Working Group meetings from technical point of view at spring meetings in 2020 ([Outcome of HOD 56-2019](#), para. 2.5).

4.26 The Meeting took note of the proposed dates and themes for BSAP UP thematic workshops in the spring 2020. The Meeting took note of the clarification that the thematic workshops have been agreed as part of the workplan for the BSAP update (cf. activity 2.6, as agreed by HOD 56-2019) to discuss results of the SOM analysis and other supporting activities with the aim of proposing new actions for the updated BSAP.

4.27 The Meeting recalled that according to the strategic plan of the BSAP update it is HELCOM Working Groups that will make proposals on new actions for the updated BSAP to HOD while HELCOM SOM Platform and ACTION project will support the thematic workshops and Working Groups through the preparation of background analyses and proposals.

4.28 The Meeting took note of the ongoing development of criteria by the HELCOM SOM Platform, led by Latvia and Sweden, for supporting the evaluation of the proposed new actions at the thematic workshops and that the criteria will be presented for consideration at HOD 57-2019 but will continue to be developed by the HELCOM SOM Platform in preparation of the thematic workshops.

4.29 The Meeting supported that the thematic workshops should aim for attendance by a broad set of expertise i.e. covering as far as possible expertise in social, economic, policy and



environmental sciences. The Meeting encouraged countries to nominate Working Group representatives to the workshops to ensure continuity with the continued drafting of the BSAP that will take place at Working Groups meetings in autumn 2020.

4.30 The Meeting took note that HOD 56-2019 endorsed the approach for analysing sufficiency of measures (SOM) and its use to support the BSAP update and that SOM Platform 2-2019 supported the use of the methodology for assessing the effectiveness of measures and pressure-state linkages.

4.31 The Meeting considered the ongoing activities under the HELCOM SOM Platform, and expressed their views as follows:

- the Meeting proposed to clarify that most of the measures considered in the analysis reduce the future input of pressures rather than the pressures that already exist in the sea;
- the Meeting proposed to consider strategies to address the possible uncertainties and lack of data in the SOM analysis. The Meeting took note that the assumptions and simplifications will be made clear when presenting and interpreting the results of the analysis, and that probability distributions will be used when presenting the results to show the associated confidence and uncertainties.

4.32 The Meeting took note of the information that the outcomes of the SOM topic workshops will be made available as soon as possible.

4.33 The Meeting took note that the use of a quantitative approach for assessing the effects of measures and pressure-state linkages for all topics was supported by the SOM platform in their meetings and proposed that the approach will be evaluated when presenting and interpreting the results.

4.34 The Meeting encouraged experts to contribute to the data collection in the frame of the SOM analysis. For the activity-pressure expert survey, responses are needed particularly for the topics of mammals, birds and hazardous substances. The Meeting took note that the expert surveys on the effectiveness of measures and pressure-state links will be sent later on, and that nominations of experts to participate to the surveys will be requested from the Working Groups, which has already been done for PRESSURE.

4.35 The Meeting took note of the update from ACTION project work package 5 on the examination of conditions that influence the achievement of good environmental status (GES) (**document 4-7** and **Presentation 4**).

4.36 The Meeting took note of the clarification that natural conditions, in the frame of the project, are considered in relation to the achievement of GES.

4.37 The Meeting took note that the natural condition in the deeper part of the Baltic is hypoxia, therefore it will take more time for it to recover.

4.38 The Meeting recalled that STATE&CONSERVATION 11-2019 agreed to provide comments to be sent by **14 November 2019**.

4.39 The Meeting considered the proposals on concretized HELCOM actions as contained in **document 4-6** and agreed that the actions are to be presented as work in progress at HOD 57-2020.

4.40 The Meeting invited EN-ESA to provide proposals for concretizations to the three first actions outlined in the document, possibly using the ESA roadmap, and submit the proposal to the Secretariat by **5 February 2020**.

4.41 The Meeting agreed that for the remaining two actions GEAR contacts will provide suggestions for concretizations to the Secretariat by **5 February 2020**, the Secretariat will collate the proposals, combine them with those received from EN ESA and send out a revised document containing all proposals to GEAR contacts by **7 February 2020** for review and subsequent approval at an intersessional GEAR online meeting on **27 February 2020**.

4.42 The Meeting took note of the overview of the input received so far from the HELCOM subsidiary bodies to the development of the HELCOM science agenda (**document 4-5, Presentation 7**). The Meeting took note that a Task Group has been established by HOD 56-2019 to work further on the science agenda.

4.43 The Meeting recalled that the focus of the HELCOM science agenda is on knowledge and research needs to implement HELCOM agreements and strategies. The Meeting took note that the proposals are often closely linked to the ToR of HELCOM expert groups and network and that about half of the proposals are related to monitoring, mapping and the development of indicators.

4.44 The Meeting identified:

- the need to slim down the number of proposals. It was noted that the Task Group for the science agenda will have the task to identify priority areas for HELCOM;
- missing proposals related to food webs, pelagic habitats, certain groups of fish, and on hydrographical changes. It was noted that the Secretariat has re-submitted the survey to HELCOM PEG, ZEN ZIIM, FISH-PRO project and CG Migratory fish asking for additional contributions;
- the need to ensure that the proposals are not covered by ongoing or planned projects. In this regard it was noted that identification of such overlaps needs to be supported also by HELCOM Working Groups and experts.

4.45 The Meeting agreed to submit additional proposals on knowledge and research needs to the Secretariat by **20 November 2019** ([ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi)). The updated survey will be used as basis for the preparation of the Science agenda by the Task Group.

## **Agenda Item 5**

### **Activities of relevant HELCOM projects or processes**

5.1 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 20-2019 agreed to further elaborate the initial proposal of the components of HOLAS III, and invited countries to provide comments and suggestions to these components to the Secretariat. No feedback has been provided ([Outcome of GEAR 20-2019](#), para. 4.5).

5.2 The Meeting took note of the proposed timeline and process of HOLAS III (**document 5-4 Rev. 1 and Presentation 8**)

5.3 The Meeting welcomed the proposed timeline and acknowledged that while effort has been made to improve on the challenges identified under HOLASII, the plan for HOLAS III needs to be elaborated within the framework delineated by the BSAP and other international commitments (such as the MSFD) and in accordance with the needs outlined by the Contracting Parties. This places some limitations on how dynamic the HOLAS III process can be and necessitates that some trade-offs be considered early in the process. It also sets hard deadlines which need to be met in order to optimize the added value and to make full use of the HOLAS III work.

5.4 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to crosscheck the proposed timeline with that of other HELCOM assessment work, e.g. PLC, and where possible adjust timelines to improve synergies.

5.5 The Meeting considered the inclusion of 2016 in the assessment period and took note of the information by the EU that WG GES will be informed of the topic at it the next meeting of the group.

5.6 The Meeting took note that Poland proposes to not decide on the assessment period yet. Poland brought forward that ideally the assessment period should be 2017-2022 since reporting to EU is 2024 and Poland proposed to come back to assessment period question after the discussion at WG GES.

5.7 The Meeting in principal supported the inclusion of 2016 in the assessment period for HOLAS III, noting the reservation by Poland. The Meeting agreed that the use of the repeat use of the year 2016 should be clearly indicated in any subsequent reporting.

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5.8 The Meeting further considered the inclusion of 2021 data and that the coverage of 2021 data may be partial due to the time-lag associated with data reporting.

5.9 The Meeting took note that the Secretariat is conducting an exercise to map the data needs for HOLAS III to be presented at STATE&CONSERVATION 12-2020 and will invite the CPs to provide information regarding their national dataflow timelines for each strand, in the effort to obtain an overview of for what 2021 data barriers might exist and plan accordingly.

5.10 The Meeting agreed to include 2021 data in the assessment period, aiming to include a full six years of data wherever possible, but acknowledging the 2021 data might not be readily available for all relevant assessment data strands and encouraged all data rapporteurs to consider the need for shortened data reporting timelines in 2021.

5.11 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 20-2019 took note of the the reflection of the Secretariat on the need of ensuring economical and human resources to support the work on HOLAS III. The Meeting took note of the information that there is currently no external funding opportunities available to support the HOLAS III work, and invited Contracting Parties to consider the possibility to provide funding to support the work.

5.12 The Meeting endorsed the proposed provisional plan and agreed to submit it to HOD 57-2019 for approval.

5.13 The Meeting agreed to provide further input to the list of aspects which might be missing, need further development or benefit from a different approach compared to HOLAS II (Annex 1 of document 5-4) to the Secretariat ([jannica.haldin@helcom.fi](mailto:jannica.haldin@helcom.fi)) by **31 January 2020**.

5.14 The Meeting took note of the for HELCOM Data Flow project proposal (**document 5-6** and **Presentation 9**) and acknowledged that the proposal is intended to provide the necessary improvements identified in the corresponding work strand in the preparatory phase of the HOLAS III process.

5.15 The Meeting welcomed the project proposal, considered the outlined work and provided the following comments:

- there is a need to better involve PRESSURE in the outlined process;
- functioning dataflows will not be modified without the involvement of relevant experts.

5.16 The Meeting noted that there are no external funds available for the work outlined in the proposal and encouraged countries to consider the possibility to provide national funding to support the work.

5.17 The Meeting endorsed the proposed work and agreed to submit it to HOD 57-2019 for approval.

5.18 The Meeting considered the proposals for further improvements of the of the Baltic Sea Pressure and Impact indices in HOLAS III (**document 5-5**).

5.19 The Meeting took note that the use of the information from the indices has varied between countries.

5.20 The Meeting acknowledged that, should the detailed of the maps be further improved they could provide a valuable tool for MSP at a local level and noted that further development work of the indices has taken place under the PanBaltic Scope project.

5.21 The Meeting took note that the ecosystem components layers that are used in the BSPI/BSII in 2017 used data available from the indicators evaluations, as well as other available data sources.

5.22 The Meeting took note of the information by Estonia that there is an UNCLOS workshop on **28-29 January 2020** in Brussels where cumulative impacts will be discussed.

5.23 The Meeting concluded as follows:

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- to include BSPI/BSII as part of HOLAS III, but in what capacity and format is still in need of further discussion;
- the BSPI/BSII can further be used for transboundary purposes, such as MSP purposes;
- there is clear need to continue discussions on regional cumulative impacts assessment for HOLAS III.

5.24 The Meeting agreed to organize a workshop focusing on how to tackle cumulative impacts assessment and ecosystem analysis in the Baltic Sea region, including, but not limited to

- identifying what is required from such an assessment;
- what the current and possible uses of the assessment outputs are;
- considering the added value of such assessments;
- the analysis and interpretation of results;
- how to handle uncertainty and possibilities for validation of assessment results; and
- how to better link the assessment with the indicator evaluations.

5.25 The Workshop is proposed to be held on **23-24 April 2020** (specific place to be confirmed). The Workshop could also consider available national approaches as well as OSPAR approaches to cumulative impacts assessments and possibly build on the EU workshop to be held on 23 March-1 April 2020 touching upon cross cutting issues.

5.26 The Meeting agreed that the main focal groups for the workshop should be GEAR representatives as well as other involved Working Groups, especially those representatives with technical expertise on using the indices.

5.27 The Meeting agreed to set up a planning team for the workshop and welcomed that Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden are willing to contribute to the process, and that Estonia will confirm their possibility to take part by the end of November. Propose draft ToRs for the workshop will be prepared by the end of the year with a commenting period open until the end of January 2020.

5.28 The Meeting supported the overall work on the economic and social analyses and the work of EN ESA.

5.29 The Meeting considered and supported the proposal for the economic and social analyses in HOLAS III (**document 5-1** and **Presentation 10**).

5.30 The Meeting supported the integration of ESA to other work strands in HOLAS III and also considered important to have a specific chapter on ESA in the report.

5.31 The Meeting took note that priorities and ambition level of the ESA work for HOLAS III needs to be adjusted when resources for the work have been secured.

5.32 The Meeting took note of the clarification that the development of approaches and data for natural capital and marine ecosystem accounting for HOLAS III could be based on existing data as much as possible.

5.33 The Meeting considered the update of the roadmap for continued HELCOM work on ESA (**document 5-2** and **Presentation 10**), which includes all the elements proposed for ESA in HOLAS III as well as general development areas for future HELCOM ESA.

5.34 The Meeting proposed the following additions to the roadmap:

- a timeline that relates to the general development of the BSAP update and HOLAS III to clarify the timing of the analyses and provide information to assess resource needs;
- additional reflections on the social dimension of economic and social analyses; and
- scenario analysis.

5.35 The Meeting agreed in principle with the roadmap for continued HELCOM work on ESA with the understanding that it will be revised based on the input from the Meeting, including the addition of a timeline for the work.

5.36 The Meeting took note of the key messages from the International Marine Ecosystem Accounting Workshop held on 10 October 2019 in Helsinki, Finland, in terms of HOLAS III and continuation of HELCOM work on economic and social analyses (**document 5-3**).

5.37 Due to time limitations the Meeting did not have the possibility to consider the document on future work on HELCOM Indicators which contains the recommendations of the Workshop together with detailed workplans per topic (provided as links under each section and available through the document library of the [Second HELCOM Indicator Workshop site](#)) (**document 5-7**) and the additional information on indicators (**document 5-8**) simplifying and summarizing the information related to future work on HELCOM Indicators (from both workshops that have taken place) in the template used for the initial indicator-policy matching exercise.

5.38 The Meeting agreed that any comments forwarded by State&Conservation representatives to the respective GEAR contacts prior to GEAR 21-2019, in accordance with the outcome of STATE&CONSERVATION 11-20219, can be submitted to the Secretariat by **13 November 2019** for inclusion prior to the information being submitted to HOD.

5.39 The Meeting agreed that the plan outlining HELCOM indicator work 2020-2021 should be submitted to HOD 57-2019 for consideration and approval, with the intention that the work commence in early 2020.

#### **Agenda Item 6 Future work and any other business**

6.1 The Meeting agreed to convene GEAR 22-2020 on **27-29 April 2020**, starting at 10:30h on 27 April and finalising at 16h on 29 April, with a half day dedicated to an informal session on the regional coordination on the EU MSFD implementation on the 27 April

6.2 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to offer to host the next meeting **by 30 November 2019** and inform the Secretariat ([marta.ruiz@helcom.fi](mailto:marta.ruiz@helcom.fi)).

6.3 The Meeting agreed to convene GEAR 23-2020 on **9-11 November 2020**, starting at 10:30h on 9 November and finalising at 16h on 11 November.

6.4 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to consider their possibilities to host GEAR 23-2020.

6.5 The Meeting took note of the information in the list of contact addresses of GEAR (**document 6-1**). Countries are invited to provide further changes to the Secretariat ([marta.ruiz@helcom.fi](mailto:marta.ruiz@helcom.fi)). Taking into account the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, (EU) 2016/679), the Meeting agreed that the GEAR contact address list will be made available on the HELCOM Meeting Portal upon receipt of consent for publication by all contact persons.

6.6 The Meeting took note of the presentation of the BONUS ROSEMARIE project as contained in **Presentation 13**.

6.7 The Meeting thanked Finland for excellent hosting of the Meeting.

#### **Agenda Item 7 Outcome of the Meeting**

7.1 The Meeting adopted the draft outcome of the Meeting. The final Outcome of the Meeting, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting are available in the [HELCOM Meeting Site](#).

## Annex 1 List of Participants

Representing	Name	Organization	E-mail
<b>Chair</b>			
<b>Germany</b>	Andrea Weiss	MSFD - Secretariat Function for the Ministry of the Environment c/o Federal Environment Agency	<a href="mailto:andrea.weiss@uba.de">andrea.weiss@uba.de</a>
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