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Background

A Jubilee Session on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the Signing of the 1974 Helsinki Convention was held at the Marina Congress Center in Helsinki, Finland, on 5 March 2014.

Action required

The Meeting is invited to take note of the attached outcome of the Jubilee Session.



**THE JUBILEE SESSION OF THE HELSINKI COMMISSION
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIGNING OF THE 1974 HELSINKI CONVENTION**

The 40th anniversary of the signing of the 1974 Helsinki Convention was celebrated on 5 March 2014 at the Marina Congress Centre in Helsinki, Finland, from 10:00 to 13:00.

Mrs. Helle Pilsgaard, the Chair of the Helsinki Commission, opened the Jubilee Session by welcoming President Tarja Halonen, Minister Ville Niinistö, ambassadors and distinguished guests, HELCOM Heads of Delegations, Delegates from the Contracting Parties and representatives of the HELCOM observer organizations to the celebrate the Jubilee Session of the Helsinki Commission.

The session was commenced with a song performance by **Huima Laulu**, a.k.a. **Wild Song**, improvisational ensemble which uses voice in an unconventional way for making music in the moment. The performance was based on a slide show featuring pictures of the Baltic Sea.

1. The first part of the Jubilee Session focused on celebrating 40 years of regional cooperation.

The Jubilee Session was welcomed by **former President of Finland, Ms. Tarja Halonen**, who welcomed the participants on behalf of the host country of the Helsinki Convention. President Halonen congratulated HELCOM for the good achievements over the past four decades but reminded that despite many years of cooperation and many accomplishments, the Baltic Sea has not yet been restored to the status of a healthy sea.

She acknowledged that each of the world's oceans and seas has its own challenges to tackle and that many seas in the world struggle due to political and economic situations. She pointed out, however, that in our region we enjoy economic prosperity and stability, which puts more expectations on us. Despite economic downturns from time to time, the Baltic Sea coastal countries have what it takes to be persistent, ambitious and forward-looking in their efforts to save the sea.

Although appreciating the legal basis, established procedures, transparency and professionalism of HELCOM, President Halonen recognized from her personal experience that in order to achieve effective measures to clean our Baltic Sea, we need all actors of society onboard. She underlined the role of the civil society as guardians of protection efforts and that with consumer choices people can create better markets for sustainable development.

She mentioned the Baltic Sea Summit, started by her together with the Finnish Prime Minister of the time, Mr. Vanhanen, where Heads of States and Governments were invited to Helsinki to work together to speed up the implementation of HELCOM decisions, with the result that 150 commitments were made by the public and private sectors.

She also encouraged municipalities to strengthen their national and international cooperation through exchange of practical knowhow.

Finally she thanked the HELCOM community for the work done so far and urged for continued efforts so that the objectives of HELCOM can be achieved.

President Halonen's speech is included in Annex 2.

Minister of the Environment of Finland, Mr. Ville Niinistö, gave a key note speech, highlighting the history of HELCOM referring to the signing of the 1974 Helsinki Convention as a historic milestone, where for the first time ever, a single Convention covered all the pollution sources around an entire sea. He stated that this legally binding instrument has been and should continue to be an effective channel for introducing local and regional aspects into global and European commitments.

Minister Niinistö recognized the achievements accomplished during the past four decades of HELCOM work, including progress in the fields of wastewater treatment, air pollution control, waste management, biodiversity conservation and improvements in maritime safety, to mention only a few and that as a result, several positive signals have been reported regarding the state of the Baltic Sea. He nevertheless pointed to the need to take further measures to address eutrophication, hazardous substances and maritime activities, while giving importance to green investments in cleaner technologies, developing environmental know-how, and applying best environmental practices in order to implement the Baltic Sea Action Plan and to strengthen the economy in the Baltic Sea region.

Minister Niinistö emphasized the need to continue to intensify efforts to improve data and information quality and availability to serve as a basis for evaluating whether progress is being made towards reaching a good environmental status of the sea. He pointed to the importance of maritime spatial planning and the use of an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities, including consideration of possible cumulative effects. At the same time while enabling a sustainable use of marine goods and services, priority should be given to achieving or maintaining good environmental status in the marine environment, to continuing its protection and preservation and to preventing subsequent deterioration.

He acknowledged the limitation of available resources and suggested that HELCOM should concentrate on activities that bring added value to the on-going work within the Contracting Parties, focusing on agreeing on and implementing effective measures that support the recovery of the Baltic Sea. HELCOM should maintain and strengthen interlinkages with other international frameworks, and ensure a forward-looking and focused agenda that reflects well the priorities of the Contracting Parties. He also called to all Contracting Parties to actively contribute to the HELCOM co-operation.

The Minister encouraged all to see the joint challenge to achieve our common vision of a healthy and clean Baltic Sea as an opportunity and reminded that a clean and healthy Baltic Sea is a source of inspiration and prosperity to all of us.

The statement of Minister Ville Niinistö is contained in Annex 3.

Ms. Jacqueline Alder, Head of the Freshwater and Marine Ecosystems Branch, Division of Environmental Policy Implementation of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), represented the Executive Director of UNEP at the HELCOM Jubilee Session.

She congratulated HELCOM on its achievements during the past four decades and stated that HELCOM has demonstrated true leadership in building a strong transboundary cooperation framework that allows its member states to protect and manage in a sustainable manner the various resources and services provided by the Baltic Sea.

Also the UNEP Regional Seas Programme is celebrating its 40th this year. She reminded that the programme was established in March of 1974 - just 2 years after the foundational United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held Stockholm in 1972. After 40 years of action many achievements of the regional seas around the world can be celebrated - from political, environmental, legal and economic perspectives. In some regions the regional sea convention can be the only platform where countries in conflict or dispute can meet. Regional seas convention and action plans in many areas have developed to often be the only legally recognized intergovernmental platforms for taking regional action on marine issues, especially outside of the fisheries sector. The regional seas also make economic sense - cost of effectiveness of economy of scale in taking a similar approach and leveraging resources.

Ms. Alder noted that the regional seas have been responsive to trends in development of the environment agenda and the changing needs of its member countries, and that often HELCOM has been in the lead - mostly recently in its Green Economy/Ocean Valuation work.

UNEP thanked the HELCOM Contracting Parties for their continued support to the Helsinki Convention and for making HELCOM one of the most visibly successful Regional Seas Programmes.

The statement of Ms. Jacqueline Alder contained in Annex 4.

Ms. Helle Pilsgaard, Chair of HELCOM, shared some thoughts about the accomplishments of HELCOM during the past 40 years and raised issues that should be focused on in future work.

She pointed out that one should be proud and happy of the accomplishments of HELCOM and that HELCOM has been both a pioneer and world leader in a wide range of fields. According to the best available figures, we have reduced nutrient pollution to the Baltic Sea quite dramatically, by half, from the times of the signature of the Convention. The status of a number of Baltic Sea species, previously in decline, has been restored and the area coverage of the Baltic Sea marine protected areas has reached globally set goals.

The professional standard of HELCOM work is very high and is recognized both within and outside the region and the same goes for the efficiency of the HELCOM Secretariat. The co-operation within the Helsinki Commission is constructive and solution-orientated in relation to both Delegations and Observers, and is based on equality and consensus. Also the host country of the Commission, the Republic of Finland, has always been very helpful and generous to the Commission and its Secretariat.

Ms. Pilsgaard acknowledged, however, that there are also shortcomings in the work of HELCOM. There is a need to intensify our efforts to implement the 2007 Baltic Sea Action Plan.

We have agreed on concrete figures on the needed nutrient reductions to reach a Baltic Sea without excessive eutrophication and we know where the pollution is coming from. Although we have a joint frame for tackling our major transboundary pollution problem, it will only work if each country maintains its commitment and integrates the efforts on national level. HELCOM has good information at hand about the status of biodiversity to help us speed up the progress towards the goal of favourable conservation status of biodiversity. And while we are on the right path with regard to addressing maritime activities, hazardous substances require both more research and intensified actions.

Ms. Pilsgaard informed that one of the main goals of the Danish Chairmanship of HELCOM has been to renew our cooperation and to make a more dynamic and effective HELCOM. The 35th meeting of HELCOM will discuss a proposal for a streamlined HELCOM, including a new working structure as well as other changes in the concrete working practices. The changes will enable us to better answer the current needs of the Contracting Parties, including creating synergies in implementing other obligations of the Contracting States.

Intensifying our cooperation in the field of agriculture and fisheries in implementing ecosystem approach is another matter of utmost importance. HELCOM should continue to engage in finding viable solutions for these challenges, alongside the efforts to reduce NO_x (oxides of nitrogen) emissions from the greatly increased shipping in our region.

The statement of Ms. Helle Pilsgaard is contained in Annex 5.

II. During the second part of the jubilee session, the state of the Baltic Sea ecosystem and prosperity were assessed

Professor Erik Bonsdorff, Åbo Akademi, in his capacity as a “doctor of marine science”, carried out a “health check” of the Baltic Sea and made a general diagnosis of her health status. His conclusion was that she is overweight (excess inputs of nutrients), has breathing problems (anoxic bottoms), and has a toxic allergy (caused by excess inputs of hazardous substances).

He discussed the importance of joint cooperation between science, politicians and civil society to identify and implement an ecosystem approach to clean up the Baltic Sea. He also highlighted the importance to continue to improve the knowledge basis which we have already developed about the Baltic Sea in order to be able to make even more informed decisions.

He further identified seven tenets for a achieving a sustainable management of the Baltic Sea: that actions should be ecologically sustainable, economically viable, technologically feasible, socially desirable/tolerable, administratively permissible, legally permissible and politically expedient. Professor Bonsdorff was of the view that HELCOM is a valuable arena where these seven tenets can be considered together.

Mr. Bo Gustafsson, Baltic Nest Institute, presented the process behind revising the Baltic Sea Action Plan nutrient reduction targets which were adopted at the 2013 HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting. He shared some lessons learned and introduced some issues and challenges that should be addressed in future work related to the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme.

He also presented information about trends in inputs of nutrients that show that Baltic Sea countries have made significant nutrient input reductions in the past 40 years. Nevertheless, signs of large-scale improvements in the marine environment are still lacking in the major basins, which can be seen in the development of hypoxia (oxygen depletion) in the Baltic Sea from 1900 – 2012. Modelling results suggest, however, that continued decisive action to reduce nutrient inputs will give results. Although it will take a long time before agreed targets are reached, significant improvements will be visible within decades, perhaps even sooner.

Mr. Gustafsson concluded by highlighting the uniqueness of the BSAP nutrient reduction scheme, pointing out that although critical load calculations have being calculated in other regions of the world, the Baltic region is the only one where these have been taken on board at the policy level.

Ms. Marianne Kettunen, Institute of European Environmental Policy, presented recent key developments in valuation of ecosystem services. She stressed the importance of considering the entire web of ecosystem services, rather than looking at individual benefits as separate components, as many of these are interdependent. There is a great diversity of ecosystem services and values and many of these services have not always been considered valuable on their own.

The Baltic Stern review found that people living in the Baltic Sea region appreciate a clean, well-functioning Baltic Sea and the ecosystem services it provides and are willing to pay up to 3,800 million euros a year. She used fish(ing) as an example to demonstrate how ecosystem evaluation is carried out, showing that the benefits of ecosystem services are not only monetary, but also quantitative and qualitative.

She emphasized the need to improve the understanding and systematic assessment of ecosystem services, especially when values are not market-based or economic, and to remember that healthy Baltic Sea biodiversity is insurance for well-functioning ecosystem services.

Ms. Kettunen presented examples of cost-effective win-win solutions as examples of putting theory into practice, such as construction or restoration of wetlands, well-managed marine protected areas or fisheries

closures. She also presented some ideas for finding nature-based solutions and marine spatial planning, highlighting the need to integrate values systematically into the foundations of decision-making at all levels (developing and adopting indicators, marine spatial planning and impact assessments). She also emphasized the need to provide the right economic signals (removing harmful subsidies and creating incentives for sustainable use) and investment in green / blue - green / blue infrastructure and creating green / blue jobs.

The presentations of the speakers are available at the [HELCOM website](#).

III. The third part of the Jubilee Session was a future-orientated dialogue between HELCOM, OSPAR, ICES, BONUS, EU and Russia about working together for common goals.

As the final part of the Jubilee Session, a future oriented panel discussion was held on cooperation between regional actors. The discussion was moderated by Ms. Pauli Merriman, WWF Baltic Programme, and members of the discussion panel were: Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary of HELCOM; Mr. Darius Campbell, Executive Secretary of OSPAR; Ms. Anne Christine Brusendorff, General Secretary of ICES; Ms. Kaisa Kononen, Executive Director of BONUS; Ms. Astrid Schomaker, Head of Unit, Environment DG, European Commission; and Mr. Nuritdin Inamov, Director of Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation.

The discussion was kicked-off by presenting some stereotypes, myths and misconceptions about regional cooperation such as that progress is slow, different actors are pulling in different directions, some prefer sticks to carrots, many questions are answered by an even bigger question, etc.

The panel members generally agreed that there are some truths to the many of the presented misconceptions, but that nevertheless there is good cooperation and progress between the regional partners.

It was acknowledged that there are many on-going activities happening in parallel and that each organization is evolving to adapt to regional, European and global demands. The panelists agreed that all organizations – HELCOM, OSPAR, ICES and BONUS, have the common goal to achieve a healthy Baltic Sea but each also has its specific mandates. Hence, it was recognized that the work of the organizations complements each other, and that at this time of limited resources, it is important to share experiences, join forces and intensify cooperation so that we can address the common challenges ahead in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Ms. Stankiewicz acknowledged the important role of all the actors in the Baltic Sea region towards the mutual goal of a healthy Baltic Sea and reminded about the commitment of HELCOM to further improve cooperation and the other regional partners.

Mr. Campbell recalled that OSPAR and HELCOM have often been referred to as sister organizations that as such support each other but also look at each other with competitive eyes. OSPAR sees the cooperation with HELCOM as important, but pointed out that the OSPAR Convention covers four different marine regions and that there are therefore also some different priorities to take into account.

Ms. Schomaker stressed the important role of HELCOM in contributing the EU goals on protecting the European seas. Ms. Schomaker reminded that the EU provides the legislative underpinning for those HELCOM Contracting Parties being also EU member states to carry out what they need to do under the EU legislative framework (the stick). The EU is in a position to coordinate legislation under different sectors by addressing parallel legislation, such as the revision of EU waste legislation so that it also takes into account the problem of marine litter. Being involved in the work of other regional seas, including OSPAR, the EU also has an overview of activities on-going in other parts of Europe and can hence contribute to development of harmonized European approaches to protection of the marine environment.

Russia, which is involved in 13 different regional sea programmes, pointed out that HELCOM is the most active of them all. Mr. Inamov recalled that when the first Helsinki Convention was signed in 1974, environmental issues were put forward despite political differences and he hoped that this would continue to be the case also in future cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. He pointed to Russia's commitment to the protection of the Baltic Sea by referring to the initiatives discussed at the Baltic Sea Summit in Saint Petersburg in 2013 and spoke of the involvement of wide range of sectors, including the private sector, in developing more green technology for tackling municipal waste waters and emissions from shipping.

Ms. Brusendorff informed on the recent adoption of the ICES 5 year Strategic Plan which will be prioritizing improved cooperation for the implementation of the ecosystem approach. She underlined the role of ICES in providing the science that is being used as input to the decision-making at HELCOM, OSPAR and EU levels and suggested to define specific and concrete actions of how ICES can contribute to the regional sea initiative such as HELCOM holistic assessments and OSPAR quality status reports.

Ms. Kononen underlined the good cooperation and synergies between BONUS and HELCOM, pointing out that BONUS uses HELCOM priorities to define its strategic research agenda and that HELCOM therefore benefits directly from the results of BONUS projects. Ms. Kononen noted how Baltic Sea monitoring programmes have developed tremendously over the past 40 years and was of the view that this is largely due to HELCOM's commitment to increasing the knowledge base of the Baltic Sea marine environment. She also appreciated HELCOM's willingness to adapt to applying new scientific approaches to decision-making and pointed out that HELCOM has also been an important forum for teaching scientists how science can be targeted towards answering questions raised at the policy level.

Ms. Merriman, as a member of the non-governmental organization (NGO) community, thanked the panellists and urged for a broadened discussion of Baltic Sea issues at higher political levels, to reach out to sectors and to better engage the private-public sectors as well as NGOs.

When asked which on-going HELCOM activities will be seen as pivotal at the next Jubilee session in ten years' time, Ms. Stankiewicz pointed to the on-going streamlining of HELCOM, including focus on fewer priorities but securing resource for their successful implementation, renewed working structure of HELCOM and the updating of data and information systems as important contributors to achieving of our common objectives.

IV. Closing of the jubilee session

The morning jubilee session ended with the viewing of a jubilee movie about HELCOM, a group photo session as well as a glass of sparkling wine and lunch.

A reception was held at the premises of the HELCOM Secretariat (Katajanokanlaituri 6B, Helsinki) in the evening from 18:00 to 20:30, featuring special guest speeches and stories about memorable moments from the past.

PART I – PROGRAMME

VENUE: Scandic Marina Congress Center (MCC), meeting hall Europaea, Katajanokanlaituri 6, Helsinki, Finland

Mrs. Helle Pilsgaard, HELCOM Chair, will chair the Jubilee Session.

Exhibition on HELCOM work since 1974 <i>Displayed in the lobby area in front of the Europaea meeting hall (MCC ground floor)</i>	
9:00-10:00	Registration and breakfast buffet <i>Lobby area by the meeting hall Europaea</i>
10:00-11:00	Celebrating 40 years of HELCOM cooperation
	<p><i>Music performance by the improvisational ensemble Huima Laulu (Wild Song)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening address by President Tarja Halonen • <i>Solutions for improving the quality of the environment for all</i> Keynote speech by Minister of the Environment of Finland, Mr. Ville Niinistö • <i>40th Anniversary of Regional Seas Programme and HELCOM contribution to global agenda</i> Speech by Ms. Jacqueline Alder, Head, Freshwater and Marine Ecosystems Branch, Division of Environmental Policy Implementation of UNEP • <i>Living up to our commitments for a healthy Baltic Sea</i> Key messages by HELCOM Chair Mrs. Helle Pilsgaard
11:00-11:50	The Baltic Sea: ecosystem and prosperity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Health check for the Baltic Sea</i> Presentation by Prof. Erik Bonsdorff, Åbo Akademi University • <i>Eutrophication – reflections on the Baltic Sea Action Plan revision process and future challenges</i> Presentation by Mr. Bo Gustafsson, Director of Baltic Nest Institute Sweden • <i>Ecosystems services under magnifying glass</i> Presentation by Mrs. Marianne Kettunen, Senior Policy Analyst, Institute of European Environmental Policy

11:50-12:20	Working together for common goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A future-orientated dialogue between HELCOM, OSPAR, ICES, BONUS and EU and Russia moderated by Mrs. Pauli Merriman, WWF Baltic Programme <p>Mrs. Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary of HELCOM</p> <p>Mr. Darius Campbell, Executive Secretary of OSPAR</p> <p>Mrs. Anne Christine Brusendorff, General Secretary of ICES</p> <p>Mrs. Kaisa Kononen, Executive Director of BONUS</p> <p>Mrs. Astrid Schomaker, Head of Unit, Environment DG, European Commission</p> <p>Mr. Nuritdin Inamov, Director of Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation</p>
<i>A jubilee movie about HELCOM</i>	
<i>Photo session and a glass of sparkling wine</i>	
12:30-13:30	Buffet lunch
<i>Served in the lobby area by the meeting hall</i>	

PART II - EVENING PROGRAMME

18:00 – 20:30 Joint celebration at the Evening Reception

VENUE: *The premises of the HELCOM Secretariat, Katajanokanlaituri 6B, Helsinki*

All participants of the Jubilee Session are invited to the evening reception featuring special guest speeches and stories about memorable moments from the past and much more.

WELCOME SPEECH OF PRESIDENT TARJA HALONEN AT THE JUBILEE SESSION OF THE HELSINKI COMMISSION ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIGNING OF THE 1974 HELSINKI CONVENTION

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Welcome to the participants of the 40th Jubilee Session also on behalf of the host country of HELCOM - Finland, being Depositary of instruments of ratification of the Helsinki Convention by the nine coastal countries and the European Union, as well as hosting the HELCOM Secretariat in Helsinki.
2. We need to protect the world's oceans and seas, which are currently deteriorating at a quick pace, due to overexploitation of their resources and lack of integrated management of human activities.
3. Each of the oceans and seas has its own challenges to tackle. These challenges are related to natural characteristics, historical pollution problems and the geopolitical and economic situation of the surrounding states. However, the need to put more emphasis on oceans and their importance is common. The Baltic Sea Region and HELCOM work hard to contribute to the global efforts for oceans and seas. HELCOM is in fact one of the "matured" regional sea conventions, celebrating its 40th anniversary together with UNEP's Regional Seas Programme.
4. Despite many years of cooperation and many accomplishments, the Baltic Sea has not yet restored the status of a healthy sea. This is due the sea being very fragile. It is also sensitive to pollution and pressures from human activities, which constantly grow. Therefore special protection measures that are sometimes more stringent than elsewhere are necessary. They need to be tailor-made to the specific environmental problems such as eutrophication or the threat of low biodiversity. This special regime has been recognized, for instance, by the International Maritime Organization, by which the Baltic Sea received a special status for discharges and emissions of certain pollutants from ships.
5. Many seas in the world struggle due to political and economic situations. But in our region we enjoy economic prosperity and stability, which puts even more expectations on us. Despite economic downturns from time to time, the Baltic Sea coastal countries have what it takes to be persistent, ambitious and forward-looking in their efforts to save the sea. They can apply good marine and maritime governance, maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management. And they should not be tempted to compromise the marine environment for short-term economic gains or unsustainable business and activities. Instead, they should invest in the good status of the marine environment, which will pay off in the future.
6. The role of the civil society can be underlined. We can observe growing environmental awareness, which affects consumer behavior and daily choices. In the end societies are the "guardians" of protection efforts not slowing down and being high on the political agenda.
7. The HELCOM organization has a legal basis, established procedures, transparency and professionalism. This needs to be coupled with higher political support to fully utilize the potential of a cooperation platform. Also all the members should be involved on equal footing and strive for harmonized implementation of the same and sufficient standards though out the region.

8. I have some personal observations on the recent years' work to protect the Baltic Sea and what has changed. The work of the states is very important, but not enough. In order to achieve effective measures to clean our Baltic Sea, we need all actors of society onboard. The public sector and its activities are a good basis for the work, but if citizens themselves and their organizations are involved, the reforms are much faster. People will improve their everyday behavior. They might consume less and buy ecologically better products. With this they create better markets for sustainable development – finally they vote for smarter politicians. The business sector is rather sensitive to consumers' demands, and some of the business people are interested in sustainable development by themselves.
9. We all know this, but the knowledge has been used rather seldom in the environmental protection of Baltic Sea. A few years ago, in 2010, we held for the first time a Summit of a new style in Helsinki. I started building up it with NGOs and corporations, and when it looked good I and our Prime Minister of that time Mr. Vanhanen invited the Heads of States and Governments to Helsinki to work together in order to speed up the implementation of the Helcom decisions.
10. The basic structure of the process was built according to the UN's Global compact idea, and the implementation was pretty similar to Bill Clinton's Global Initiative. The difference was that we did not aspire for any new agreements, but we wanted to achieve faster what we have already promised to do.
11. WHY? Simply because people very often argue that international agreements or promises does not mean anything in practice. WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE? People are sometimes too impatience, but too often they are right.
12. In the Summit we got about 150 promises. The BSAG (The Baltic Sea Action Group), an independent foundation, has followed commitments and their success. Many of the commitments have succeeded. Both are important to study.
13. One of the best results has been the modernization of the waste water system of St Petersburg and its surroundings. It is also an excellent example of international cooperation (between Russia, Finland and the EU). You can freely copy it.
14. I specially encourage cities and other municipalities to strengthen their national and international cooperation. At the municipal level, implementation and the change of practical knowhow can be achieved.
15. I would like to very warmly thank all of you for the work you have done and wish you a successful meeting.

**KEYNOTE SPEECH BY MINISTER VILLE NIINISTÖ AT THE JUBILEE SESSION OF THE HELSINKI COMMISSION
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Solutions for improving the environmental quality of the Baltic Sea

President Tarja Halonen, Madam Chair, your Excellences, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me start by saying that Finland is honoured to be the host country of the Helsinki Convention and it gives me great pleasure to address this Jubilee Session to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Helsinki Convention.

In 1974, an agreement like the Helsinki Convention was unique and the signing of it was a historic milestone – for the first time ever, a single convention covered all the pollution sources around an entire sea. Since 1974 we have seen extensive changes, the region has undergone major political transformations and our Convention has been updated once. The Helsinki Convention, a legally binding instrument, has been and should continue to be an effective channel for introducing local and regional aspects into global and European commitments.

Today, the Helsinki Commission (or HELCOM as it's called) is an important forum where the coastal countries can act on an equal footing. Through our own actions, jointly or individually, we can influence the state of the Baltic marine environment and its sustainable use. HELCOM is a platform for developing regionally coordinated and coherent approaches and solutions needed to achieve a good environmental status of the Sea. Because of our 40 years of joint co-operation, we have made progress in the fields of wastewater treatment, air pollution control, waste management, biodiversity conservation and improvements in maritime safety, to mention only a few. As a result, several positive signals have been reported regarding the state of the Baltic Sea.

In 2007, our governments agreed on a comprehensive programme – the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan – which has set the ultimate goal of ensuring that the Sea is in a good environmental status by 2021. At the ministerial meeting in Copenhagen last year the progress in implementing the Action Plan was assessed and all contracting parties agreed on additional measures and actions to further strengthen its implementation.

We all know that curbing eutrophication is of utmost importance. We also know it is one of the most serious and difficult problems to tackle. Excessive nutrient inputs remain one of the key threats to the marine ecosystem.

It's clear that both nitrogen and phosphorus inputs still have to be significantly reduced to improve the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea. We also need to remember that there are strong links between reducing eutrophication and the protection of marine biodiversity. Improving the eutrophication status will, as an added value, result in substantial improvements in habitat quality and conservation status in many parts of the Baltic.

Without a doubt, the main sources of excessive nutrient inputs are still agriculture, airborne nitrogen inputs from both land- and sea-based activities, and untreated or unsatisfactorily treated municipal wastewaters. An increase in the leaching of nutrients, as a result of climate change, presents an additional challenge in terms of water pollution control methods in agriculture.

A few months ago, HELCOM's ministerial meeting came to agreement on newly revised and challenging nutrient reduction targets for all coastal countries. It is our responsibility to make sure that those targets will

be met. To do so requires stringent implementation of municipal waste water treatment requirements, minimisation of nutrient losses from agriculture, application of sustainable agricultural production, enhanced recycling of nutrients, especially phosphorus, and effective nutrient management to reach nutrient-balanced fertilization practices. Enhancing recycling of nutrients – especially phosphorus - is one of the Finnish priorities in fostering the implementation of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. These are just some examples of what needs to be done.

HELCOM's monitoring work and assessments of pollutant loads and environmental status are important and provide a necessary basis for evaluating whether progress will be made towards reaching a good environmental status of the Sea. It is important that the work done by HELCOM is reliable and, for this reason, we need to continue to intensify our efforts to improve data and information quality and availability.

Ministerial meeting recognized also the importance of green investments in cleaner technologies, developing environmental know-how, and applying best environmental practices in order to implement the Action Plan and to strengthen the economy in the Baltic Sea region.

In addition to eutrophication, the growth in maritime traffic and the ever-increasing transport of oil and harmful substances are also causing risks and environmental effects, such as more atmospheric nitrogen emissions, and thus also an increase in eutrophication, more invasive species in ballast water, and undesirable effects of possible accidents. Although good progress has been made, additional measures are also needed in this field, such as effective management of ships' ballast water and of sediments, further work to improve maritime safety, and development and use of alternative fuels, such as LNG. Promotion of "greener" technologies and practices is often related to maritime activities (innovations in shipping).

I am happy to note that HELCOM's annual meeting this week will address the outcome of national assessments of the adequacy of sewage reception facilities in ports and the draft notification to the IMO of adequate port reception facilities for sewage from passenger vessels in the Baltic Sea. I hope that the contracting parties will be able to find consensus and decide on a submission to the IMO. (MEPS 67 meeting in autumn 2014).

Let me now turn to hazardous substances. Expert assessments have shown that the overall status of hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea is not satisfactory. Wide areas are classified as "disturbed". Even though we see encouraging signs of decreasing trends in certain substances and improvements in the health status of some top predators, a great deal of work still needs to be done to reach a good status for these substances. Pharmaceutical residues are a growing environmental concern. We also know that there are gaps in our knowledge. To fill these gaps, we need more monitoring data and better control of the use and spread of hazardous substances.

We also can't forget economic activities. Today, offshore activities such as wind power generation, gravel extraction, transport and infrastructure projects are on the rise in the Baltic Sea. Because of these activities, we need to plan the management and use of maritime areas in an integrated manner. Maritime spatial planning is an important tool for improving decision-making.

We are aware that sustainable development, as well as sustainable growth in the region must be supported by an ecosystem-based approach to the management of human activities, including consideration of possible cumulative effects. At the same time while enabling a sustainable use of marine goods and services, priority should be given to achieving or maintaining good environmental status in the marine environment, to continuing its protection and preservation and to preventing subsequent deterioration.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are all aware that resources today are limited, if not decreasing. This brings about a number of challenges, for HELCOM as well. In this changing framework, HELCOM should concentrate on activities that bring added value to the ongoing work within the contracting parties. In our view, focus should be placed on

agreeing on and implementing effective measures that support the recovery of the Baltic Sea. HELCOM has to maintain and strengthen the interlinkage with other international frameworks, and ensure a forward-looking and focused agenda that reflects well the priorities of the contracting parties. Furthermore, all contracting parties need to actively contribute to the HELCOM co-operation.

I am pleased to note that on the basis of the ministerial meeting decisions in Copenhagen last year, the Helsinki Commission will consider at the forthcoming annual meeting its future priorities, responsibilities, working structure and methods. By this, I trust that the Helsinki Commission's key role in protecting the Baltic Sea will continue and HELCOM can maintain and even strengthen its role as a leading marine commission in the world with highly advanced cooperation.

To meet the above-mentioned challenges, and to maintain HELCOM as a strong intergovernmental organisation, the contracting parties must continue to give solid political support to HELCOM's work. The coastal countries, their citizens and the business communities around the Baltic Sea are the most important actors in bringing about concrete actions.

Ladies and gentleman,

Countries occupying the same sea region share environmental challenges and have to work together to solve those challenges. These same countries – we - also share the opportunities that a clean and healthy Baltic Sea can offer to us. Therefore, I would like to stress that only if all countries bordering the sea continue to work actively, engage private actors and companies likewise - and find clever and effective ways to take the action that is needed - will the Baltic Sea become clean and healthy – and a source of inspiration and prosperity to all of us.

We have our common vision of a healthy and clean Baltic Sea. I hope that HELCOM co-operation will prosper also in the future. We have a great challenge - but let us also see it as an opportunity. Together we have all the means to make the most out of that opportunity!

**SPEECH BY Ms. JACQUELINE ALDER, UNEP, AT THE JUBILEE SESSION OF THE HELSINKI COMMISSION
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF SIGNING OF THE 1974 HELSINKI CONVENTION**

Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. On behalf of the executive director of UNEP. It is my great pleasure to join the celebration of one of the first Regional Seas Programmes to be established, 40 years ago. HELCOM has demonstrated true leadership in building a strong transboundary cooperation framework that allows its member states to protect and manage in a sustainable manner the various resources and services provided by the Baltic Sea.
2. Life gets better after 40 is quite an appropriate slogan for the 40th jubilee as HELCOM has made much progress over the last 40 years and has many experiences that will no doubt contribute to successes in the upcoming years.
3. 40 years of action. That is the slogan that UNEP is utilizing to highlight the 40th anniversary of the Regional Seas Programme, created in March of 1974 - just 2 years after the foundational United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held Stockholm in 1972.
4. Looking back at that moment in time when the leaders that preceded us, decided that we needed to take bold steps to protect our environment, not only because we faced a very dangerous outlook if we did not take action, but also because we realized that our fate as human beings, was linked to the fate of our planet.
5. It was with that outlook in mind that the Regional Seas Programme was established by countries to protect our oceans and coasts. Today we proudly say that 143 countries are part of 18 Conventions and Action Plans around the world.
6. After 40 years of action, we celebrate many achievements of the regional seas around the world. And we can celebrate successes from different perspectives - political, environmental, legal and economic.
7. In some regions the regional sea convention can be the only platform where countries in conflict or dispute can meet, as we have seen in the Mediterranean for nearly 40 years where it is the only platform where Israel, Arab states, North Africa, the Eastern Europeans and Western Europeans meet on a level playing field. In Asia for more than 20 years the COBSEA brings together china, Vietnam and Philippines to the table to talk to each other and their neighbors on marine and coastal issues despite their territorial differences.
8. Regional seas convention and action plans in many areas have developed to often be the only legally recognized intergovernmental platforms for taking regional action on marine issues, especially outside of the fisheries sector. This reflects the recognition of their role and value to member states in convening discussions and generating action - another global success for regional seas.
9. The regional seas also make economic sense - cost of effectiveness of economy of scale in taking a similar approach and leveraging resources. In some developing countries their contribution to the secretariat cost leverage a 1:8 ratio for every dollar or higher.
10. Environmentally, many regions have been able to drastically reduce pollution levels from the land entering their regional seas, the protocol on land based sources of pollution is a common feature across the regional seas programme and in many areas has been catalytic in establishing a regional framework for national action to address a range of pollutants.

11. Other accomplishments on the pollution front include an improved capacity of countries to respond to emergency spills of oil and other hazardous substances. We have also seen an increased number of Marine Protected Areas declared, protocols on integrated coastal zone management and specially protected areas and wildlife established, amongst many other accomplishments.
12. These accomplishments also follow the trends in development of the environment agenda demonstrating how the regional seas have been responsive to the changing needs of its member countries, and often HELCOM has been in the lead - mostly recently in its Green Economy/Ocean Valuation work.
13. These accomplishment have not been without their challenges. Still we are seeing our oceans heavily threatened to the point where its natural resources are being over exploited in many seas and oceans. Our fisheries, in some regions, have collapsed. In others, they are nearing collapsing levels. And yet, we still continue the use of unsustainable subsidies estimated at around USD \$15–35 billion annually.
14. Similarly, we have seen exponential growth in the amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus entering our oceans, creating more than 500 dead zones across 245,000 square kilometres of coasts and oceans. Here in the Baltic Sea, this remains a serious issue that is being tackled through HELCOM.
15. Ocean acidification due to climate change is another emerging issue that is heavily threatening the productivity of our oceans. And while the source is related to cutting CO₂ and other gas emissions from land activities, our Regional Seas are working to ensure marine and coastal ecosystems are healthy and resilient as possible to the impacts of climate change.
16. We also know that human impacts have resulted in a loss of more than 20 per cent of mangroves, 30 per cent of sea grass beds and 20 per cent of coral reefs. At the same time we know that these crucial ecosystems are responsible for many socio-economic benefits for coastal communities. For instance, it is estimated that ecotourism from coral reefs reaches USD 9 billion per year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

17. We find ourselves at another monumental point in time. Like our predecessors we must take bold steps to address the growing degradation of our oceans.
18. Through the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans we have strong frameworks to address the drivers of change that continue harm our efforts towards a healthy marine environment that can ensure food security, provide sustainable livelihoods while respecting its cultural and spiritual values.
19. The Helsinki Convention is a pivotal component in the regional efforts to stop the degradation of the Baltic Sea, but I also believe in the need to have coordinated efforts within the framework of the Law of the Sea and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations so that we can secure the ecological foundation for food security.
20. There is little doubt that the economic rationale is there to call for increased investments to protect the natural resources of the Baltic Sea. With an estimated investment of EUR 2.8 billion, the potential benefit could be around EUR 3.8 billion, according to the BalticSTERN report.
21. UNEP has led efforts through the Green Economy for Oceans, to illustrate how oceans, seas and coasts would benefit from a transition towards a green economy in key sectors that depend and influence the state of the marine and coastal environment.
22. For the Baltic region, this area of work is very relevant as five key marine sectors: fisheries, tourism, shipping, renewable energy and pollution, are addressed by the UNEP report, and can help to further shape and advance the region's goals and objectives.

23. In this context, it is encouraging to see the emergence of marine-based renewable energy in this region, which is offering new opportunities for job creation while at the same time diversifying your energy sources. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the different national contexts, and that each country may pursue its own unique and appropriate pathway towards a green economy.

Distinguished Delegates

24. We hope that through the leadership of the countries involved in the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, we will see a significant evolution of ocean governance in the coming 40 years, and that Life gets better after 40 for all 18 of them.
25. Time and time again, member states have rallied round the Helsinki Convention to address various governance issues such as pollution, sustainable development, marine protected areas and wildlife and have done so successfully.
26. UNEP is convinced that member states will continue supporting the Helsinki Convention and we are very grateful to all of you for making HELCOM one of the most visibly successful Regional Seas Programmes.
27. UNEP congratulates you once again for a very successful 40 years and wishes you another great 40 years.

Thank you for your attention.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIR OF THE HELSINKI COMMISSION MS. HELLE PILSGAARD ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40-YEAR JUBILEE OF THE 1974 HELSINKI CONVENTION

Your Excellences, Mr Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Like contracts in ordinary life, treaties between states have always been an indispensable tool of diplomacy.

To become party to a treaty, a state must express its willingness to undertake the legal rights and obligations contained in the treaty. In other words, it must “consent to be bound” by the treaty. This is done through a concrete act, by ratification.

All of us, the nine states of the Baltic Sea coasts as well as the European Union have expressed such consent to be bound by the Helsinki Convention, the basis of the HELCOM cooperation.

However, after the signature, ratification and entry into force of an international Treaty a diplomatic process becomes a process of substance, of concrete action.

On the 22th day of this month, in two and a half weeks’ time, the process started by the first Helsinki Convention will have been in motion for forty years. Four decades we have worked together to eliminate pollution in order to restore the Baltic Sea and preserve its ecological balance. The Contracting Parties to the Convention were international forerunners. They – we - provided a positive example to countries in the world’s other regions on how to protect shared waters.

Many lessons have been learned over this period. They have been documented in the minutes of various meetings and in Ministerial Declarations. The latest declaration was adopted in last year’s ministerial meeting in my home town, Copenhagen.

The experiences from the first decades of working within HELCOM helped to elaborate the revised Helsinki Convention, which was adopted in 1992 and is still in force. This was a major milestone in HELCOM work. Since then, the Convention and its Annexes are under regular review and update.

So where are we now?

As this Jubilee part of the annual HELCOM meeting is also a birthday celebration I think one should follow the normal birthday procedure and start in the positive.

When I see the results achieved by HELCOM I must say that one should indeed not be ashamed. On the contrary, one should be proud and happy of what has been accomplished.

HELCOM has been both a pioneer and world leader in a wide range of fields, such as:

- monitoring and setting targets for pollution loads,
- assessing the status of the environment,
- reducing environmental impact of shipping, and optimizing our regional preparedness capacity to respond to pollution incidents.

I would like to mention a few concrete achievements.

Firstly, according to the best available figures we have reduced nutrient pollution to the Baltic Sea quite dramatically, by half, from the times of the signature of the Convention.

Secondly, the status of a number of Baltic Sea species, previously in decline, has been restored. Thirdly, the area coverage of the Baltic Sea marine protected areas has reached the globally set goals.

The professional standard of HELCOM work is very high. This is recognized both within and outside the region. I would say the same goes for the efficiency of the HELCOM Secretariat.

The co-operation within the Helsinki Commission is constructive and solution-orientated in relation to both Delegations and Observers, and is based on equality and consensus. I find the HELCOM work also pleasant.

The host country of the Commission, the Republic of Finland, has always been very helpful and generous to the Commission and its Secretariat.

I could mention many other positive aspects of the HELCOM work, but time does not allow me to elaborate further on these matters. I should therefore only express the hope that my reflections will remain valid also for the next forty years.

However, even HELCOM is not perfect.

I think we all know that there are shortcomings in our work. We also have a pretty good notion of where to find them.

Most of all, we need to intensify our efforts to implement the 2007 Baltic Sea Action Plan. Otherwise we will not be able to reach a healthy sea status by 2021. Until now, one third of the measures and actions that we have agreed on, have been accomplished. This is of course good, but I would like to say that we must do even more to succeed.

In the case of eutrophication, we have within HELCOM agreed on concrete figures on the needed reductions to reach a Baltic Sea without excessive eutrophication. We have likely the world's best regional monitoring programme for land-based pollution and know where the pollution is coming from.

These reduction figures provide a joint frame for tackling our major transboundary problem. However, it will only work if each country maintains its commitment and integrates the efforts on national level. This requires utilizing the necessary legislative and financial instruments.

Thanks to recent HELCOM work on Red Lists we also have good information at hand about biodiversity issues. This information will enable us to speed up the progress towards the goal of favourable conservation status of biodiversity. And while we are on the right path with regard to addressing maritime activities, hazardous substances require both more research and intensified actions.

This being said, it is always possible to modernize working methods and do things better also on the administrative side. As expressed in the beginning of the Danish chairmanship of the Commission, one of our goals is to renew our cooperation, to make a more dynamic and effective HELCOM. Some results of this reform process can already be seen in the new website and improved data and information services, but this is only the start.

In this 35th meeting of the Helsinki Commission, we will discuss a relatively mature proposal for a streamlined HELCOM, including a new working structure as well as other changes in the concrete working practices. The changes to come will enable us to better answer the current needs of the Contracting Parties. This includes creating synergies in implementing other obligations of the Contracting States.

The other urgency is to intensify our cooperation in the field of agriculture and fisheries in implementing ecosystem approach. It is clearly of utmost importance, as inputs from agriculture have proven to be a particularly difficult matter to address and fisheries remains one of the main pressures negatively impacting coastal and marine ecosystems. HELCOM should continue to engage in finding viable solutions for these challenges, alongside the efforts to reduce NO_x (oxides of nitrogen) emissions from the greatly increased shipping in our region.

Dear Friends,

I would like to congratulate us all for the anniversary of our signature of the Helsinki Convention. Obligations emerging from the Helsinki Convention, both the original one and the current one from 1992, are something that binds us together. They show we are mature enough to commit to responsibilities - and shoulder them both in times of economic upturn and recession. By having each other and by having confidence in each other, we can really make a difference.

Thank You.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CHAIR	
Ms. Helle Pilsgaard Chair of HELCOM	Ministry of the Environment Nature Agency Haraldsgade 53 DK-2100 Copenhagen Ö
SPEAKERS / PANELISTS	
Ms. Tarja Halonen President	Säästöpankinranta 6 C Helsinki
Mr. Ville Niinistö Minister of the Environment of Finland	Minister of the Environment Ministry of the Environment P.O. Box 35 FI-00023 Government
Ms. Jacqueline Alder Head, Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Branch	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme Division of Environmental Policy Implementation P.O. Box 30552 00100-Nairobi
Mr. Erik Bonsdorff Professor	Åbo Akademi University Department of Biology Akademigatan 1 FI-20500 Åbo
Mr. Bo Gustafsson Director	Baltic Nest Institute Stockholm University Baltic Sea Centre SE-106 91 Stockholm
Ms. Marianne Kettunen Senior Policy Analyst	Institute for European Environmental Policy London Office 11 Belgrave Road IEEP Offices, Floor 3 London SW1V 1RB
Ms. Pauli Merriman Programme Director	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme Ulriksdals Slott SE-170 81 Solna
Ms. Monika Stankiewicz Executive Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Mr. Darius Campbell Executive Secretary	OSPAR Commission Victoria House 37-63 Southampton Row London WC1B 4DA
Ms. Anne Christine Brusendorff General Secretary	International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) H.C. Andersens Boulevard 44-46 DK-1553 Copenhagen V
Ms. Kaisa Kononen Executive Director	BONUS Baltic Organisations Network for Funding Science EEIG Hakaniemenranta 6 FI-00530 Helsinki
Ms. Astrid Schomaker Head of Unit	European Commission DG Environment Unit C2 Marine Environment and Water Industry BU9-4/185 Rue de la Loi 200 B-1049 Brussels

PARTICIPANTS	
Ms. Heini Ahtiainen Research Scientist	MTT Agrifood Research Finland Latokartanonkaari 9 FI-00790 Helsinki
Mr. Anders Alm HELCOM Head of Delegation of Sweden	Ministry of Environment Tegelbacken 2 SE-103 33 Stockholm
Mr. Andris Andrusaitis Programme Manager	BONUS Baltic Organisations Network for Funding Science EEIG BONUS EEIG Secretariat Hakaniemenranta 6 FI-00530 Helsinki
Ms. Sari Artjoki Acting Head of Representation	European Commission Representation in Finland Malminkatu 16 FI-00101 Helsinki
H. E. Mr. Ugis Bambe Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia	Armfeltintie 10 FI-00150 Helsinki
Mr. Mathias Bergman Secretary General	Baltic Sea Action Group (BSAG) Foundation for a Living Baltic Sea Yrjönkatu 23 A FI-00100 Helsinki
Ms. Penina Blankett Ministerial Adviser Vice-Chair of HELCOM HABITAT	Ministry of the Environment Department of the Natural Environment P.O. Box 35 FI-00023 Government
Mr. Dieter Boedeker	German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation Isle of Vilm D-18581 Putbus/Ruegen
H. E. Mr Jørg Bronebakk Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway	Itäinen Puistotie 17 P.O. Box 116 FI-00151 Helsinki
Ms. Galina Danilisina Senior Officer Vice-Chair of HELCOM LAND	Ministry of the Environment of Estonia Water Department Narva mnt 7a EE-15172 Tallinn
Ms. Lolan Margaretha Eriksson Senior Government Adviser Outgoing Chair of HELCOM MARITIME	Ministry of Transport and Communications Transport Policy Department P.O. 31 FI-00023 Government
Ms. Ulla-Britta Fallenius Senior Advisor	Swedish Environmental Protection Agency SE-106 48 Stockholm
Mr. Kaj Forsius Project Manager	Finnish Environment Institute SYKE Mechelininkatu 34a P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Dr. Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky	St. Petersburg
Ms. Christina Gestrin	Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) Parliament of Finland FI-00102 Government
Mr. Kaj Granholm Coordinator	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences Baltic COMPASS SLU Grants Office P.O. Box 7071 SE-750 07 Uppsala

Mr. Björn Grönholm Head of Secretariat	Union of the Baltic Cities Commission on Environment Vanha Suurtori 7 FI-20500 Turku
Ms. Tarja Haaranen Environment Counsellor	Ministry of the Environment of Finland Kasarmikatu 25 P.O. Box 35 FI-00023 Government
Ms. Kaisu Heikonen Senior Technical Advisor	Finnish Transport Agency P.O. Box 33 FI-00521 Helsinki
Ms. Anna-Stiina Heiskanen Head of Unit Chair of HELCOM MONAS	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Ms. Nina Hellström Senior Officer	Ministry for Foreign Affairs Merikasarmi P.O. Box 176 FI-00023 Government
Mr. Jaakko Henttonen NDEP Director	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) Resident Office in St. Petersburg 25 Nevsky Prospect RU-191186 St. Petersburg
Ms. Anne-Mette Hjortebjerg Lund	Ministry of the Environment Danish Nature Agency Water Planning and Marine Environment Haraldsgade 53 DK-2100 Copenhagen Ö
Ms. Mari Hokkanen	Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) Parliament of Finland FI-00102 Government
Mr. Kari Homanen Executive Vice President	Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) P.O. Box 249 FI-00171 Helsinki
Mr. Kari Hyytiäinen Professor	University of Helsinki Department of Economics and Management P.O. Box 27 FI-00014 Helsingin yliopisto
Mr. Nuritdin Inamov Director of the International Relations Department	Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Russian Federation 4/6, B. Gruzinskaya st., D-242, GSP-5 RU-123995 Moscow
Mr. Ville-Veikko Intovuori Senior Inspector	Finnish Transport Safety Agency (TraFi) Kumpulantie 9 P.O. Box 320 FI-00520 Helsinki
Mr. Andrzej Jagusiewicz HELCOM Head of Delegation of Poland	Ministry of the Environment Wawelska Str. 52/54 PL-00 922 Warsaw
H. E. Mr. Arunas Jievalt Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania	Pohjoisranta 4 A 15 FI-00170 Helsinki
Ms. Krista Kampus Senior Adviser & Head Baltic 21 Unit	Council of the Baltic Sea States Secretariat P.O. Box 2010 Slussplan 9 SE-103 11 Stockholm

Mr. Felix Karmazinov Director General	Vodokanal St. Petersburg Kavalergardskaya Str. 42 RU-191015 St. Petersburg
Ms. Airi Karvonen Counsellor	Ministry of the Environment Kasarmikatu 25 P.O. Box 35 FI-00023 Government
Ms. Lea Kauppi Director General	Finnish Environment Institute Mechelininkatu 34 a P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Ms. Anna Kiiski Executive Manager	Kotka Maritime Research Centre Heikinkatu 7 FI-48100 Kotka
Ms. Agne Kniezaite Head	Ministry of the Environment of Lithuania Water Department Water Policy Division A. Jaksto Str. 4/9 LT-01105 Vilnius
Mr. Seppo Knuutila Senior Research Scientist	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Dr. Tapani Kohonen Counsellor for International Affairs (retired)	Riihimäki
Ms. Tytti Kontula Senior Research Scientist	Finnish Environment Institute Natural Environment Centre P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Mr. Juha Korhonen Secretary of International Issues	Finnish Transport Agency Hydrographic Office P.O. Box 33 FI-00521 Helsinki
Mr. Leonid Korovin Chair of HELCOM LAND	Saint-Petersburg Public Organization "Ecology and Business" P.O. Box 66 (Sabirovskaya str. 37-304) RU-197342 St. Petersburg
Mr. Samuli Korpinen Research Manager	Finnish Environment Institute Marine Research Centre Mechelininkatu 34 P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Ms. Ritva Kostakow-Kämpe	Helsinki
Mr. Pekka Kotilainen Senior Scientist	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) Marine Research Centre Mechelininkatu 34a P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Ms. Sanna Kuningas Marine Conservation Officer	WWF Finland Lintulahdenkatu 10 FI-00500 Helsinki
Mr. Tuomas Kuokkanen Ministerial adviser	Ministry of the Environment FI-00023 Government

Ms. Natalia Kutaeva Head of Maritime Environment Protection Division Vice-Chair of HELCOM MARITIME	State Marine Pollution Control, Salvage and Rescue Administration of the Russian Federation (SMPCSA) Marine Environment Protection Division Ul. Petrovka 3/6 RU-125993 Moscow
Mr. Jorma Kämäräinen Chief Adviser Vice-Chair of HELCOM MARITIME	Finnish Transport Safety Agency (TraFi) Regulation/Transport Technology P.O. Box 320 FI-00101 Helsinki
Ms. Maria Laamanen Counsellor	Ministry of the Environment of Finland Kasarmikatu 25 P.O. Box 35 FI-00023 Government
Mr. Heikki Lehtinen Senior Officer	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Department of Fisheries and Game P.O. Box 30 FI-00023 Government
Dr. Juha-Markku Leppänen	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) Marine Research Centre P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Mr. Harry Liiv HELCOM Head of Delegation of Estonia	Ministry of the Environment of Estonia Narva mnt 7a EE-15172 Tallinn
Mr. Talis Linkaits Head of Secretariat	VASAB Secretariat Elizabetes street 19 LV-1010 Riga
Ms. Aurore Maillet	European Commission DG Environment Unit C2 - Marine Environment & Water Industry BU5-4/196 Avenue de Beaulieu 5 B-1049 Brussels
Mr. Pavel V. Malyshev Counsellor	Embassy of the Russian Federation Tehtaankatu 1 B FI-00140 Helsinki
Ms. Miia Mannerla	Helsinki
Mr. Marco Manzi	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) ICT Department Mechelininkatu 34a P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Ms. Satu Mattila Ambassador	Ministry for Foreign Affairs, CBSS Presidency Unit for Regional Cooperation Laivastokatu 22 G P.O.Box 428 FI-00023 Government
Ms. Terttu Melvasalo	Helsinki
Dr. Kai Myrberg	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) Mechelininkatu 34a P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki

Ms. Anita Mäkinen Chief Adviser Co-Chair of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG	Finnish Transport Safety Agency (TraFi) International relations and co-operation (Kumpulantie 9) P.O. Box 320 FI-00520 Helsinki
Ms. Marit Mätik	Ministry of the Interior Migration and Border Policy Department Lai Tn 46/48 Harjumaa EE-10133 Tallinn
H. E. Mr. Janusz Niesyto Ambassador of the Republic of Poland	Armas Lindgrenintie 21 FI-00570 Helsinki
Mr. Tonny Niilonen HELCOM Head of Delegation of Denmark	Ministry of the Environment Danish Nature Agency Water Planning and Marine Environment Haraldsgade 53 DK-2100 Copenhagen Ö
Ms. Solveig Nordström	"Nordmiljö" Niittykallio 3 F FI-02200 Espoo
Mr. Gunnar Norén Executive Secretary	Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB) Östra Ågatan 53, 5tr SE-753 22 Uppsala
Ms. Leena Närhi	Bitdesign Kaupinkuja 26 FI-01360 Vantaa
Ms. Lisbet Oelgaard Vice-Chair of HELCOM	Ministry of the Environment Nature Agency Water Planning and Marine Environment Haraldsgade 53 DK-2100 Copenhagen Ö
Mr. Olli Ojala Director General (retired) (Ministry of the Environment, Finland)	Porvoo
H. E. Mr. Alexander Ostrovsky Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus	Unioninkatu 18 FI-00130 Helsinki
Mr. Dmitry Otorochkin Third Secretary	Embassy of the Russian Federation Tehtaankatu 1 B FI-00140 Helsinki
Mr. Jussi Pajunen Mayor	City of Helsinki City Hall Pohjoisesplanadi 11-13 P.O. Box 1 FI-00099 Helsinki
Ms. Hanna Paulomäki Baltic Project Marine Scientist	Oceana Nyhavn 16, 4 sal DK-1051 Copenhagen K
Ms. Anna Petersson Incoming Chair of HELCOM MARITIME	Swedish Transport Agency Civil Aviation and Maritime Department SE-601 73 Norrköping
Ms. Liisa Pietola Head of environmental affairs	Baltic Farmers Forum on Environment (BFFE) c/o Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK) P.O. Box 510 (Simonkatu 6) FI-00101 Helsinki

Mr. Andrzej Podscianski	Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection Division of International Cooperation and Promotion of the Inspection Wawelska 52/54 PL-00 922 Warsaw
Mr. Erik Poulsen Minister Counsellor	Royal Danish Embassy in Helsinki P.O. Box 1042 FI-00101 Helsinki
Ms. Eeva-Liisa Poutanen Senior Environmental Adviser HELCOM Head of Delegation of Finland	Ministry of the Environment of Finland Kasarmikatu 25 P.O. Box 35 FI-00023 Government
Mr. Mihail Probirsky Director of Waste Water Treatment Directorate	Vodokanal St. Petersburg Kavalergardskaya Str. 42 RU-191015 St. Petersburg
Ms. Elna Rautalahti Senior Environmental Advisor	Ministry of the Environment of Finland Kasarmikatu 25 P.O. Box 35 FI-00023 Government
Ms. Mirja Rosenberg	European Boating Association (EBA) Ahventie 4 A 19 FI-02170 Espoo
Mr. Holger Rotkirch Ambassador emeritus	Helsinki
Ms. Vanessa Ryan Marine Conservation Officer	WWF Finland Lintulahdenkatu 10 FI-00500 Helsinki
Mr. Folke Rydén	FRP AB Fatburstrappan 18 SE-118 26 Stockholm
Mr. Magnus Rystedt Managing Director	Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) P.O.Box 249 FI-00171 Helsinki
Mr. Paris Sansoglou Secretary General	European Dredging Association Avenue Grandchamp 148 Grootveldlaan B-1150 Brussels
Ms. Romy Schroeder HELCOM Head of Delegation of Germany	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety P.O. Box 120629 D-53048 Bonn
Mr. Josi Seilonen	European Commission Representation in Finland Malminkatu 16 FI-00101 Helsinki
Ms. Maija Sirola Communications Manager	BONUS Baltic Organisations Network for Funding Science EEIG Hakaniemenranta 6 FI-00530 Helsinki
Mr. Mikael Sjövall Communications Manager	Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO) P.O. Box 249 FI-00171 Helsinki
Ms. Lisa Emelia Svensson Ambassador for Oceans, Seas and Fresh Water	Ministry of the Environment Ministry of the Environment of Sweden Tegelbacken 2 SE-103 33 Stockholm

Ms. Kati Tahvonen Senior Officer	Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) P.O. Box 140 FI-00251 Helsinki
Mr. Janne Tamminen Executive Secretary	Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) – Baltic Sea Commission c/o Helsinki-Uusimaa Region Esterinportti 2 B FI-00240 Helsinki
Ms. Marja-Liisa Tapio-Biström Senior Officer	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry PO Box 30 FI-00023 Valtioneuvosto
H. E. Mr. Mart Tarmak Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia	Itäinen Puistotie 10 FI-00140 Helsinki
Ms. Vappu Tervo	Vantaa
Ms. Erja Tikka Ambassador for Baltic Sea Issues	Ministry for Foreign Affairs Ministry for Foreign Affairs P.O. Box 432 FI-00023 Government
H. E. Mr. Martin Tomco Ambassador of the Czech Republic	Armfeltintie 14 FI-00150 Helsinki
Ms. Natalia Tretiakova HELCOM Head of Delegation of Russia	Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Russian Federation 4/6, Bol. Gruzinskaya Str. RU-123995 Moscow, D-242, GSP-5
Mr. Dmitry V. Troshenko Deputy Director of Information and Training Center	Vodokanal St. Petersburg 56 Shpalernaja st. St. Petersburg
Mr. Silver Vahtra Councillor	Ministry of the Environment Marine Environment Dept. Narva mnt. 7a EE-15172 Tallinn
Mr. Tapani Veistola Senior advisor	Coalition Clean Baltic Finnish Association for Nature Conservation Kotkankatu 9 FI-00150 Helsinki
Mr. Sampsa Vilhunen Head of Marine Programme	World Wide Fund for Nature WWF Finland Lintulahdenkatu 10 FI-00500 Helsinki
Mr. Nikolay Vlasov Editor-in-Chief	Interfax Information Services International Information Group 2, Pervaya Tverskaya-Yamskaya Ul. Moscow 127006
Mr. Jan Widberg Secretary General	Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) c/o Nordic Council Ved Stranden 18 DK-1061 Copenhagen
Mr. Mikael Wennström Water biologist	Provincial Government of Åland P.O. Box 1060 AX-22111 Mariehamn
Ms. Baiba Zasa HELCOM Head of Delegation of Latvia	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development Department of Environmental Protection Peldu Str. 25 LV-1494 Riga
HELCOM SECRETARIAT	

Ms. Monika Stankiewicz Executive Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Mr. Hermann Backer Professional Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Mr. Mikhail Durkin Professional Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Ulla Li Zweifel Professional Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Johanna Laurila Information Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Satu Raisamo Administrative Officer	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Petra Kääriä Assisting Professional Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Laura Meski Assisting Professional Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Minna Pyhälä Assisting Professional Secretary	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Mr. Håkan Blomberg ICT Administrator	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Mr. Joni Kaitaranta Data Administrator	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Leena Heikkilä Administrative Assistant	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Teija-Liisa Lehtinen Professional Assistant	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Miisa Holmström Financial Officer (EU BASE)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Lena Avellan Project Manager (CORESET II)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Janica Borg Project Researcher (PROTECT)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen Project Manager (EUTRO-OPER)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Mr. Manuel Frias Project Coordinator (MORE) & Data Coordinator (HORIZON)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki

Ms. Johanna Karhu Project Coordinator (BALSAM)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Marta Ruiz Project Researcher (ALIENS 3)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Mr. Sriram Sethuraman Project Manager (PLUS)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki
Ms. Saija Vuola Project Manager (EU-BASE)	Helsinki Commission Katajanokanlaituri 6 B FI-00160 Helsinki