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Agenda Item	2 - Matters arising from the subsidiary bodies
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Reference	

Background

The attached document contains the Outcome of the Ninth Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 9-2015), which was held in Berlin, Germany on 4-5 February 2015.

The Meeting reviewed the draft document on work in progress on regional coordination of Programmes of Measures (PoMs) prepared by the Gear Intersessional Group on PoMs. The document provides a draft snapshot of regional coordination efforts. Several countries informed on their intended use of the document in their public consultation on national PoMs and the Meeting agreed that the Gear Intersessional Group on PoMs should continue its work.

Coordination of regional measures will be further carried out along with the finalization of the document by the end of 2015. On 21 April 2015, Gear will convene an on-line meeting to discuss specific topics in need of further regional coordination as proposed by IG PoM. Chairs of relevant Working Groups will be invited to the Gear meeting since technical input on measures appropriate for regional coordination will be requested from Working Groups.

Sections of particular relevance to the Meeting of HELCOM 36-2015 are highlighted in **bold**.

The complete Outcome is available [here](#).

Action required

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the outcome of the Meeting
- agree on the arranging of the online Gear meeting on 21 April 2015 and the next regular meeting of the GEAR group on 19-20 May 2015.

OUTCOME OF THE NINTH MEETING OF GROUP FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH (HELCOM GEAR 9-2015)

Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the outcomes of HELCOM GEAR 8-2014 (Paragraph 6.2) and HOD 47-2014 (Paragraph 3.77), the ninth Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 9-2015) was held in Berlin, Germany, at the premises of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by delegations from Denmark, Estonia, European Commission, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, and Poland and the Observer WWF-Germany. The List of Participants is attached as Annex 1.

0.3 The Meeting regretted the lack of participation by Russia in recent GEAR meetings, and welcomed the offer of the Chair to contact Russia to encourage them to participate.

0.1 The Meeting was welcomed by Ms. Heike Imhoff on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety.

0.2 The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Heike Imhoff, Germany, Chair of the GEAR Group. Ms. Ulla Li Zweifel, Professional Secretary, and Ms. Minna Pyhälä, Assisting Professional Secretary, acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

Documents: 1-1, 1-2

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda as contained in documents 1-1 and 1-2.

Agenda Item 2 Matter arising from other meetings of relevance to GEAR

Documents: 2-1, 2-2

2.1 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the outcome of HELCOM HOD 47-2014 (document 2-1).

2.2 The Meeting took note of the outcomes of the first meeting of the new Pressure Group and the first meeting of the new State and Nature Conservation Group (document 2-2).

Agenda Item 3 Coordination and information related to the implementation of the ecosystem approach and related policies

Documents: 3-1, 3-2, 3-2-Rev.1, 3-2-Rev.1-Add.1, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5

3.1 The Meeting took note that the Secretariat participated in and contributed to the Workshop to discuss Cross-cutting issues (21-22 January 2015) as part of the ongoing review of the EU Commission decision on criteria and methodological standards for GES and that the Secretariat will continue to participate, when relevant and possible, in upcoming meetings to review the GES decision.

3.2 The EC informed that the document on Cross-cutting issues will be updated based on the discussion at the mentioned workshop, possibly already before the next experts meetings on the review of the GES decision to be organized by ICES and JRC.

Programmes of Measures

3.3 The Meeting took note of the information on the proposal for a Finnish MSFD Programme of Measures as contained in document 3-5. The plan is currently in public consultation together with the WFD river basin management plans, RBMPs. The focus has been on analyzing existing measures and identifying whether they should be strengthened or complemented by additional new measures and eventually 35 new measures were proposed.

3.4 The Meeting also took note of the following information on existing and planned national measures to implement the ecosystem approach, especially related to Programmes of Measures (PoMs):

- Denmark informed that they have sent out a first part of the PoMs to public consultation (12 weeks) which includes a proposal to designate six new MPAs in Kattegat with restrictions on activities such as fishing with bottom towed gear, dredging and sediment extraction. Denmark has notified Norway, Sweden and Germany according to the Espoo Convention.
- Estonia informed that the first draft of new measures was available since the end of January. They are currently organizing stakeholder meetings before the official public hearing. They are preparing the public procurement for SEA. And a six month public consultation is expected to start in May 2015 together with the WFD RBMPs and floods directive processes.
- Germany informed that they are still working towards the mile stones of their time plan for the POMs despite delays and hope to start public consultation on 1 April 2015.
- Lithuania are planning to develop a first draft of PoMs by March and public consultation is planned from April to June.
- Poland is currently compiling information on existing measures. A project will be set up to propose new measures and the public consultation will be 3 weeks and finalized by the end of 2015
- Finland informed that they used the CART of Finland as an important basis for considering the needs for nutrient load reduction measures in national PoM and that Finland proposes seven new measures to reduce nutrients in the marine PoM and part of the WFD measures will be applied as MSFD measures as well.

3.5 **The Meeting took note of the draft document on work in progress on regional coordination of PoMs as contained in document 3-2-Rev.1-Att.1, as well as the early analysis of available information on new national measures as presented in Annex 1 of document 3-2-Rev.1 and 3-2-Rev.1-Add.1 with a link to the Finnish national consultation.**

3.6 The Meeting appreciated the efforts of the Intersessional Group on Programmes of Measures (IG PoM) to further elaborate the document, and thanked especially the chair, Ms. Andrea Weiss, Germany.

3.7 The Meeting acknowledged that the document is a work in progress that provides a preliminary snapshot of current status of regional coordination efforts, and that gaps in the document related to coordination of regional measures will be further developed in the finalization of the document by the end of 2015.

3.8 The Meeting noted that Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Lithuania and Poland can support the use of the document in their public consultation.

3.9 The Meeting took note of the information that Germany was not able to support document 3-2-Rev.1-Att.1 as the German Länder were not in a position to approve the document at this stage or give a vote whether or not the document could be used for national public consultation processes for MSFD PoMs.

3.10 The Meeting recognized that the document allows Contracting Parties, if they so wish, to use it in their national PoM consultation processes and proposed the addition to the end of the caveat note on the cover of document 3-2-Rev.1-Att.1, the following two sentences: “The contents of this document is subject to national internal and public consultation processes and is expected undergo further changes. It is up to the Contracting Parties if they wish to use the document in their national processes.”

3.11 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties, who have not yet done so, to provide input to Annex 1 to document 3-2 Rev.1-Att.1 on possible measures under consideration in HELCOM Contracting Parties by 19 February 2015 or to use a standard formulation on later input. Contracting Parties who wish to adjust their information in Annex 1 to the latest state of affairs are invited to do so also by 19 February 2015.

3.12 The Meeting agreed that the updated document should be made available for use by Contracting Parties by 20 February 2015.

3.13 The Meeting invited those Contracting States not present at the meeting to clarify by 12 February 2015 their position on the document as a basis for further work.

3.14 The Meeting also invited Germany and any other country which may not be in a position to support the document to specify in detail their hesitation.

3.15 The Meeting discussed the next steps for further elaboration of the draft document on regional coordination of POMs and agreed that IG PoM should continue its work. The Meeting was of the view that as a priority, IG PoM should focus on the coordination of national programmes of measures with a view to completing the Joint Document for approval by HOD in December 2015.

3.16 The Meeting agreed on the following procedure:

- to invite Contracting Parties to endeavor to send their information on proposed new national measures by 31 March 2015.
- that, by 16 April 2015 IG POM should undertake an analysis of the new national measures and prepare a proposal for
 - o specific topics in need of further regional coordination
 - o any technical input required from Working Groups for developing the proposal further
- **that GEAR, on 21 April 2015, through an online meeting, 9-13 CET, should review the proposals and give guidance to IG POM and to the Working Groups for the input required taking into consideration the upcoming meetings of Pressure (6-8 May 2015) and State & Conservation (11-15 May 2015). Chairs of relevant Working Groups will be invited to the Gear meeting.**
- that a GEAR workshop (participation to be decided) be held in September / October 2015 (possibly back-to-back with a GEAR meeting) to develop a plan on practical steps for the coordination of national measures and the development of regional measures and joint actions. The aim is to facilitate the regionally coordinated implementation of programmes of measures as of 2016. The workshop builds on the proposals from IG PoM, the input from WGs and presentation by each Contracting Party of their PoMs/new measures and priorities for regional coordination/joint action.
- GEAR 11-2015 reviews the results of the workshop with a view to recommending them to HOD for endorsement in December 2015. The conclusions of HOD on further coordination and regional measures/actions will be included in the completed Joint Document.

3.17 The Meeting considered and discussed arrangements for consultations on transboundary impacts of PoMs.

3.18 The Meeting took note of the information on the analysis of transboundary impacts of the Finnish PoM proposal included in document 3-5 and that Finland has notified Sweden and Estonia, who they share sub-basins with, on the impacts of Finnish PoMs according to the Espoo Convention. All other HELCOM countries that are EU member states have also been informed.

3.19 The Meeting noted that Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Lithuania and Poland are still considering how to carry out the consultations on transboundary impacts but may use a similar approach as Finland. The Meeting was of the view that it might be helpful to define a common approach on the consultation on transboundary impacts. The Meeting welcomed the offer of Germany to take the lead in to propose a common approach (via correspondence).

3.20 The Meeting considered the proposal by GEAR 8-2014 to arrange a joint workshop, e.g. in mid-2015, for HELCOM Contracting Parties to discuss the transboundary impacts jointly and agreed that such a workshop would not have added value at this stage.

Environmental targets

3.21 The Meeting recalled that in the implementation of MSFD Article 10, national environmental targets to achieve good environmental status of marine waters have been defined by Contracting Parties being EU Member States and that these form the basis for development of PoMs.

3.22 The Meeting acknowledged that at a regional level, environmental targets for reducing pressures in the Baltic Sea have been agreed e.g. through the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme (MAI/CART), but a need to develop environmental targets for also other parameters, e.g. hazardous substances, non-indigenous species and seabed disturbance has been previously indicated e.g. in the Roadmap for HELCOM activities.

3.23 The Meeting felt that in order to start up work on improving regional coherence in environmental target setting for 2018, an analysis of coherence of national environmental targets could be a starting point.

3.24 The Meeting agreed that the Secretariat will use the existing compilation of national targets provided by the European Commission and identify those reported environmental targets that are related to reduction of pressures, and make an analysis of coherence of existing targets and to present the results and the next meeting of Gear.

HELCOM Plan to improve regional coherence in moving towards good environmental status

3.25 The Meeting considered and discussed the draft HELCOM Plan to improve regional coherence in moving towards good environmental status contained in document 3-1, taking into account also the comments provided by Sweden in document 3-4.

3.26 The Meeting amended the document as contained in document 3-1-Rev.1 and endorsed in principle the Plan, with the view that it will be forwarded to HELCOM 36-2015 for adoption. The Meeting noted that Germany made a study reservation on the HELCOM Plan since the German Länder were not in a position to approve the HELCOM Plan at this stage and Denmark had a study reservation on section 5.1, to be clarified by HELCOM 36-2015.

Application for Baltic Sea project to boost regional coherence of marine strategies through improved data flow, assessments, and knowledge base for development of measures

3.27 The Meeting took note of information about the application in response to the EU Call: "Best practices for action plans to develop integrated, regional monitoring programmes, coordinated programmes of measures and addressing data and knowledge gaps in coastal and marine waters" (DG ENV/MSFD Action Plans /2014) (document 3-3).

3.28 The Meeting highlighted the importance of ensuring good cooperation and linkage to other on-going work in HELCOM and noted that the work to be carried out within the BOOST project has been planned to be steered by relevant HELCOM bodies, including the HOLAS II project core team, thus enabling the Contracting Parties to fully integrate the project activities into HELCOM work.

3.29 The Meeting took note of the information by EC that decisions on the applications will probably not be available until end of March or April 2015.

Agenda Item 4 Activities of relevant HELCOM projects and processes

Documents: 4-1, 4-1-Rev.1, 4-2, 4-3, 4-4

A second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II)

4.1 The Meeting took note of the Outcome of the first meeting of the HELCOM HOLAS II project (document 4-1), including the preliminary draft outline of second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea ecosystem elaborated by the meeting as contained in Annex 2 of the Outcome of the meeting.

4.2 The Meeting emphasized the importance of the project and acknowledged that the work of HOLAS II is very dependent on many other projects and policy developments, e.g. CORESET II, BOOST application, input from Contracting Parties, ongoing review of the EC GES decision, etc.

4.3 The Meeting was of the opinion that the holistic assessment should focus on assessment of the status of the Baltic Sea marine environment and whether GES has been achieved and that less focus should be placed on the social and economic aspects and measures components.

4.4 The Meeting welcomed the offer of Finland to take the lead in the socio-economic evaluation to be included in the assessment.

4.5 The Meeting stressed the importance of knowing the MSFD reporting requirements in 2018, as soon as possible, in order to ensure that the HOLAS II assessment will provide Contracting Parties that are EU members with the necessary information.

4.6 The Meeting took note that the HOLAS II core team proposed to address environmental targets in the holistic report, and that the GEAR group was asked to give advice on how to address environmental targets for pressures in the holistic report and that this is in line with the activity initiated under Agenda item 3, Environmental targets.

Development of a core set of HELCOM indicators (CORESET II)

4.7 The Meeting took note of the progress and remaining time-table for the CORESET II project (document 4-2). The Meeting noted that a sub-set of the core indicators will be made available for review by Contracting Parties as soon as possible, starting in March 2015.

4.8 The Meeting emphasized that the development of indicators is fundamental to the preparation of the holistic assessment and recognized that adequate resources for experts are needed to secure their finalization.

4.9 The Meeting discussed the planned endorsement process of indicators and raised concern that time-table was very tight considering the need for an adequate national consultation process, in particular on GES-boundaries, to facilitate the review process at Pressure 2-2015, State & Conservation 2-2015 and decision at HOD 47-2015.

4.10 The Meeting stressed that to facilitate the review process an extract of information from the core indicator reports should be provided as soon as possible by the CORESET II project, including a summary of the indicator and its concept, GES-boundary, and a brief explanation of how the GES boundaries have been derived.

4.11 The Meeting furthermore requested the State & Conservation group, at their next meeting, to also discuss the compatibility between GES boundaries across relevant core indicators and report if any issues of concern are identified.

4.12 The Meeting furthermore noted that the core indicators are in different stages of development and that continued work to finalize indicators for use in the holistic assessment will be needed after June 2015.

4.13 The Meeting agreed to consider the outcomes of the Working Group meetings that will review the core indicators from a technical aspect and formulate a recommendation for HOD 48-2015.

Testing new concepts for integrated environmental monitoring of the Baltic Sea (BALSAM)

4.14 The Meeting welcomed the progress of the HELCOM BALSAM project that finalizes its activities in March 2015 as presented by the Project Coordinator Ms Johanna Karhu (presentation 2, document 4-4).

4.15 The Meeting noted that some of the issues worked on under the BALSAM project are expected to continue within the framework of the proposed BOOST project.

Making HELCOM eutrophication assessments operational (EUTRO-OPER)

4.16 The Meeting took note of the progress of the HELCOM EUTRO-OPER project (document 4-3). The Meeting noted that the project will carry out an updated eutrophication assessment and cater for an improved data flow and assessment protocol for future assessments but that the timing of the project (continuing until end of 2015) does not allow for an input of relevant data to the holistic assessment.

Agenda Item 5 Follow-up of the HELCOM streamlining and Roadmap for HELCOM activities

Documents: 5-1

5.1 The Meeting took note that the Roadmap for HELCOM activities on ecosystem approach will be presented to HELCOM 36-2015 and that the Secretariat is preparing on an overview on how the Working groups are to contribute to the Roadmap deliverables.

5.2 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the joint session on cooperation between HELCOM and EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) held as part of the Heads of Delegation meeting in December 2014 (cf. document 2-1) and of the information that the EU Commission has issued a discussion paper for the revision of the Action Plan of the EUSBSR proposing an adjusted structure of the Action Plan and prioritization of the cooperation areas.

5.3 The Meeting considered the draft input by HELCOM for increasing synergies with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) as presented in document 5-1 and noted comments by Finland to the draft input.

5.4 Noting the study reservation by Denmark and Finland, the Meeting invited Contracting Parties to consult the draft HELCOM input as amended during the meeting and contained in document 5-1-Rev.1 with national heads of delegation in order to have a HELCOM agreement on the document and to provide possible comments to the Executive Secretary latest on 12 February 2015.

5.5 The Meeting noted that the consultation of the proposed revision by the Commission with the countries is planned to be closed in February. Therefore, the Meeting recommended sending the HELCOM input on operationalization of the cooperation between HELCOM and the EUSBSR in time for feeding it into the revision process.

Agenda Item 6 Any other business

Documents: 6-1, 6-1-Rev.1

6.1 Finland enquired how the recommendations from the BASE project have been implemented. The Meeting took note of information by the Secretariat that the project results were different in nature and where relevant they were presented to the meetings of the HELCOM working groups taking place in autumn last year. The Meeting invited Russia to provide follow-up information on how they intend to take forward the BASE recommendations nationally, and welcomed the offer by the GEAR Chair to address this issue to Russia (cf. paragraph 0.3).

6.2 The Meeting was of the view that it would be helpful to discuss the use of exceptions (according to MSFD Article 14) in the PoM reporting and agreed to come back to this issue at GEAR 10-2015.

6.3 The Meeting updated the contact information for GEAR as contained in document 6-1-Rev.1.

6.4 The Meeting agreed to organize the next meeting of the GEAR group on 19-20 May 2015 and invited Contracting Parties to inform the Secretariat (UllaLi.Zweifel@helcom.fi) of their possibilities to host the meeting by 12 February 2015. The Meeting welcomed the standing offer of Germany to host the meeting should there be no other offers.

6.5 The Meeting agreed that the meeting should focus on developing the Gear input to HOD 48 related to work on core indicators, follow-up on the work on the joint document of coordinated PoMs during 2015, continue the discussion on how to improve synergies between HELCOM and EUSBSR, and get updated on the work of HOLAS II.

6.6 The Meeting thanked Germany for excellent arrangements and hosting of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 7 Outcome of the Meeting

Documents: Outcome

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 Portal.