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Reference	

Background

The Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Baltic Sea was held on 20–24 February 2018, in Helsinki, Finland, hosted by the Government of Finland and with financial support by Finland and Sweden. The workshop was convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in collaboration with HELCOM.

The workshop was co-chaired by Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland, and Mr. Dieter Boedeker, Germany, and opened by Ms. Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary the Finnish Ministry of the Environment. The list of participants of the workshop is included in Annex 1.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the outcome of the workshop.



Outcome of the Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of EBSAs in the Baltic Sea

Background

The purpose of the EBSA process is to globally describe Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas using the CBD scientific criteria for the EBSAs (CBD decision IX/20, annex I, <https://www.cbd.int/doc/decisions/cop-09/cop-09-dec-20-en.pdf>) adopted by the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at its ninth meeting in 2008.

The application of the EBSA criteria is a scientific and technical exercise, carried out through a series of regional workshops. Since 2011 CBD Secretariat has convened 13 regional EBSA workshops, covering more than 74 per cent of the world's ocean.

Each workshop is tasked to describe areas meeting the scientific criteria for EBSAs or other relevant criteria based on best available scientific information. As such, experts at the workshops are not expected to discuss any management issues, including threats to the areas.

For instance, EBSAs are not Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), and the CBD process of describing EBSAs does not require, legally or otherwise, that they should be designated as MPAs.

The Baltic EBSA Workshop

The Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Baltic Sea was held on 20-24 February 2018, in Helsinki, hosted by the Government of Finland and with financial support by Finland and Sweden.

The workshop was convened by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity in collaboration with HELCOM.

The Duke University Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, with support from the Finnish Environment Institute, acted as the technical support team of the workshop, supporting the workshop participants with compilation and interpretation of GIS data layers and mapping of areas.

The organization of the workshop in the Baltic Sea was requested based on the decision by the Contracting Parties in HELCOM (Paragraph 4.5 of the Outcome of HELCOM 38-2017, concluded intersessionally e-mail by the Executive Secretary as of 29.05.2017).

The Baltic EBSA workshop was registered by HELCOM as a voluntary commitment at the UN Ocean Conference for implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14, on 5-9 June 2017, New York, (<https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=18382>).

The workshop was decided to be organized bearing in mind especially the possibilities the EBSA concept offers for Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP). In the Baltic Sea region the EBSAs are expected to contribute to fulfilling the regional goal of producing and applying maritime spatial plans that are coherent across borders and apply the ecosystem approach. In MSP the EBSAs could be utilized in addition to MPAs as ecosystem features that ensure the protection of the state and biodiversity of the marine ecosystem as well as improve its functioning while promoting ecosystem services. This topic of so called "green

infrastructure” has been discussed and will be followed-up in the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group, serving as a regional platform for MSP and also a steering body of the Horizontal Action “Spatial Planning” of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea.

Participating experts were invited through a CBD selection process, based on nominations by CBD National Focal Points of the Baltic Sea countries as well as by relevant organizations, using the selection criteria as defined in the CBD notification, focusing on scientific and technical expertise and experience as well as gender balance.

The workshop was attended by experts from Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Sweden as well as from BirdLife International, Coalition Clean Baltic, Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative, ICCA (Indigenous Peoples’ and Community Conserved Areas and Territories) Consortium, UNEP World Conservation Monitoring Centre, WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme, as well as the CBD Secretariat, the HELCOM Secretariat and Duke University Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab. The list of participants is included in Annex 1.

The opening statements were delivered by Ms. Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of the Environment of Finland, Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, HELCOM Executive Secretary, and Ms. Jihyun Lee, Environmental Affairs Officer, CBD Secretariat (on behalf of CBD Executive Secretary).

The workshop was co-chaired by Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland, and Mr. Dieter Boedeker, Germany, elected by the workshop.

The workshop focused on the geographic area covered by the Helsinki Convention. However, the workshop could not fully consider the marine areas of two Baltic Sea countries whose experts did not attend the workshop.

Scientific and technical information including biological, physical and oceanographic data provided by Contracting Parties as well as compiled by the technical team (Duke University Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab) were available in a data report for the deliberation of the workshop through the meeting website (<https://www.cbd.int/meetings/EBSAWS-2018-01>) prior to the workshop. The report includes datasets provided by HELCOM on the HELCOM Map and Data Service, as approved by the State & Conservation [7-2017](#).

The workshop was preceded by a one-day training session on EBSAs in Helsinki, Finland, on 19 February. The aim of the training session was to increase awareness on the Convention’s work on marine and coastal biodiversity in general, and the understanding on the CBD process on EBSAs in particular. The session was facilitated by Ms. Marina von Weissenberg, CBD National Focal Point and Ms. Penina Blankett, Co-Chair of the HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group, both from the Ministry of the Environment of Finland.

The Finnish Inventory Programme for the Underwater Marine Environment, [VELMU](#), was presented to the participants through a picture exhibition and of short VELMU videos from the Finnish sea areas. The results of the first version of the HELCOM “Status of the Baltic Sea” report (<http://www.helcom.fi/baltic-sea-trends/holistic-assessments/state-of-the-baltic-sea-2017>) was also presented at an evening social event.

Outcome

The workshop participants agreed on descriptions of nine areas in the Baltic Sea meeting the EBSA criteria:

- Northern Bothnian Bay
- Kvarken Archipelago
- Åland Sea, Åland Islands and the Archipelago Sea of Finland
- Eastern Gulf of Finland
- Inner Sea of West Estonian Archipelago
- Southeastern Baltic Sea Shallows
- Southern Gotland Harbour Porpoise Area
- Fehmarn Belt
- Fladen and Stora and Lilla Middelgrund.

Five of these areas are transboundary areas, covering waters of two or more countries. Altogether, the described EBSAs cover 23% of the Baltic Sea waters.

Each area has been described using the EBSA template, through plenary and break-out sessions, and adopted by the workshop plenary for inclusion into the workshop report. The report also contains an annex highlighting unique and vulnerable ecological and biological features of the Baltic Sea in the global context.

Furthermore, the report also contains information on the identified gaps and needs for further elaboration in describing areas meeting EBSA criteria, including the need for the development of scientific capacity and scientific collaboration. It reflects also that the workshop emphasized that those areas in the Baltic Sea (including MPAs) that have not been described during the workshop as meeting the EBSA criteria have not been interpreted as not being ecologically important.

The description of EBSAs is based on the scientific information and expert knowledge available at the time of the workshop, and, as the EBSA process is iterative and ongoing, there may be additional areas described as meeting the EBSA criteria in future regional or sub-regional workshops.

The workshop also discussed the significant diversity of indigenous peoples and local communities in the Baltic Sea region, which have endemic, traditional knowledge and customary governance of marine and coastal ecosystems, and the relevance of the indigenous and local knowledge of these indigenous peoples and local communities to the description of areas meeting the EBSA criteria. The indigenous and local knowledge is little explored in the context of HELCOM work and this new aspect brought forward by the workshop could be considered in the future to enhance regional efforts to restore and maintain biodiversity in the Baltic Sea.

Next steps

The workshop report will be submitted for consideration to the 22nd meeting of the CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), scheduled for 2–7 July 2018, Montreal, Canada, and subsequently to the 14th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention (COP), scheduled for 10–22 November 2018, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

Side-events could be organized at these meetings to share the information about the regional workshop and described EBSAs as well as other relevant activities of the HELCOM countries.

Once approved by CBD COP, the Baltic Sea EBSAs are expected to be included in the CBD EBSA repository (www.cbd.int/ebsa) and a summary report will be transmitted to the United Nations General Assembly and its relevant processes as well as other relevant UN/international organizations.

The workshop outcome is an opportunity to highlight the fact that despite the known marine environmental problems, the unique semi-enclosed Baltic Sea does have a great ecological or biological significance.

Annex 1 – List of workshop participants**Estonia**

Mr. Georg Martin, Vice-director, Estonian Marine Institute, University of Tartu, Tallinn, Estonia

Finland

Ms. Penina Blankett, Ministerial Adviser, Ministry of the Environment, Department of the Natural Environment, Government of Finland, Helsinki, Finland, Government of Finland

Mr. Michael Haldin, Senior Advisor (Marine), Parks & Wildlife Finland (Vaasa), Head of Marine Conservation Unit, Vaasa, Finland

Mr. Markku Viitasalo, Research professor, Finnish Environment Institute, Helsinki, Finland

Germany

Mr. Dieter Boedeker, Nature Conservation Officer, Unit for marine conservation, German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, Vilm, Germany

Mr. Alexander Darr, Researcher, Leibniz-Institute for Baltic Sea Research, Benthic Ecology, Rostock, Germany

Latvia

Ms. Solvita Strāķe, Senior researcher, Head of Hydrobiological laboratory, Marine Monitoring Department, Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology, Riga, Latvia

Lithuania

Ms. Aistė Kubiliūtė, Head of Data Management and Programmes Division, Marine Research Department Environment Protection Agency, Klaipėda, Lithuania

Mr. Erlandas Paplauskis, Senior specialist/Ecologist, Pajūris Regional Park (Seaside Regional Park), Klaipėda, Lithuania

Russian Federation

Mr. Evgeny Genelt-Yanovskiy, Researcher, Laboratory of Molecular Systematics, Zoological Institute, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, Russia

Mr. Roustam Sagitov, Associate professor, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg, Russian Federation

Sweden

Ms. Sofia A. Wikström, Associate Professor, Stockholm University, Baltic Sea Centre, Stockholm, Sweden

Ms. Pia Norling, Senior Analyst, Ph.D., Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, Gothenburg, Sweden

BirdLife International

Ms. Rieke Scholz, Scientific Associate Marine Conservation, NABU – Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union Germany, Stralsund, Germany

Coalition Clean Baltic

Ms. Sandra Marie Neumann Arvidson, Biologist, Nordfyn Municipality, Nature and Environment Department, Fredericia, Denmark

Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative

Mr. Christopher Barrio Froján, Project Officer, Seascope Consultants, Romsey, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

ICCA (Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas and Territories) Consortium

Mr. Tero Mustonen, Snowchange Cooperative, Selkie, Finland

UNEP-World Conservation Monitoring Centre

Corinne Martin, Head (interim), Marine Programme, United Nations Environment Programme – World Conservation Monitoring Centre Cambridge, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

WWF Baltic Ecoregion Programme

Ms. Janica Borg, Marine Conservation Officer, WWF Finland, Helsinki, Finland

HELCOM Secretariat

Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), Helsinki, Finland

Ms. Jannica Haldin, Professional Secretary, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), Helsinki, Finland

Mr. Joni Kaitaranta, Data Coordinator, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), Helsinki, Finland

Mr. Ville Karvinen, Project Coordinator, Horizontal Action “Spatial Planning” Support 2, Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM), Helsinki, Finland

CBD Secretariat

Ms. Jihyun Lee, Environmental Affairs Officer for Marine and Coastal Biodiversity, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Environment Programme, Montreal, Canada

Mr. Joseph Appiott, Associate Programme Officer, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Environment Programme, Montreal, Canada

Ms. Jacqueline Grekin, Programme Assistant, Science and Policy Support, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Environment Programme, Montreal, Canada

Technical Support Team

Mr. Patrick N. Halpin, Associate Professor of Marine Geospatial Ecology, Director OBIS - SEAMAP, Nicholas School of the Environment - Duke University Marine Lab, Duke University, Durham, United States of America

Mr. Jesse Cleary, Research Analyst, Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University, Durham, United States of America

Ms. Sarah DeLand, Research Associate, Marine Geospatial Ecology Lab, Nicholas School of the Environment, Duke University, Beaufort, United States of America

Mr. Juho Lappalainen, Researcher, Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE), Marine Research Centre, Helsinki, Finland