



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Helsinki Commission
Helsinki, Finland, 4-5 March 2020

HELCOM 41-2020

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Background

The First Joint Meeting of Chairpersons of HELCOM main groups was held on 2 March 2020 at the premises of the HELCOM Secretariat in Helsinki, Finland. This document contains notes from the meeting.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the notes from the First Meeting of Chairpersons of HELCOM main groups.



Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Meeting of Chairpersons of HELCOM main groups
Helsinki, Finland, 2 March 2020

Notes from the First Joint Meeting of Chairpersons of HELCOM Main Groups Helsinki, Finland, 2 March 2020

The First Joint Meeting of Chairpersons of HELCOM Main Groups was held on 2 March 2020 at the premises of the HELCOM Secretariat in Helsinki, Finland. The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of HELCOM main groups had been invited to the Meeting, namely:

Permanent groups which address different aspects of HELCOM's work

- Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (Gear);
- Maritime Working Group (Maritime);
- Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area (Pressure);
- Response Working Group (Response);
- Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (State and Conservation);

Time-limited groups which complement the work of the permanent groups

- Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri);
- Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (Fish); and
- HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG).

The Meeting was attended by chairpersons of all HELCOM main groups as well as the Chair of the ad hoc HELCOM Platform on sufficiency of measures (SOM Platform) as the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and analysis of sufficiency of measures to reach good environmental status in the Baltic Sea is a central topic for all groups. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

The aim of the Meeting was to enhance the flow of information and improve coordination between the main HELCOM groups.

The Meeting was chaired by the HELCOM Executive Secretary, Mr. Rüdiger Stempel.

1. Opening of the Meeting

Rüdiger Stempel, opened the Meeting and welcomed the participants, providing a brief explanation of the aim of the meeting and informing that the notes from the Meeting will be presented to HELCOM 41-2020 for information.

A brief tour de table was performed, allowing all participants to introduce themselves.

2. Presentations by chairpersons on achievements in 2019 and projected activities in 2020

The Meeting was held in order to enhance the flow of information and improve coordination between the main HELCOM groups. The chairpersons of each main HELCOM group had been invited to give a presentation on achievements in 2019 and provide an outlook of challenges and activities ahead.

The Meeting noted and considered the presentations as follows:

Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (Gear):

The Meeting noted that Gear has a coordinating role, including facilitation and strategic coordination between HELCOM and other regional seas conventions, and that there is therefore some overlap with other Working Groups on topics such as threshold values, good environmental status, targets, monitoring, assessment and measures.

Among the latest achievements of Gear, the Meeting noted progress in planning indicator development, preparations for HOLAS III, contribution to BSAP update structure and objectives as well as MSFD coordination on programmes, measures and exceptions. In this context, the Meeting noted that also other policies could benefit from regional coordination, but that focus has been on the MSFD as the directive specifically mentions that regional seas conventions should be used to coordinate its implementation.

The Meeting noted that the participation by chairpersons of other Working Groups is encouraged. Recent online Meetings of Gear and chairpersons of other Working Groups discussing BSAP objectives were seen as a good example of this.

The Meeting discussed the possibilities of looking at pressures in a holistic way, e.g. in order to determine e.g. whether focus on management actions should be focused on land or sea-based activities.

Maritime Working Group (Maritime):

The Meeting noted that Maritime closely follows the development and implementation of the global regulations from the International Maritime Organization (IMO). In this respect the Meeting noted recent achievements through the preparation of joint proposals to IMO, bringing into force the Baltic Sea special areas for more stringent sewage and nitrogen oxide emission limits from ships under the MARPOL Convention.

Emerging issues such as underwater noise, marine litter, grey water, green technologies and alternative fuels were discussed.

A number of cross-cutting issues with other groups were identified, including the extraction of mineral resources on the sea floor, where cooperation with Pressure has to date been lacking.

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

The Meeting noted that Pressure was formed by merging the Land and Load working groups. While pressures stemming from land-based sources have dominated the agenda to some extent, a number of sea-based pressures are also considered.

Cooperation with OSPAR and other regional seas conventions, as well as EUSBSR policy areas and other EU frameworks and a number of global processes were also noted.

A number of cross-cutting issues were identified, together with e.g. the Maritime, State & Conservation and Fish Groups. The need for increased cooperation with Maritime, e.g. on microplastics from municipal treatment plants was recognized.

Response Working Group (Response):

The Meeting noted ongoing work on inter alia revising the HELCOM Response Manual, development of a HELCOM Response Exercise Plan, review of HELCOM Recommendations, as well as challenges involving new fuel types and chemical products. The Meeting noted that RESPONSE 27-2020

considered the review of proposed new actions related to submerged hazardous objects to be outside the competence of the Group, and that Pressure would be more appropriate for such a review.

The Meeting noted that in some of the sub-groups to Response, there has been poor representation of Contracting Parties. Cooperation with other regional seas organizations, as well as the importance of considering IMO and EU regulations in response related matters were also highlighted as important aspects of the work.

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

The Meeting noted that the Group was formed by merging Habitat and Monas in 2014. The main focus is on issues related to monitoring, assessment and nature conservation, with the themes being split between meetings or separate days during the meetings.

With regard to cross cutting issues, the Meeting noted inter alia maritime spatial planning and biodiversity issues, seabed loss and disturbance, fisheries, hazardous substances and marine mammals, as well as eutrophication.

Group on Sustainable Agricultural Practices (Agri):

The Meeting noted tasks of the Group related inter alia to reviewing and updating of Annex III of the Helsinki Convention, the Baltic Sea Regional Nutrient Recycling Strategy and national manure standards.

The Meeting noted that the Nutrient Recycling Strategy is done in cooperation with Pressure. Other cross cutting issues recognized were providing expertise for the PLC background report, effects of agricultural measures to reduce input of nutrients, reduction of ammonia emissions and secondary climate change parameters.

Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (Fish)

The Meeting noted work related to the update of the BSAP, strengthened cooperation between HELCOM and BALTFISH as well as other fisheries management organizations and work on by-catch indicators.

The development of the Roadmap on fisheries data, submitted for adoption to HELCOM 41-2020, work on seal-fisheries interactions as well as the HELCOM ACTION Project were highlighted as topics where co-operation with other Working Groups is especially prominent.

The Meeting noted that the matter of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gears (ALDFG) is now also considered within the IMO, and the resulting need to cooperate on the matter with the Pressure (coordinating implementation of the RAP ML) and Maritime Working Groups.

The Meeting discussed the importance of considering also MSP related matters in the implementation of the Roadmap on fisheries data.

HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG):

The Meeting noted that the Group is working jointly with VASAB (Vision & Strategies around the Baltic Sea) on coherent regional maritime spatial planning processes. The Meeting noted that cooperation with all HELCOM Working Groups is essential, and that the Group takes ten broad-scale principles into account in its work, linked also to the BSAP. Future challenges include inter alia the

update of the Baltic Sea Region MSP Roadmap in line with the BSAP update, updating of the joint MSP principles and strengthening of the ecosystem approach.

Revising HELCOM Recommendation 24/10 on implementation of integrated coastal management and MSP in the Baltic Sea area has been one of the recent main achievements, done in cooperation with State & Conservation.

The Meeting noted that the MSP DATA group, subordinated to HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, is currently working on requirements for fisheries data in MSP. The results of the work will be submitted to the Fish group, in order to investigate data availability.

Ad hoc HELCOM Platform on sufficiency of measures (SOM Platform):

The Meeting noted that the Platform has been established for two years to support the process of updating the BSAP by assessing effectiveness of measures and the pressure-state response. The Meeting noted the process of reviewing proposals for new BSAP actions at the Working Groups' spring 2020 meetings, which will be followed up by the BSAP UP workshops under the framework of the SOM Platform, continuing again at the autumn 2020 meetings of the Working Groups:

Week 20

- Hazardous substance and litter: starting at Tuesday 12 May at 10.00 and ending on Wednesday 13 May at 16.00.
- Eutrophication: starting Thursday 14 May at 10.00 and ending at Friday 15 May at 14.00.

Week 21

- Maritime activities, underwater noise, non-indigenous species, response actions: starting at Monday 18 May 13.00 and ending at Wednesday 20 May at 13.00.

Week 22

- Biodiversity, loss and disturbance to the seabed, extraction of species (including by-catch, hunting), spatial measures (MPA, MSP): starting at Tuesday 26 May at 10.00 and ending at Wednesday 28 May at 16.00.

The Meeting noted the importance of chairpersons of the Working Groups and representatives attending the BSAP UP workshop as well as meetings of the SOM Platform.

3. Discussion

The Meeting continued the discussion already begun under Agenda Item 2 above, considering topics of common interest and possible ways of addressing them.

The Meeting discussed the ways of sharing information between Working Groups, usually via meeting documents and outcomes. In this context, the Meeting noted challenges related to the timing of meetings which may be very close, or very far away from one another. The Meeting recognized the importance of national coordination within the Contracting Parties so that representatives in various groups are aware of the positions and issues in other groups.

The Meeting agreed that it would be useful to divide the topics of cooperation into short- and long-term ones.

Indicator thresholds and assessment methods as well as the development of HOLAS III were seen as topics where cooperation between Working Groups is needed and as a first step, invited chairpersons to take part in the HOLAS III planning discussions at the GEAR 22-2020 meeting.

The Meeting took note that several of the Working Groups are reliant on similar data to be able to conduct analysis and assessments to support their work, but that the available data might not be easily accessible or available in the correct format with the needed metadata to support its use across several topics. The Meeting agreed that it would be beneficial to develop a catalogue of precise data needs across Working Groups. This would facilitate coordination and cooperation on such matters and ensure that data collated under HELCOM can be used for multiple assessments and serve the needs of several HELCOM groups.

The Meeting also recognized the importance of the coordinating role by the Secretariat, for instance in the planning of data needs for HOLAS III and requesting input from various Working Groups.

The Meeting agreed that an overview of the overarching issues, based on the topics identified in the presentations at this meeting, should be collated and sent to Gear as well as to Working Group for input. The overview should be submitted to the Gear meeting where it will function as a basis for strategic discussion on strengthened cooperation between Working Groups. The Meeting encouraged the chairpersons to submit proposals on ways forward in this regard, and also to participate in such future discussions at Gear (via skype if possible).

4. Any other business

The Meeting discussed the issue of online participation in HELCOM meetings, and particularly the need for resources in order to facilitate such arrangements. Technical equipment and sufficient Secretariat staff and resources were noted as prerequisites for such online participation. The Meeting noted that enabling online participation in HELCOM meetings is therefore a matter with implications on the HELCOM budget.

The Meeting discussed the tendency of some meeting participants to leave before the end of HELCOM meetings and the challenges that poses for adoption of the outcome of the meetings. The Meeting noted that e.g. in OSPAR and other organizations, no possibilities are provided for participants who depart before adoption of a meeting outcome to comment on the draft outcome. The Meeting noted that, in accordance with the rules of procedure, outcomes should be adopted by consensus at the meeting and concluded that chairpersons had the option of taking decisions on this in line with the rules of procedure

5. Next meeting(s)

The Meeting agreed that it would be useful to organize joint meetings of chairpersons of HELCOM main groups on an annual basis. The Meeting agreed tentatively that the next meeting should be held 15 March 2021, back to back with HELCOM 42-2021 (16-17 March 2021), pending decision on the exact dates by HELCOM 41-2020 (4-5 March 2020).

6. Closing of the Meeting

The meeting was closed by Rüdiger Stempel.

Annex 1 List of Participants

Representing	Title	Name	Organization	Email address
HELCOM	Chair	Saara Bäck	Ministry of the Environment	saara.back@ym.fi
Gear	Chair	Andrea Weiss	German Environment Agency	andrea.weiss@uba.de
Gear	Vice-Chair	Asker Juul Aagren	Ministry of Environment and Food of Denmark	askja@mfv.dk
Maritime	Chair	Susanne Heitmüller	Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency (BSH)	susanne.heimmueller@bsh.de
Maritime	Vice-Chair	Natalia Kutaeva	Federal State Budgetary Institution "Marine Rescue Service" (MRS)	kutaevang@morspas.com
Pressure	Chair	Lars Sonesten	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences	lars.sonesten@slu.se
Response	Chair	Heli Haapasaari	The Finnish Border Guard	heli.haapasaari@raja.fi
State&Conservation	Co-Chair	Norbert Häubner	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	norbert.haubner@havochvatten.se
State&Conservation	Co-Chair	Marie-Louise Krawack	Danish Ministry of Environment and Food	makra@mfv.dk
Agri	Chair	Sari Luostarinen (online)	Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke)	sari.luostarinen@luke.fi
Fish	Chair	Marianne Goffeng Raakil	Swedish Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation	marianne.goffeng-raakil@gov.se
Fish	Vice-Chair	Katarzyna Kaminska	Ministry of Maritime Economy and Inland Navigation	k.kaminska@mgm.gov.pl
HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG	Co-Chair	Joacim Johannesson	Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management	joacim.johannesson@havochvatten.se
SOM Platform	Chair	Urmas Lips	Tallinn University of Technology	urmas.lips@taltech.ee
HELCOM	Executive Secretary	Rüdiger Stempel	Secretariat	rudiger.stempel@helcom.fi
HELCOM	Professional Secretary (Gear, State&Conservation)	Jannica Haldin	Secretariat	jannica.haldin@helcom.fi
HELCOM	Professional Secretary (Maritime, Response, Fish)	Markus Helavuori	Secretariat	markus.helavuori@helcom.fi
HELCOM	Professional Secretary (Pressure, Agri, MSP)	Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky	Secretariat	dmitry.frank-kamenetsky@helcom.fi
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