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Background

The 27th Meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group (RESPONSE 27-2020) was held on 26-28 February in Vejle, Denmark.

The Meeting was attended by all Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention, Observers from the Bonn Agreement/OSPAR, Sea Alarm, UNEP and WWF as well as invited guests from REMPEC, ITOPF, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), Cedre and ISPRA. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Heli Haapasaari, Chair of the Response Working Group.

This document contains the Outcome of RESPONSE 27-2020. The whole Outcome including all Annexes can also be found [here](#). Matters requiring specific action by HOD 58-2020 are outlined below.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the outcome of RESPONSE 27-2020 in general and consider it as appropriate. Specifically, the Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the work on rephrasing of existing BSAP actions (paragraph 3.1 and Annex 2);
- take note of the proposal by RESPONSE 27-2020 for a new BSAP action on holistic/integrated management of marine pollution incidents (paragraph 3.3 and Annex 3);
- note that RESPONSE 27-2020 supported the intentions of two proposed new BSAP actions regarding submerged hazardous objects in the Baltic Sea (synopses in RESPONSE 27-2020 document 3-2), but had noted that the Working Group does not have the competence needed for undertaking a technical review of the proposals, in particular when it comes to submerged munitions and other warfare material and the environmental consequences of the hazardous substances involved, agreeing that it would be more appropriate for the Pressure Working Group to review these proposals in detail (paragraphs 3.5-3.6);
- take note of the progress regarding the review of existing HELCOM Recommendations in the response field (paragraphs 8.3 and 13.1-13.6);
- adopt the Terms of Reference of the Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response until 2021 (paragraph 8.8 and RESPONSE 27-2020 [document 8-1](#));
- take note of the ongoing work on fully revising the HELCOM Response Manual (paragraphs 13.7-13.15); and
- approve that RESPONSE 28-2020 will be held in Tallinn, Estonia on 3-5 November 2020.



Outcome of the 27th Meeting of the
Response Working Group (RESPONSE 27-2020)

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Outcome of the 27th Meeting of the Response Working Group (RESPONSE 27-2020)

Introduction

- 0.1. The 27th Meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group (RESPONSE 27-2019) was held on 26-28 February 2020 in Vejle, Denmark, upon invitation by the Naval Command.
- 0.2. The Meeting was attended by all HELCOM Contracting Parties, Observers from the Bonn Agreement/OSPAR, Sea Alarm, UNEP and WWF as well as invited guests from REMPEC, ITOPI, Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI), Cedre and ISPRA. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 1**.
- 0.3. The Meeting was welcomed by Mr. Torben Iversen of the Royal Danish Naval Command.
- 0.4. The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Heli Haapasaari, Chair of the Response Working Group.
- 0.5. Mr. Markus Helavuori, HELCOM Professional Secretary, acted as Secretary of the Meeting, assisted by Ms. Reita Waara, HELCOM Project Researcher.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

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

- 1.1. The Meeting adopted the agenda as contained in document 1-1 Rev.1.

Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from HELCOM meetings

Document: 2-1

- 2.1. The Meeting took note of the Outcome of the 56th Meeting of the Heads of Delegation (Helsinki, Finland, on 18-19 June 2019 and the Outcome of the 57th Meeting of the Heads of Delegation (10-11 December 2010) and in particular the matters related to the HELCOM Response Working Group.
- 2.2. The Meeting discussed the decision by HOD 56-2019 to instruct the Secretariat to draft a letter addressed to authorities of the Russian Federation, using the text set out in the appendix of Annex 2 of the Outcome of RESPONSE 26-2019, inviting them to formally request access to CECIS Marine Pollution and use it for response purposes.
- 2.3. The Meeting noted that the Executive Secretary had sent such a letter via email to Authorities of the Russian Federation on 14 October 2019, but that Russia has not yet requested access to CECIS MP.
- 2.4. Recognizing the importance of the matter, the Meeting invited the Secretariat to send a new letter, referring to the discussion at the present Meeting, as well as proposing the option of also requesting access to SafeSeaNet, using information to be provided by the EU on the terms and conditions for non-EU countries for such access.
- 2.5. The Meeting noted that outcomes of subsidiary bodies to the Response Working Group will be dealt with under the relevant agenda items below.

Agenda Item 3 Update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan

Documents: 2-2, 3-1, 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5, 3-6

- 3.1. The Meeting took note of the existing BSAP actions that still may need consideration as set out in the annex of document 3-1 and worked on rephrasing of existing actions and formulating new actions, taking into account the Outcome of HOD 57-2019. The Meeting agreed as further specified in **Annex 2** of the Outcome.

- 3.2. The Meeting agreed that any new actions that are developed related to the Response Working Group, should have an ambition level that exceeds the actions in the current BSAP.
- 3.3. The Meeting proposed a new action on holistic/integrated management of marine pollution incidents for the updated BSAP as set out in **Annex 3**, using the template for synopsis that had been made available by the Secretariat.
- 3.4. The Meeting considered the proposed new BSAP actions set out in the annexes of document 3-2. The Meeting noted that guidance for the review of the synopses has been developed by the SOM Platform, in order for all Working Groups to undertake the reviews of proposed actions relevant to their work by using the same criteria. The agreed guidance is set out in document 3-6, and the Meeting agreed to use it in considering the proposed new actions.
- 3.5. In considering the two proposed actions set out in document 3-2, which were both regarding submerged hazardous objects in the Baltic Sea, the Meeting noted that it does not have the competence needed for undertaking a technical review of the proposals, in particular when it comes to submerged munitions and other warfare material and the environmental consequences of the hazardous substances involved. It was noted that in most Contracting Parties, matters related to hazardous submerged objects are under the mandate of other authorities than those normally represented in the Response Working Group.
- 3.6. The Meeting supported the intention of the proposals set out in document 3-2 but agreed that it would be more appropriate for the Pressure Working Group to review these proposals in detail. The Meeting further agreed that the Response Working Group would be in a better position to consider the proposals after completion of the HELCOM Submerged Assessment, scheduled for RESPONSE 28-2020 (see also Agenda Item 9). In conclusion, the Meeting expressed support to the work of the Submerged Expert Group, recognizing that this is a matter of great importance.
- 3.7. The Meeting took note of the update of the [workplan](#) for the BSAP update of the Response Working Group including timetables for addressing the individual activities of the plan (document 3-3). The Meeting discussed what the updated BSAP will contain, and it was also identified that it is important to ensure that no actions are missed, e.g. if they fall under the responsibility of several HELCOM working groups.
- 3.8. The Meeting recognized that the process of updating the BSAP has moved to the stage of creating content and encouraged participants to consider the possibility of proposing new actions to the BSAP at the present Meeting.
- 3.9. The Meeting noted that a BSAP UP workshop that will address proposed new actions for the updated BSAP related to maritime activities, response actions, underwater noise and non-indigenous species will be held on 18-20 May 2020 in Helsinki, Finland.
- 3.10. The Meeting took note of an overview of already implemented activities of the BSAP update and the timing of upcoming activities and decisions in 2020 (document 3-4).
- 3.11. The Meeting took note of document 3-5 summarizing the considerations and agreements so far on the outline, content and style of the updated BSAP. The provisional agreement on the structure and objectives for the updated BSAP are included in Annex 3 of document 3-5.
- 3.12. The Meeting took note of the information regarding the HELCOM Stakeholder Conference focusing on the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), which will be held on 3 March 2020 in Helsinki, Finland, back-to-back with 41st Meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission (HELCOM 41-2020, 4-5 March 2020) (document 2-2).

Agenda Item 4 Risk assessments, OPENRISK and Safety of Navigation

Documents: none

- 4.1. The Meeting recalled that the Norwegian Coastal Administration (NCA) had agreed to make the AISyRisk tool available for all HELCOM and Bonn Agreement Contracting Parties. The Meeting noted, however, that information regarding the formalities and technical details in this regard is not yet available.

4.2. The Meeting recalled that Lithuania had informed RESPONSE 26-2019 that the results of a questionnaire on bunkering activities will be submitted to the Secretariat for circulation. Lithuania, however, informed that very few responses had been received and that the results are not useful for circulation as they do not give the complete picture of bunkering activities in the Baltic Sea.

4.3. The Meeting noted that a Master's Thesis is being prepared at Lund University on the efficiency of oil recovery operations, and that interviews with response authorities in the Baltic Sea are expected to be undertaken.

4.4. The Meeting noted that a follow up for the OpenRisk project is being planned (OpenRisk II), and that a request for support for a seed money application using a silence procedure had been sent out to the Policy Area on Maritime Safety and Security (PA SAFE) of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in January 2020 with no objections. The Meeting further noted that no members of the Response Working Group had received the request for support.

4.5. The Meeting discussed whether Contracting Parties are interested in using the possible results of such a project. The Meeting noted that Sweden is interested and would use the results. Denmark informed that they would not use it, but also does not object to such a project. The Meeting stressed the importance of planning projects with outputs that are considered to be useful for the Contracting Parties. The Meeting agreed that such requests for support should be considered also by the Response Working Group.

4.6. The Meeting noted information provided by Denmark regarding the BE-AWARE Trend Analysis 2030 project. The Meeting also discussed the proposal by COWI on a possible update of the risk analysis done by the BRISK project based on data from 2008. The Meeting noted that since 2008 many things have changed, including shipping patterns and volumes, as well as the HELCOM response sub-regions. While the usefulness of such an update was recognized, the Meeting was not able to state a firm position on the matter at this stage, as e.g. costs and other details would have to be considered in more detail.

4.7. The Meeting discussed risk analysis in general and agreed that it is important to share the results of national risk analysis by submissions to the meetings of the Response Working Group.

4.8. The Meeting discussed whether any work is being done among the Contracting Parties with regard to risks related to hybrid powered vessels and noted that Sweden is planning a study in that regard.

Agenda Item 5 Matters related to recent response operations

Documents: 5-1, 5-2, 5-3

5.1. The Meeting took note of the HELCOM report on shipping accidents during 2018 in the Baltic Sea region (document 5-1).

5.2. The Meeting recalled the decision by MARITIME 18-2018 that the European Marine Casualty Information Platform (EMCIP) will be used as the primary source for accident data in future annual reports starting with the reporting of accidents that occurred in 2019. A Memorandum of Understanding for access to this EMCIP data has been signed by EMSA and HELCOM. The Meeting noted that a request to the Response Working Group for reporting of significant response operations at sea and on the shore in 2019 was sent by the Secretariat on 30 January 2020 with the reporting deadline on 3 April 2020.

5.3. The Meeting took note of the information by Finland on the "Suomen Leijona" oil spill incident, which happened in June 2019 (document 5-2).

5.4. The Meeting took note of the information by Latvia on the salvage of the non-propelled cargo barge "TRIAS", which grounded on the Latvian coastline approximately 10 nm to the north from Ventspils port on 30 December 2019 (document 5-3 and Presentation 1).

5.5. The Meeting took note of a presentation provided by Lithuania regarding an oil spill that occurred during a military exercise in Lithuanian territorial waters in June 2019 (Presentation 2).

5.6. The Meeting took note of information provided by Sweden regarding measures taken to address a bunker leakage from the Finnbirch wreck by attaching a container to the hull of the ship.

5.7. The Meeting noted information provided by the Chair regarding several cases of detected spills, in a number of countries, which had disappeared before response vessels arrived at the scene. The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to send information of such cases to the Chair (heli.haapasaari@raja.fi).

Agenda Item 6 National preparedness at sea and on shore

Documents: 6-1, 6-2, 6-3, 6-3 Add.1, 6-3 Add.2

6.1. The Meeting noted that Finland, Germany Latvia, Sweden and Russia had reported on national developments in each of the reporting topics using the template provided in document 6-1 (documents 6-3 and 6-3 Add.2).

6.2. The Meeting agreed that the information provided in documents 6-3 and 6-3 Add.2 as well as additional information Provided by Estonia and Poland using the template in document 6-1, should be compiled and included in an annex in order to facilitate future reference of the information. This is consequently set out in **Annex 4**.

6.3. The Meeting took note of the following additional information on national developments regarding response at sea, on shore and for oiled wildlife response:

- Germany: (c.f. **Annex 4**). In addition, Germany informed that the "Guide to the study of environmental effects after pollution accidents in the German North and Baltic Seas" was completed in 2018. A translation into English is planned. An information sheet for the interested public was completed in 2019. Environmental monitoring is currently being incorporated into exercises in order to be prepared in case of an emergency.
- Lithuania: A tender for a new multipurpose vessel was launched in July 2019, but no offers were accepted and the tender is temporarily stopped. A review of the national maritime response plan will start in 2020. In July 2019 the MRCC Lithuanian Navy organized a trilateral oil spill response exercise in the Lithuanian EEZ. In April 2020 a large-scale international oil spill response exercise will be organized on shore, and probably also at sea, as part of the OIL SPILL Project.
- Poland: (c.f. **Annex 4**) Poland also informed about a large-scale shoreline exercise that was conducted on the Polish west coast in 2019.

6.4. The Meeting took note of information regarding Germany's Maritime Emergency Response Strategy and the replacement new-buildings for two multi-purpose vessels (document 6-2, Presentation 3).

6.5. The Meeting agreed to consider document 6-3 Add.1 on information on the use of emergency towing dreggen in German response vessels under Agenda Item 11.

Agenda Item 7 Sub-regional co-operation

Documents: 7-1

7.1. The Meeting considered the request in document 7-1 for updates on the overview list and maps of bi- and multilateral agreements on joint response operations and response plans in response regions in the Baltic Sea. The Meeting noted that updates had been provided to the Secretariat as part of the revision of the HELCOM Response Manual, as set out in document 13-1 Rev.1 and agreed to consider the matter further when considering the Response Manual under Agenda Item 13.

Agenda Item 8 Response on the shore and wildlife response

Documents: 8-1, 8-2, 8-3, 8-4, 8-5

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- 8.1. The Meeting took note of the Outcome of the Fourth Meeting of the Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore (SHORE Network 4-2020), which was held on 25 February 2020, in Vejle, Denmark (document 8-5).
- 8.2. The Meeting took note of the proposed changes to the draft revised HELCOM Response Manual (paragraphs 5.2 to 5.6 of the Outcome) and agreed to consider them further under Agenda Item 13.
- 8.3. The Meeting noted the discussions with regard to the revision of HELCOM Recommendations 33/2 and 28E/12, which had been tasked to the SHORE Network by the Response Working Group (paragraphs 5.8 and 5.9 of the Outcome). The Meeting noted that SHORE Network 4-2020 had agreed not to revise these Recommendations at this stage. The Meeting agreed that if a need is identified, possible new recommendations could be developed in the future to replace the current ones, as appropriate.
- 8.4. The Meeting noted that SHORE Network 4-2020 had invited the Meeting to propose an action for the updated BSAP on developing a framework for holistic/integrated management of marine pollution incidents that can be implemented by Contracting Parties (paragraph 5.8 of the Outcome), and noted that such possible new actions were part of the discussions under Agenda Item 3.
- 8.5. The Meeting noted that SHORE Network 5-2021 could be organized in January 2021 in Helsinki, Finland, back to back with the Main Planning Conference of BALEX DELTA 2021, with exact dates to be confirmed by Finland at a later stage.
- 8.6. The Meeting took note of the 14th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 14-2019 and Presentation 4), which was held as an online meeting on 17 September 2019 (document 8-2). The Meeting further took note that EWG OWR 15-2020 had to be postponed due to a small number of registered participants and insufficient input from Contracting Parties. No new date has been set for the postponed meeting.
- 8.7. The Meeting discussed the minimum attendance proposal for EWG OWR meetings (document 8-3) and recognized the importance of active attendance by all Contracting Parties to HELCOM Working Groups and sub-groups. The meeting agreed that possible cancellation of online meetings due to insufficient registration of participants, should be decided on a case by case basis by the Group Chair in consultation with the Secretariat.
- 8.8. The Meeting considered and approved the Terms of Reference of the Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (document 8-1).
- 8.9. The Meeting took note of the information on formalisation of the EUROWA (EUROpean Oiled Wildlife Assistance) Network (document 8-4 and Presentation 5) and discussed how EUROWA could strengthen the objectives of the Response Working Group.
- 8.10. The Meeting noted information provided by Germany that a special meeting took place on 18 December 2019, at which the five German coastal state representatives agreed on how to proceed with oiled wildlife response. Priority is given to completing a joint framework plan and developing a common strategy for dealing with oiled wildlife in the event of an oil spill. Based on the results of the study on the success of cleaning oily animals, the animal protection and veterinary medicine aspects are now the focus of a supplementary elaboration.

Agenda Item 9 Wrecks and other submerged hazardous objects

Documents: 9-1, 9-2

- 9.1. The Meeting took note of the Outcome of the Eighth Meeting of the HELCOM Submerged Expert Group (SUBMERGED 8-2020), which was held on 7-8 January 2020 in Kiel, Germany (document 9-1).
- 9.2. The Meeting considered the draft Submerged Assessment (document 9-2) which will eventually be submitted for approval to RESPONSE 28-2020. The Meeting agreed on the use of the excel commenting form (document 9-2 Att.) throughout the further development of the Submerged Assessment.

The Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to provide comments using this form to the Secretariat (markus.helavuori@helcom.fi) **by the end of March 2020**, as requested by SUBMERGED 8-2020.

9.3. The Meeting noted that SUBMERGED 8-2020 had agreed that in finalizing the Submerged Assessment for approval by RESPONSE 28-2020, it should be in form of two separate volumes (Volume 1: warfare materials and Volume 2: wrecks).

9.4. The Meeting expressed concern with the fact that the draft for the wrecks part of the Submerged Assessment has not yet been submitted. The Meeting urged the Co-Chair for wrecks of the Submerged Expert Group (Mr. Jorma Rytönen, Finland) to ensure completion of the wrecks part as soon as possible, in order for it to be submitted to and approved by RESPONSE 28-2020 as Volume 2 of the Submerged Assessment.

9.5. The Meeting noted that the [DAIMON 2 project](#) will organize workshops in 2020 and encouraged Contracting Parties and observers to attend those workshops.

Agenda Item 10 Remote Sensing

Documents: 10-1, 10-2, 10-3, 10-4, 10-5

10.1 Aerial surveillance

10.1. The Meeting took note of the HELCOM Annual report on discharges observed during aerial surveillance in the Baltic Sea 2018 (document 10-2).

10.2. The Meeting considered and agreed on the proposed amendments to the Bonn Agreement/HELCOM annual surveillance reporting (document 10-1), noting that the matter will still be considered by OTSOPA at its next meeting in May 2020. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to communicate this outcome to the Bonn Agreement Secretariat.

10.3. The Meeting took note of the presentation by Germany on the results from Super CEPCO 2019 held in September 2019 (document 10-5).

10.4. No plans for CEPCO flights in the Baltic Sea for 2020/2021 were reported to the Meeting.

10.2 Use of satellites for detecting illegal discharges

10.5. The Meeting took note of CleanSeaNet Service (CSN) statistics for the Baltic region 1 January-31 December 2019 (document 10-4).

10.3 STW/AIS/SAT model

10.6. The Meeting noted that the STW has no planned developments at the moment, but it is in maintenance.

10.4 Investigation and prosecution of offenders of anti-pollution regulations

10.7. The Meeting took note of the information on the revision of Directive 2005/35/EC on ship-source pollution and proposal for a draft reporting template for EU Member States (document 10-3). In this respect, the Meeting noted that the intention is to agree on a reporting format for EU Member States, using the Bonn Agreement/HELCOM annual surveillance reporting format as a starting point. The Meeting commented that such reporting should not lead to duplication of work, but that it should be part of existing reporting requirements.

Agenda Item 11 Other developments in response strategies and equipment

Documents 11-1

11.1 HNS Response

11.1. The Meeting considered the Draft Inter-Regional HNS Response Manual (document 11-1 and Presentation 6) presented by the WestMOPoCo project team and noted that the final title of the manual will be “Marine HNS Response Manual” (with subtitle multi-regional mentioning HELCOM, REMPEC and Bonn Agreement).

11.2. The Meeting welcomed the work carried out so far by the WestMOPoCo project team and commented that the presented structure, outline and design looks user friendly visually appealing.

11.3. The Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties and observers to send comments to the Secretariat (markus.helavuori@helcom.fi) **by 10 March 2020**, to be forwarded to the WestMOPoCo project team, inter alia on the following matters:

- content of the draft manual, level of information;
- chemical substances, predicted environmental concentrations (PEC), or past incidents;
- relevant illustrations (schemas, pictures, etc.) to introduce in the manual; and
- make comments on the graphical presentation and possible ways of improvement.

11.4. The Meeting recalled that a Correspondence Group (CG HNS Manual) was established by RESPONSE 25-2018 to contribute to the development of the Manual, and invited the Group to also provide comments as detailed above.

11.5. The Meeting noted that Bonn Agreement is also following a similar approach in collecting comments and contributing to the development of the Manual.

11.6. The Meeting noted information on the process for finalization of the Manual for submission to the MEDEXPOL meeting, to be organized for two days between 27-29 October 2020 in Monaco. Contracting Parties were encouraged to take part in this meeting.

11.2 Response to oil in ice

11.7. No comments were made regarding response to oil in ice.

11.3 Places of Refuge

11.8. The Meeting noted that Denmark and Sweden will host the next EMSA places of refuge table top exercise in October 2021, back to back with a thematic workshop within the Copenhagen Agreement framework.

11.4 Response at night/in bad visibility

11.9. No comments were made regarding response operations at night/in bad visibility.

11.5 Emergency towing

11.10. The Meeting noted information provided by Germany on the use of emergency towing dreggen in German response vessels and ETV vessels (document 6-3 Add.1, Presentation 3).

11.6 Use of dispersants

11.11. The Meeting took note of information provided by Germany on a project related to the use of dispersants, including a net environmental benefit analysis (Presentation 7). The Meeting noted that the project mainly focuses on the North Sea.

11.7 Non-traditional fuel types

11.12. The Meeting took note of the information provided by Denmark on the status of the IMAROS project related chemical characteristics of non-traditional fuel types and ways of responding to spills

involving such oils. The Meeting noted that a specific challenge related to this issue is the fact that different companies have different types of non-traditional oils and that as a result it is difficult to determine what would constitute a representative non-traditional fuel.

11.13. The Meeting noted that transportation in tankers of liquid plastic, which is nevertheless categorized as oil under MARPOL Annex I, has started to the port of Sköldvik near Porvoo, Finland and that no information is available of its behaviour in the sea in case of a spill incident.

Agenda Item 12 Exercises

Documents: 12-1, 12-2, 12-3

12.1 BALEX DELTA

12.1. The Meeting noted information provided by Denmark regarding BALEX DELTA 2019 which was conducted around and on the island of Bornholm, Denmark, on 27-29 August 2019. The Meeting noted that participants had been asked in advance about their preferred training requirements. Contracting Parties were also invited to participate in the planning of the exercise, in order to ensure that it meets the needs of the participants. The Meeting agreed that the report of BALEX DELTA 2019 should be published on the Meeting Portal.

12.2. The Meeting took note of information presented by Sweden, as the lead of the EET, on the BALEX Bravo and Delta evaluation report 2019, evaluation template and presentation (document 12-3, Presentation 8).

12.3. The Meeting took note of the information presented by Estonia on HELCOM BALEX DELTA 2020, which will take place 25-27 August 2020 near Tallinn (Presentation 9). The event will include an oil spill response exercise as well as a BALEX BRAVO alarm exercise. A decision has not yet been made on the details of a shore exercise, which is managed by the Estonian Rescue Board. A main planning conference was organized in Tallinn on 28-29 January 2020, attended by 7 Contracting Parties as well as EMSA.

12.4. The Meeting took note of the preliminary plans for HELCOM BALEX DELTA 2021 presented by Finland. The scenario-based exercise will be near Kotka during week 34 in 2021. The Meeting noted that the main planning conference will be held in Helsinki, Finland, in the end of January 2021.

12.5. The Meeting noted information by the EU that on 27 February 2020 the call for Union Civil Protection Mechanism funding for exercises will be opened, with a deadline on 14 May 2020. The Meeting noted that such funding could be applicable for BALEX DELTA 2021 and 2022, as had been previously received e.g. by BALEX DELTA 2018 in Karlskrona, Sweden.

12.2 National exercises

12.6. The Meeting noted information by Latvia on annual national exercises involving the ports of Latvia and that in 2019 the ports of Riga and Liepaja were involved. In addition, information on national exercises were reported under Agenda Item 6 above

12.3 HELCOM Response Exercise Plan (HREP)

12.7. The Meeting took note of the report of the HELCOM Response Exercise Plan (HREP) project, aiming to support the development of a new exercise concept for HELCOM Response (document 12-1, Presentation 10).

12.8. The Meeting considered document 12-2 (and Presentation 11) by Sweden on a proposed way forward in developing the HREP. The Meeting supported continuation of developing the HREP in general and noted that while it is feasible based on the work already undertaken by the HREP project, as described in document 12-1, it would also be challenging e.g. due to lack of human resources and national funding opportunities.

12.9. The Meeting discussed the way forward for implementing the proposed exercise process and finalizing the HELCOM Response Exercise Plan (HREP). The remaining work was suggested to take place in a new project and proposed to include four separate tasks:

1. Revise Chapter 8 (Framework for exercises) in the draft revised Response Manual;
2. Develop Strategic Development Priorities;
3. Finalise the HREP; and
4. Exercise Evaluation Team.

12.10. The Meeting discussed the scope of the project and agreed to proceed with a project approach, but only including tasks 1 and 3. The Meeting welcomed the offer by Sweden to continue leading the work and suggested that the current EET as well as representatives from the SHORE Network and EWG OWR should participate in the project. Sweden will explore funding options to support the project with an analyst.

12.11. The Meeting noted information by EU that the deadline for the EU funding call for Prevention and Preparedness for Marine Pollution At-See and On-Shore has been extended to 19 March 2020, with a total of 3M€ available. Work could start late 2020 or early 2021 for a duration of two years. The Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to make use of this funding opportunity.

Agenda Item 13 HELCOM Recommendations and Response Manual

Documents: 13-1, 13-1 Rev.1 13-2, 13-3, 13-4, 13-5

HELCOM Recommendations

13.1. The Meeting noted that HOD 56-2019 had invited Contracting Parties to confirm willingness to take the lead in developing proposals for revisions to HELCOM Recommendations 12/7 on Special Cooperation in Case of a Chemical Tanker Accident in the Baltic Sea and 17/12 on Measures to Abate Pollution by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Grounding, Collision, Sinking of a Ship or other Maritime Casualty.

13.2. The Meeting noted that no lead countries had been identified previously but welcomed the offer by Finland to take the lead on developing a draft revision of Recommendation 12/7 for consideration by RESPONSE 28-2020.

13.3. No lead countries were identified for revising Recommendation 17/12. The Meeting consequently encouraged Contracting Parties to inform the Secretariat of their willingness to develop a draft revision for consideration by RESPONSE 28-2020.

13.4. The Meeting noted that document 13-4 had been submitted after the established deadline but agreed to consider it at this meeting. The meeting discussed the revision of HELCOM Recommendation 20/5 on minimum ability to respond to oil spillages in oil terminals as proposed in the document. The Meeting noted that Contracting Parties that are EU Member States have stricter requirements for oil terminals than those in Recommendation 20/5. However, there is a need to compare the requirements of the Recommendation with the Russian national legislation in order to decide on the continued need for the Recommendation. The Meeting consequently invited Russia to compare the requirements of the related national legislation with Recommendation 20/5 and to inform RESPONSE 28-2020 on the matter.

13.5. The Meeting agreed with the proposal in document 13-4, that if the Russian national regulation is considered less ambitious than Recommendation 20/5, the Recommendation should be revised, with the argument that no Contracting Party should lower its ambition level. The Meeting further agreed that if the Russian national ambition level is considered equivalent or higher, the HELCOM Recommendation 20/5 serves no purpose and can be withdrawn.

13.6. The Meeting discussed the relevance and validity of HELCOM Recommendations related to the Response Working Group in general, recalling the discussions on this matter at previous meetings, and invited Contracting Parties to further consider the needs to revise or withdraw Recommendations, and submit proposals on the matter to the next Meeting.

HELCOM Response Manual

13.7. The Meeting considered document 13-1 Rev.1 and Presentation 12 on the draft revised HELCOM Response Manual and reviewed the main comments and questions highlighted in the draft.

13.8. In the ensuing discussion, the Meeting inter alia:

- considered and agreed on various definitions in Chapters 1 and 2;
- considered the comment made by MARITIME 19-2019 regarding requesting assistance for places of refuge using SafeSeaNet (for EU Member States) in Chapter 3.3 and agreed to leave the text as originally drafted referring to POLREP, because SafeSeaNet is not a tool for requesting assistance for places of refuge;
- considered the comment by MARITIME 19-2019 that the section on places of refuge should not be finalized until adoption by the IMO of revised Guidelines on Places of Refuge for Ships in Need of Assistance” (Resolution A.949(23)), but agreed that with the addition of the words “or as amended” in this context, the text also covers future revisions of these Guidelines;
- considered the wording on fair sharing of costs in Chapter 3.3 and agreed to change the word “should” to “could”;
- agreed to delete entire section 9.2;
- agreed that a list of terms used in the Manual should be drafted by the Secretariat for Annex 1;
- updated the maps and list of bi- and trilateral agreements in Annex 4 and invited Contracting Parties to inform the Secretariat of any further corrections needed;
- invited the Secretariat to convert the HELCOM response grid in Annex 9 into a “Shape file format” so that it can be scaled and used digitally;
- invited the Secretariat to review Annex 10 as it contains outdated information on materials used for simulating oil spills during exercises; and
- agreed to revisit the consideration of Annex 13 at RESPONSE 28-2020.

13.9. The Meeting invited all Contracting Parties to provide contact details regarding National Contact Points regarding places of refuge to the Secretariat (reita.waara@helcom.fi), as these details are missing from Chapter 1. The Meeting noted that in some Contracting Parties this contact point may be the MAS, but this is not always the case.

13.10. In considering Chapter 6 (Co-operation in aerial surveillance) of the draft revised Response Manual, the Meeting recalled that it had agreed to use the revised forms proposed by the Bonn Agreement in document 10-1. The Meeting invited IWGAS 2020 to consider whether the forms are needed in the Manual, or if they could be deleted from the Manual to be kept by the Secretariat for circulation when annual reporting is requested from the Contracting Parties.

13.11. In considering Chapter 8 as well as annexes 11 and 12, the Meeting recalled the discussion on the HREP under Agenda Item 12 and the agreed way forward in developing a revised Chapter 8 for the Manual. The Meeting invited Sweden to submit a proposal for a revised Chapter 8, as well as annexes 11 and 12 for consideration by RESPONSE 28-2020 no later than three weeks before the Meeting, but sooner if possible.

13.12. The Meeting considered Chapter 10 of the draft revised Response Manual (Oil sampling) (document 13-5) and noted that the proposed text is focusing on forensic oil sampling while the main need for oil sampling within the context of the Manual is for operational purposes in order e.g. to be able to determine what response equipment to use. The Meeting therefore agreed that a new sub-chapter on oil sampling for operational purposes needs to be drafted. The Meeting agreed that guidelines being developed

by the EMSA CTG MPPR may possibly be used for this purpose and further agreed to revisit the matter at RESPONSE 28-2020.

13.13. The Meeting considered inclusion of a new chapter on Host Nation Support into the HELCOM Response Manual (document 13-2). The Meeting agreed to include the Host Nation Support checklist set out in the Annex to document 13-2 as a new annex to the revised Response Manual, but not as a new chapter. The Meeting also instructed the Secretariat to revise the checklist so that it is appropriate for HELCOM, and to ensure that the terminology is in line with the rest of the Manual. The Meeting further invited the Secretariat to review Chapter 4 of the Manual to avoid duplication between the Chapter and the Annex.

13.14. The Meeting considered the list of oil response vessels and equipment in the HELCOM Response Manual (document 13-3) and invited Contracting Parties to provide any missing information to the Secretariat (reita.waara@helcom.fi) at their earliest convenience.

13.15. The Meeting agreed that further comments on the draft Revised Response Manual should be sent **by 13 March 2020** to the Secretariat (reita.waara@helcom.fi). The meeting agreed to use an excel form to provide such comments, to be circulated by the Secretariat to Contracting Parties and observers together with an updated version of the revised Manual.

Agenda Item 14 Activities within other organizations and initiatives

Documents: 14-1, 14-2

14.1 The Meeting took note of the developments and new activities within the Bonn Agreement (document 14-2 and Presentation 13). The Meeting noted the intention for enhanced communication between HELCOM and the Bonn Agreement on response related matters.

14.2 The Meeting took note of the update on EMSA's Pollution Response Services 2019-2020 (document 14-1). In relation to the revision of the HELCOM Response Manual, the Meeting noted that the EMSA Working Group on Health & Safety of Responders (HSE WG) is continuing the work it started in 2019 of developing a practical guidance document addressing health and safety considerations during oil spill response operations. The Meeting noted that such health and safety aspects may also be considered for inclusion in the revised HELCOM Response Manual, as had also been considered important by SHORE Network 4-2020 (document 8-5).

Agenda Item 15 Any other business

Documents: 15-1, 15-1 Rev.1, 15-1 Rev.2, 15-1 Rev.3 15-2, 15-3

15.1. The Meeting checked and updated the list of contact addresses and Observers of the Response Working Group (document 15-1 Rev.3) as contained in **Annex 4**.

15.2. The Meeting took note of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network (document 15-2). The Meeting considered the opportunity to build links with this Network and noted inter alia that in most Contracting Parties the response authorities are not involved in these processes but rather the civil protection authorities are.

15.3. The Meeting took note of the information regarding the planned building of "Skulte LNG terminal" at sea in the Riga bay near the Skulte port anchorage area (document 15-3). The Meeting noted a comment from Estonia that the relevant authorities have not been notified of an environmental impact assessment according to the Espoo Convention being undertaken. The Meeting further noted that such a new terminal also strengthens the need for updating the risk analyses for the Baltic Sea.

Agenda Item 16 Future work and meetings

Documents: 16-1, 16-1 Rev.1

16.1. The Meeting took note and considered the preliminary list of upcoming HELCOM and other meetings (document 16-1 Rev.1) and invited Contracting Parties and observers to keep the Secretariat informed of any meetings related to pollution response issues, in order to avoid overlaps

16.2. The Meeting welcomed the offer by Estonia to host RESPONSE 28-2020 on 3-5 November 2020 in Tallinn at the premises of the Ministry of the Environment.

16.3. The Meeting noted that the Chair of the Response Working Group will not be available for re-election after the next meeting and encouraged Contracting Parties to consider suitable candidates for the election of the Chair for the period 2021-2022, to take place at RESPONSE 28-2020.

16.4. The Meeting noted the importance of participants registering to meetings by the established deadlines as late registrations present the host country with logistical challenges and cost implications.

16.5. The Meeting thanked Denmark for the hosting of the Meeting and the excellent facilities and hospitality provided.

Agenda Item 17 Outcome of the Meeting

Documents: 17-1

17.1. The Meeting adopted the draft Outcome of the Meeting as contained in document 18-1.

17.2. The final Outcome of the Meeting has been finalized by the Secretariat and made available on the HELCOM Meeting Portal together with the documents and presentations given during the Meeting.