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Background

The twelfth Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020) was convened on 11-14 May 2020. In line with [HELCOM policy on COVID-19](#), the Meeting was organized as an online meeting. The Joint session was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties and observers from the Nordic Hunters' Alliance and Coalition Clean Baltic. The Monitoring and assessment session was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties except EU and Lithuania.

This document contains the Outcome of STATE&CONSERVATION 12-2020 (without Annexes). Relevant issues not covered by other documents submitted for the Meeting but requiring specific attention by HOD 58-2020 are also outlined below. The whole Outcome including all Annexes can be found [here](#).

[Progress on further development and consolidation of indicators](#)

The meeting considered and provided further guidance on the further development and consolidation for a number of indicators (including for underwater noise, beach litter, micro litter, loss and disturbance to the seabed and indicators for seabirds). The meeting also took note of the first draft HELCOM Indicator Manual, welcomed the work and recognised its usefulness for future indicator processes. The meeting agreed to come back to the discussion on the Manual at STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020 and invited the Secretariat to continue the work to finalize the Manual and submit a final draft to STATE&CONSERVATION 13-2020 and GEAR 23-2020.

[Strategic discussion on Expert Groups under State and Conservation Working Group](#)

In line with the invitation from HOD to consider the distribution and availability of expertise under Expert Groups associated with State and Conservation WG from a strategic perspective the meeting held a special session on this topic. The scoping session placed special focus on the urgent need to provision expertise for and identify appropriate structure to support the HOLAS III assessment. The meeting discussed the overview of existing Expert groups and subsequent identified gaps in Expert group structure for HOLAS III and agreed on the following further steps to improve the organization of HELCOM expert groups in order to facilitate the development of necessary assessments for HOLAS III:

- **Food webs:** the meeting supported the establishment of a Correspondence Group on Food webs. The meeting further agreed on the following:
 - The CG would be time limited, with the option, based on need and evaluation of performance, of extending the group's mandate/make the group a permanent part of the HELCOM structure at the end of its initial term;

- The main aim of the CG would be to take the work on producing an assessment of food webs in the Baltic Sea forward, including identifying how existing information, methods and tools can be used to cater for HOLAS III;
- The CG tasks would include the planning and organization of a thematic workshop (as outlined in step 5 of the future work on indicators plan approved at HOD 57-2019) on food web indicators and assessment prior to the HOLAS III assessment;
- The expertise of the CG would largely be sourced from already existing HELCOM groups which represent parts of the food web, but also bring food web specific expertise into the HELCOM structure.

The meeting highlighted the potential for future cooperation with OSPAR on the topic of food webs, and that, should the group's mandate be extended, the possibility of a joint expert group on food webs could be explored.

- **Commercial fish:** The meeting supported arranging of a thematic workshop (as outlined in step 5 of the future work on indicators plan approved at HOD 57-2019) on commercial fish assessment for the purposes of HOLAS III. The workshop would focus on how existing ICES data and assessments could be utilized to assess commercial stocks from an ecosystem perspective.
- **NIS:** The meeting supported closer future cooperation with OSPAR on non-indigenous species, possibly through a joint group, and that for the purpose of HOLAS III focus on continued work with the experts already involved in the work on NIS indicators.
- **Pelagic habitats:** The meeting suggested organizing a thematic workshop (as outlined in step 5 of the future work on indicators plan approved at HOD 57-2019) on pelagic habitat assessment. The workshop should include both the HELCOM phytoplankton and zooplankton networks, as well as include expertise on abiotic aspects relevant for a pelagic habitat assessment. The meeting encouraged increased cooperation between the two expert groups and recognized that a platform for cooperation is needed and agreed to explore this further.

Altered timetable for the HELCOM Climate Change Factsheet due to COVID-19

The meeting took note of the outcome of EN CLIME 5-2020, including a revised timeline to account for the changes in the process due to COVID-19, and provisionally agreed on the revised timetable for finalization of the Climate Change Fact Sheet, including the organization of an intersessional meeting of State and Conservation on 15 February 2021 for approval of key messages. The meeting noted the list of previously agreed parameters currently lacking a lead person/active experts contributing to the work, acknowledged that if leads/expertise for these topics is not found shortly these topics will need to be excluded from the first version of the fact sheet. The meeting agreed to provide suggestions for names to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) by 21 May 2020.

Finalizing the update of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual

The meeting considered the draft update of HELCOM monitoring programmes, available in the designated online workspace. The revision of the monitoring programmes takes place every 6 years and the current process started with planning in STATE&CONSERAVTION 10-2019 and revision work, including intersessional meetings, through autumn 2019 and spring 2020. The meeting agreed to conclude the revision of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual as follows:

- Contracting Parties are invited to inform the Secretariat (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi) of their willingness to take the lead on the revision of monitoring programmes by **8 June 2020**. The Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to consider taking lead on four or more programmes/country, to

ensure all programmes are covered and account for the ambitious deadlines required to ensure the updated monitoring programmes are available for national reporting purposes.

- countries as well as expert groups are invited to provide comments to the monitoring programmes by **15 June 2020** in track changes directly in the documents available in the workspace. One consolidated national view is encouraged when providing input through State and Conservation, to ensure access to the files. For expert groups experts can respond individually as all expert group members have access to the workspace;
- there is a need to revise the template for the monitoring programme to be aligned with the final version of the Art. 11 EU MSFD reporting guidance. Such an update will be conducted to the improved versions of the monitoring programmes;
- the finalised revised monitoring programmes will be made available to Contracting Parties by **11 August 2020** at the latest for final approval by **1 September 2020**, thus enabling those Contracting Parties that are also EU member states to utilize the information for national reporting purposes.

Data reporting and gap analysis

The meeting considered a number of documents related to identifying gaps in, and possibilities to improve, data reporting. These included the first iteration of the annual reporting on the level of implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 19/3, in the format of an overview of reported data and gaps from the different data repositories as well as the current status of data flows supporting HELCOM assessments. The meeting also considered the suggested further actions identified as part of the outcome of COMBINE data reporting workshop (organized for improving the reporting practices and quality of COMBINE biological community data (zooplankton, phytoplankton, zoobenthos). The meeting noted that the documents will form the basis of the more elaborated gap analysis to be presented by HELCOM DataFlow project to STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the outcome in general;
- approve the proposed way forward for filling gaps in expertise for the HOLAS III assessment, as outlined on this cover;
- approve that STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021 will be convened on 3-7 May 2021, likely in Sweden;
- approve that an intersessional STATE&CONSERVATION meeting be arranged online on the 15 February 2021, focused on review and approval of the key messages for the HELCOM Climate Change Fact Sheets.

Draft Outcome of the 12th Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020)

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Joint session	2
Agenda Item 1J Adoption of the Agenda: Joint themes.....	2
Agenda Item 2J Matters of relevance for the Meeting and information from the Secretariat.....	2
Agenda Item 3J Update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and associated activities	2
Agenda Item 4J Progress of relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects	6
Agenda Item 5J Development and implementation of Recommendations	11
Agenda Item 7J Future work	12
Agenda Item 8J Any other business	12
Agenda Item 9J Outcome of the Joint themes.....	12
Monitoring and assessment	13
Agenda Item 1MA Adoption of the Agenda: Monitoring and assessment	13
Agenda Item 2MA Matters of relevance for the Meeting and information from the Secretariat.....	13
Agenda Item 3MA Development and implementation of Recommendations	13
Agenda Item 5MA Any other business.....	18
Agenda Item 6MA Outcome of the Monitoring and assessment session.....	18
Annex 1 List of participants	19
Annex 2 Proposals for concretization and rephrasing of existing HELCOM actions	21
Annex 3 Technical review of synopses	37

Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the decision by HOD 56-2019, the twelfth Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020) was convened on 11-14 May 2020. In line with HELCOM policy on COVID-19, the Meeting was organized as an online meeting.

0.2 The Joint session was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties and observers from Nordic Hunters' Alliance and Coalition Clean Baltic. The Monitoring and assessment session was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties except EU and Lithuania. The List of Participants is contained as **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Meeting was chaired by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group: Ms. Marie-Louise Krawack (Denmark), Chair of nature conservation issues and Mr. Norbert Häubner (Sweden), Chair of monitoring and assessment related topics. Ms. Jannica Haldin, HELCOM Professional Secretary, Ms. Marta Ruiz, HELCOM

Associate Professional Secretary, Ms. Petra Kääriä, HELCOM Assisting Professional Secretary, and Ms. Susanna Kaasinen, HELCOM Associate Professional Secretary, acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

0.4 The Meeting was welcomed by Mr. Rüdiger Stempel, HELCOM Executive Secretary.

Joint session

Agenda Item 1J Adoption of the Agenda: Joint themes

1J.1 The Meeting adopted items 1J-5J and 7J-9J in the Agenda as contained in document 1-3-Rev.3.

Agenda Item 2J Matters of relevance for the Meeting and information from the Secretariat

2J.1 The Meeting took note that the Roadmap for fisheries data in order to assess incidental bycatch and fisheries impact on benthic biotopes was approved by HOD 57-2019, pending that the requested amendments are included.

2J.2 The Meeting noted that HELCOM has been accepted to take part in arranging a special symposium on MPA networks as part of the International Marine Conservation Congress (IMCC), and that the congress, originally planned to be held in August 2020 in Kiel, Germany has been moved online, dates and format still to be decided.

2J.3 The Meeting took note of information regarding the upcoming EU Baltic Sea Ministerial meeting, to take place in Lithuania in September 2020.

2J.4 The Meeting took note of information on publication of the [European environment — state and outlook 2020 and progress towards the new EU Biodiversity Strategy, tabled for approval on the 19 May 2020](#).

2J.5 The Meeting took note of the [HELCOM voluntary commitments to the UN Oceans conference](#) (Annex 2), as agreed by the HELCOM 41-2020 high level segment.

Agenda Item 3J Update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and associated activities

3J.1 The Meeting took note of the information on accomplished and upcoming activities of the BSAP update (document 3J-1).

3J.2 The Meeting took note that an updated work plan for BSAP update extending the plan for 2021 will be submitted to HOD 58-2020 by the Secretariat. The Meeting took note that also a more detailed time plan for the sufficiency of measures (SOM) analysis will be submitted to HOD 58-2020 as part of the SOM documents.

3J.3 The Meeting took note of the information on drafting of the updated BSAP (document 3J-2, Presentation 1).

3J.4 The Meeting took note of the comment by Germany that on page 2 of document 3J-2 it would be preferable to refer to “sustainable use of natural resources” rather than “efficient use of natural resources” and that Germany has sent additional comments in writing to the Secretariat.

3J.5 The Meeting took note that material and results of the SOM analysis will most likely be published as separate supplementary information for the updated BSAP.

3J.6 The Meeting took note that HELCOM Recommendations that are adopted alongside the adoption of the updated BSAP in October 2021 will remain separate documents and that it is not necessary that all Recommendations that are currently being drafted or revised are adopted at that time.

Finalization of proposal on ecological and management objectives for the updated BSAP (work plan activity 2.2.)

3J.7 The Meeting took note of the overview of BSAP structure and objectives (document 3J-3).

Actions to be included in for the updated BSAP

3J.8 The Meeting took note of the HELCOM Stakeholder Conference “For a sustainable Baltic Sea: The Baltic Sea Action Plan beyond 2021”.

Finalizing existing actions

3J.9 The Meeting took note of rephrasing and concretization of existing HELCOM actions unlikely to be implemented by 2021 (documents 3J-6 and 3J-6-Att.1, Presentation 2).

3J.10 The Meeting recalled the decision of STATE&CONSERVATION 11C-2020 that, while there is no specific objections to the target years proposed for the actions, all proposed target years be considered as provisional for the time being. Once all proposed target years are in place the overall division and distribution of target years be reviewed and where needed target years might be amended to better distribute upcoming work and ensure that work is planned to take place in a logic order.

3J.11 The Meeting took note that, where appropriate, the Secretariat will strive to merge the text for actions dealing with the same topic and activity (currently divided to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to, and appropriate target year identified for, each individual action) prior to HOD 58-2020 as outlined in presentation 2.

3J.12 The Meeting proposed that for actions closely tied to the CBD post-2020 process and associated targets the final formulations, targets and target years of the actions be considered once the new CBD targets are available.

3J.13 The Meeting identified that some of the proposed actions should be considered to be new actions and thus be included in the process for evaluating new actions and be further considered at the BSAP UP workshops and in STATE&CONSERVATION 13-2020. The Meeting invited interested parties to submit the actions as synopsis to the Secretariat (jannica.haldin@helcom.fi) by **15 June**, for inclusion in the evaluation process.

3J.14 The Meeting finalized the remaining actions as included in **Annex 2** and endorsed the actions to be submitted to HOD 58-2020 for review.

Proposed new actions

3J.15 The Meeting took note that the BSAP UP workshops planned for May 2020 have been postponed due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions to August-September 2020.

3J.16 The Meeting noted that the BSAP UP workshop on biodiversity will take place in Helsinki, Finland, on 31 August – 2 September 2020.

3J.17 The Meeting took note of the review of synopses on potential new actions for the updated BSAP (documents 3J-5-Rev.1, 3J-5-Att.1 and 3J-5-Att.1 Add.1, Presentation 3), presented by the Secretariat and carried out a technical review of the synopses, as included in **Annex 3**.

3J.18 The Meeting acknowledged that the technical review represents the expert view by State and Conservation WG and is carried out from a scientific perspective and focuses on technical feasibility of the measures. The review should not consider legal or political feasibility, and no proposals will be excluded at this stage.

3J.19 The Meeting supported that in general the comments in the excel file should be kept next to the responses in order to ensure context for the responses is available.

3J.20 The Meeting noted that the fish group has interpreted technical feasibility as potential for further technical development included in the measure.

- 3J.21 The Meeting agreed on the following general practices to facilitate the review process:
1. Categorization
 - i. Measures are actions which have a concrete effect on the state of the environment.
 2. Coverage of existing actions
 - i. Actions will be labeled as new measures if they are new to HELCOM (although they might already be included under other policies).
 - ii. when deciding between “partly covered” or “new measure” to select partly covered if both options are mentioned and to mention which particular measure it is that is partly covering the considered synopsis, with the idea that a measure can always be upgraded to “new measure”.
 3. Substantiation of proposal
 - i. if a need for substantiation is identified specification for what type of substantiation is required is to be included.
 4. Technical feasibility
 - i. to consider only the technical aspects (is it technically possible and practical to implement the proposed measure)
 - ii. political or legal aspects will not be considered in technical review.
 5. Gaps
 - i. to use an OAO procedure, i.e. if one Contracting Party has identified gaps then it will be classified as Yes with regards to gaps, and if possible gaps will be specified.
- 3J.22 Regarding measure “Enhanced protection of coastal fish habitats”, the Meeting highlighted the need to clarify whether closure refers to seasonal and/or complete closure.
- 3J.23 The Meeting noted that restoration measures (e.g. coastal fish measures 1 and 2) should be considered in conjunction (and possibly merged) with actions on restoration proposed under the re-phrasing and concretization of existing actions.
- 3J.24 The Meeting took note that Germany can express final opinions regarding the technical review of synopses preferably by end of July 2020, but at latest during the workshops in late summer/fall, as the synopses still have to be evaluated nationally by federal and state agencies.
- 3J.25 The Meeting agreed to arrange an online intersessional meeting of State and Conservation WG (STATE&CONSERVATION 12b-2020) in the first week of June 2020 to finalize the technical review. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to make a doodle poll to find a suitable date and time for the meeting.
- 3J.26 The Meeting considered the State and Conservation relevant actions proposed as possible new actions for inclusion in the updated BSAP from the 2020 HELCOM Stakeholder Conference (document 3J-10 and in document 3J-5-Att.1-Rev.1), as presented by the Secretariat.
- 3J.27 The Meeting conducted a preliminary technical review of the proposed actions and consequently agreed to exclude those proposals already considered covered by existing actions. The Meeting invited the Secretariat to contact the submitters of the remaining proposed actions and invite them to submit

full synopsis of the proposals, to be further evaluated at the BSAP UP workshops. The Meeting took note that the new synopses by stakeholders should be submitted to the Secretariat at the latest by **12 June 2020**.

3J.28 The Meeting considered the Baltic Shadow Plan: For the future of the Baltic Sea. NGO's key asks for the revised BSAP – relevant for HELCOM State & Conservation (document 3J-9, Presentation 4), as presented by CCB.

3J.29 The Meeting welcomed the initiative and thanked CCB and WWF for the work done. The Meeting encouraged the NGOs to continue discussion on the proposals with the Contracting Parties during the BSAP update process. The Meeting suggested that the Baltic Shadow Plan could be used in the further work on updating the BSAP to help identify possible actions to fill identified gaps in the set of proposed actions for the updated BSAP. The Meeting mentioned that national legislation might inhibit the implementation of some of the proposed measures. The Meeting took note that CCB is in the process of making a prioritized list of the actions included in the Shadow Plan.

3J.30 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to clarify the process on identifying gaps in the set of new actions and how the new proposals from this process will be dealt with.

Guidance and validation of work under the SOM Platform (work plan activity 2.5)

3J.31 The Meeting took note of the Progress of the analysis of sufficiency of measures (SOM) (document 3J-7, Presentation 5), as presented by the Secretariat.

3J.32 The Meeting took note that the results of the SOM analysis, including a gap assessment, are ready by the end of June and will be submitted to the BSAP UP workshops the validation of input data to the SOM analysis will take place in June-September 2020. The Meeting noted that the validation of data will thus only take place simultaneously and after the BSAP UP workshops, which is not optimal but cannot be avoided due to the unexpected delays in the process.

3J.33 The Meeting took note that the Pressure Working Group preferred the approach of validating aggregated input data instead of individual responses. The number of respondents and standard deviation of the replies will be included in the aggregated data. The Meeting also took note of the clarification that the term “weighted response count” is used in the document to distinguish how many respondents there are per individual questions in cases where several experts have supplied a group answer for the survey but not all experts in the group have answered all questions.

3J.34 The Meeting took note that as part of the background material for the BSAP UP workshops, it will be marked if the synopses address the gaps identified in the SOM analysis.

3J.35 The Meeting took note of the Draft reports for ACTION WP2 Impacts on the seabed (document 3J-11) and agreed that comments regarding the document can be submitted by **29 May 2020** to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi).

3J.36 The Meeting took note of the comment on the definition for physical loss and disturbance used in the ACTION WP2 report and considered that clarity should be provided as to what definition is applied within HELCOM.

3J.37 The Meeting noted that Germany and Denmark plan to send comments in writing on the ACTION WP2 report by the deadline provided. Germany stated that the national discussion as regards the distinction of physical loss from physical disturbance is still ongoing and that Germany is not in the position to support any classification which is contradictory to the practical experiences at national level.

3J.38 The Meeting took note of the Draft report on Marine Protected Areas HELCOM ACTION WP3 (document 3J-12) and agreed that comments regarding the document can be submitted by **29 May 2020** to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi).

3J.39 The Meeting took note of the concern by Denmark that due to limited data the report does not provide a full picture of MPA management in the Baltic Sea region.

3J.40 The Meeting requested the ACTION project to emphasize more strongly in the report that the results should be viewed as indicative of the type of information and results which can be expected using the method and be considered more as proof of concept, rather than a comprehensive overview on the situation in the Baltic Sea region.

Agenda Item 4J Progress of relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects

4J.1 The Meeting took note of the progress on planning a HELCOM led MPA project for submission under the EU LIFE funding instrument (Presentation 6) and that further comments to the initial proposals are welcomed and can be sent to the Secretariat (Jannica.haldin@helcom.fi) by **26 May 2020**.

4J.2 The Meeting took note of changes in the plan for coordination of the SAMBAH II project.

Ongoing projects

4J.3 The Meeting took note of the [outcome of the second meeting of FISH-PRO III](#), held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 11-13 February 2020.

HOLAS III

4J.4 The Meeting took note of the Overview and provisional timeline of preparatory work processes to support the second State of the Baltic Sea report (document 4J-12, Presentation 7).

4J.5 The Meeting took note of the Updated preliminary plan for the HOLAS III assessment and provisional timeline (document 4J-2).

4J.6 The Meeting considered the draft specified timeline for work planned under the HOLAS III Assessment Phase (document 4J-3), as presented by the Secretariat.

4J.7 The Meeting acknowledged that for some data strands and countries, delivering 2021 data in time for inclusion in the HOLAS III assessment will be challenging.

4J.8 The Meeting recognized some of the challenges in reporting 2021 data within the timeline set out for HOLAS III and invited the Secretariat to draft a data call for HOLAS III, covering established HELCOM dataflows needed for the indicators and integrated assessments, clearly outlining the altered timelines for reporting for 2021 data, to be submitted to STATE&CONSERVATION 13-2020.

4J.9 The Meeting took note of the statement by Germany that approval steps should be done transparently and in close connection to the HELCOM working groups and expert groups.

Continued development of HELCOM core indicators

4J.10 The Meeting noted that HOD 57-2019 approved the work outlined in Step 5 of the future work on HELCOM indicator process, in line with the agreed prioritization and plans outlined under each topic.

4J.11 The Meeting took note of the information on implementing the Work Plan for future work on HELCOM indicators on underwater noise (document 4J-10), as presented by the Secretariat.

4J.12 The Meeting took note of the plans for further work on the HELCOM beach litter indicator (document 4J-11), as presented by the Secretariat.

4J.13 The Meeting discussed the proposed scenarios towards a harmonized Baltic Sea wide monitoring and assessment of beach litter and agreed to choose the scenario C contained in document 4J-11.

4J.14 The Meeting agreed on the need for countries to update information on their national monitoring programmes (e.g. number of stations, type of stations, monitoring frequency) as contained in the HELCOM monitoring sub-programme of beach litter.

4J.15 The Meeting discussed the issue of a common database to host HELCOM beach litter monitoring data and agreed on the use of an existing database for the purpose. The Meeting invited the EN-Marine Litter to consider which database would best fit HELCOM purposes (e.g. EMODnet or ICES DOME databases), including financial resource implications and long-term continuation of the database, so that the discussion on the topic can continue at STATE&CONSERVATION 13-2020. The Meeting took note that EU encourages harmonisation with the ongoing work of TG Litter, and, if needed, communication between the EN-Marine Litter and EMODnet to support hosting of beach litter data. The EU further advised that a European baseline for beach litter had been adopted for MSFD purposes and that a Joint list of litter items had been adopted to promote standardised data collection in the future.

4J.16 In relation to the assessment of the beach litter indicator within HOLAS III, the Meeting invited the EN-Marine Litter to provide recommendations on use of assessment scale and trends in HOLAS III for State and Conservation to consider. The Meeting further invited the network to consider the threshold value for this indicator once established at EU level.

4J.17 The Meeting approved that the section on beach litter in the marine litter indicator development workplan is updated based on the decisions made by the Meeting.

4J.18 The Meeting took note of further work on the HELCOM microlitter indicator (document 4J-18), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting discussed the matrix (e.g. water column and/or sediment) to be used for further development of the HELCOM microlitter indicator and agreed that the further development of an indicator on microlitter should cover both matrices (e.g. water column and sediment) as far as data are available. EU clarified that Commission Decision 2017/848/EU requires monitoring of microlitter in the surface layer of the water column and in the seabed sediment, and that it may additionally be monitored on the coastline.

4J.19 The Meeting encouraged close cooperation between EN-Marine Litter and OSPAR ICG ML in relation to OSPAR's developments on the microlitter in sediments indicator.

4J.20 The Meeting encouraged countries to provide input to the information contained in document 4J-18 and inform the Secretariat (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi) accordingly.

4J.21 The Meeting encouraged countries to support the lead and co-lead countries on the further development of the microlitter indicator.

4J.22 The Meeting approved that the section on microlitter in the marine litter indicator development workplan is updated based on the decisions made by the Meeting.

4J.23 The Meeting took note of the updated pre-core indicator report on cumulative impact on benthic biotopes (document 4J-16), as presented by Mr. Thorsten Berg on behalf of the co-lead countries Germany and Sweden.

4J.24 The Meeting welcomed the work carried out, thanked the indicator leads for the extensive development and stressed the importance of including the indicator in the HOLAS III assessment.

4J.25 The Meeting took note that Denmark can only embark on the process of shifting the status of the indicator from pre-core to core once the threshold values are in place as well as that Denmark requires a minimum of two months for national consultation and approval processes related to indicator threshold values.

4J.26 The Meeting took note of the request that the indicator title be reviewed to better reflect that the indicator is evaluating the physical disturbance and physical loss of benthic habitats and to consider if the

term biotopes is appropriate. The co-lead explained that the indicator is indeed evaluating biotopes, i.e. it includes the biology of the physical habitats in the assessment.

4J.27 The Meeting took note of the comment by Finland that the indicator in its current format does not account for previous deterioration in heavily impacted areas e.g. harbors/industrial areas.

4J.28 The Meeting supported that, when available, the scripts for methods used in the indicator evaluation should be made publicly available and welcomed the information by the indicator leads that this is being explored.

4J.29 The Meeting took note of the comment by EU that for MSFD purposes the indicator would need to be applied to MSFD broad habitat types, ecologically relevant scales for assessment would need to be defined and noting that the scale of assessment has a significant effect on the outcome of a status assessment. There is also a need to clarify what the quality threshold proposed in relation to its use for MSFD D6C3 is, and to develop the relationship between this indicator and other HELCOM indicators relevant for the assessment of seabed habitats. The Meeting noted that detailed comments will be provided in writing by the EU.

4J.30 The Meeting took note of the comment by Sweden that once threshold values have been developed, they should be shared with TG Seabed for information.

4J.31 The Meeting expressed general support for the work and encouraged the co-leads to consider the issues raised, in particular focusing on the development of threshold value and to continue to involve the EN Benthic in the work, possibly through an extra meeting of the EN before STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

4J.32 The Meeting invited the indicator co-leads, with support from the Secretariat, to prepare a time plan for further work to finalize the core indicator, to be submitted as information to the State and Conservation WG.

4J.33 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to submit comments for the indicator report to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi) by 30 May 2020. Comments will be transferred to the co-leads directly.

4J.34 The Meeting invited the indicator co-leads to present an updated indicator report for STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020 for further discussion on threshold values and shifting the status of the indicator from pre-core to core indicator, at latest by HOD meeting in June 2021.

4J.35 The Meeting invited the indicator co-leads, together with the Secretariat and the Co-chairs of State and Conservation to prepare a realistic time plan for further work, including a possible extra meeting of the EN, taking into account the Danish time requirements.

4J.36 The Meeting took note of the status of HELCOM indicators to assess waterbirds in the Baltic Sea (document 4J-13), as presented by the Secretariat and welcomed the work done. The Meeting emphasized the need for prioritization of the indicator work outlined in the document, in accordance with the guidance agreed by GEAR, with special focus on the agreement to finalize work on primary criteria (bycatch and abundance) before commencing work on secondary criteria (e.g. habitat quality or breeding success).

4J.37 The Meeting invited the HELCOM co-chair of JWG Bird to provide clarification on the planned distribution of resource and development efforts across the proposed indicators **by 2 June 2020**, based on which State and Conservation WG will then consider approval for updating the indicator workplan by **15 June 2020**.

4J.38 The Meeting took note of the clarification, in relation to finding a lead for the HELCOM oxygen debt indicator, that there is currently no capacity in the IN EUTRO network to lead the indicator. The indicator

is operational and used as part of eutrophication assessment, with indicator evaluation calculated automatically.

4J.39 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to consider taking the lead on the oxygen debt indicator and inform the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) on their possibility to lead the indicator.

4J.40 The Meeting welcomed that Denmark has confirmed that they continue as lead on the indicator seafloor litter.

4J.41 The Meeting welcomed that Finland will co-lead the white-tailed sea eagle indicator.

4J.42 The Meeting took note of the draft HELCOM Indicator Manual Version 1.0 (document 4J-5), as presented by the Secretariat, welcomed the work and recognised its usefulness for future indicator processes.

4J.43 The Meeting considered that at this point in time there is not strong support amongst the Contracting Parties for an indicator mentor group and that policy guidance for indicator work should take place in the relevant Working Groups.

4J.44 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to provide further comments and suggestions to the document by **15 June 2020** to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi). The Meeting agreed to come back to the discussion on the Manual at STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020 and invited the Secretariat to continue the work to finalize the Manual and submit a final draft to STATE&CONSERVATION 13-2020 and GEAR 23-2020.

HELCOM Data Flow Project (DataFlow)

4J.45 The Meeting noted that funding has been secured for the HELCOM Data Flow project.

HELCOM Holistic Assessment Methodology Development Project (MetDev)

4J.46 The Meeting took note of the draft project plan for HELCOM Holistic Assessment Methodology Development Project (HELCOM MetDev) (document 4J-6-Rev.1), as presented by the Secretariat.

4J.47 The Meeting took note of the information that the project is not yet funded, with the exception of the tasks which are included in the Baltic DataFlow project (proposal submitted to CEF Telecom in 11/2019) and might be funded through that process. The Meeting took note of the information that, should the Baltic DataFlow project be funded, any overlap in tasks between the two projects will be addressed and the task removed from the draft MetDev project plan.

4J.48 The Meeting took note of the clarification by the Secretariat that at this stage the project resource needs can be outlined in person months (as e.g. document 5-6 rev.1 to GEAR 22-2020).

4J.49 The Meeting supported that efforts should be made to ensure that any changes to the HOLAS III methodology be done in close cooperation with the relevant HELCOM Expert Groups, include frequent progress reports to the relevant HELCOM Working Groups and have transparent approval processes.

4J.50 The Meeting took note of the comments by Germany that HOLAS III should be directly usable, as far as possible, for MSFD purposes for the Contracting Parties that are also EU member states and that the EU CIS process (Article 8 guidance such as aggregation and integration rules) should be considered for HOLAS III. Work has been intensified within the EU CIS process to develop guidelines for the assessments of species (e.g. advice on integration rules, now being tested by several HELCOM parties with JRC support) and benthic habitats (TG Seabed, including development of Article 8 guidance). HOLAS III should make use of this work (e.g. EU CIS article 8 guidance) as much as possible in order to allow EU member states to use HOLAS III assessments for MSFD reporting in 2024.

4J.51 The Meeting took note of the view of Sweden that of the work outlined in the MetDev project development of economic and social analysis should be considered to have the highest priority, followed by the further development of the HEAT tool.

4J.52 The Meeting endorsed the submission of the project plan for information to HOD 58-2020 and agreed to come back to the discussion at STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

HELCOM Expert Groups under the guidance of the State and Conservation WG

4J.53 The Meeting took note of the overview of work of the Expert Groups, Intersessional Networks and projects associated with the group (document 4J-7). The Meeting took note of the comments by Germany regarding the document that Mr. Jörn Gessner is to be added as the Chair of EG STUR and that EN BENTHIC is to be included in the preparation of the next Habitat mapping workshop (e.g. by providing topics they would like to discuss or the possibility to present national approaches) and also on the need to revive the zooplankton expert network as soon as possible. The Meeting noted that discussion related to ZEN ZIIM will be continued at STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

4J.54 The Meeting took note of the PEG meeting report (document 4J-19).

HELCOM Expert Network on Underwater Noise

4J.55 The Meeting took note of the revised draft Regional Action Plan on Underwater Noise (document 4J-15).

HELCOM-Baltic Earth Expert Network on Climate Change (EN CLIME)

4J.56 The Meeting took note of the outcome of EN CLIME 5-2020 (document 4J-9, Presentation 8), as presented by the Secretariat and provisionally agreed on the revised timetable for finalization of the Climate Change Fact Sheet, including the organization of an intersessional meeting of State and Conservation on **15 February 2021** for approval of key messages, noting that comments can be submitted to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) by **21 May 2020**. The Meeting further noted the list of parameters lacking a lead person/active experts contributing to the work and agreed to provide suggestions for names to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) by **21 May 2020**.

4J.57 The Meeting invited EN CLIME to consider alternative names for primary and secondary parameters categories, to avoid any confusion with the MSFD primary and secondary criteria and noted that these terms will not be used in the final Climate Change Fact Sheet product.

HELCOM Expert Network on Hazardous Substances (EN HZ)

4J.58 The Meeting took note of the proposal for the development of regular wide-scope screening of Hazardous substances (document 4J-17), as presented by the Secretariat.

4J.59 The Meeting noted the following initial considerations: support expressed by Denmark and Germany, the encouragement if possible to explore external funding opportunities by Latvia, and the opinion of Denmark that biota samples should be used as in OSPAR, and that it should take place in 2021, and finally samples should be limited to a few samples in the marine environment for status assessment only. The Meeting agreed that input and comments to the specific requests listed in the document can be sent to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi) by **Friday 29 May, 2020**.

Baltic Sea MPA Managers Network (MPA MANET)

4J.60 The Meeting took note of progress with regards to arranging the 2020 MPA MANET workshop and welcomed the information that Denmark is exploring the possibility to host the workshop.

Strategic discussion on EGs (Scoping session)

4J.61 The Meeting welcomed presentations on results of and work on food webs in the Baltic Sea by the BONUS BlueWebs project, as presented by Ms. Laura Uusitalo, Finnish Environment Center (Presentation 9) and BONUS XWebs project, as presented by Mr. Jan Dierking (Presentation 10).

4J.62 The Meeting took note of the overview of existing Expert groups and gaps in Expert group structure for HOLAS III (document 4J-14), presented by the Co-Chair. The Meeting discussed the identified gaps and agreed on the following further steps to improve the organization of HELCOM expert groups in order to facilitate the development of necessary assessments for HOLAS III:

- **Food webs:** the Meeting supported the establishment of a Correspondence Group on Food webs. The Meeting further agreed on the following:
 - The CG would be time limited, with the option, based on need and evaluation of performance, of extending the group's mandate/make the group a permanent part of the HELCOM structure at the end of its initial term.
 - The main aim of the CG would be to take the work on producing an assessment of food webs in the Baltic Sea forward, including identifying how existing information, methods and tools can be used to cater for HOLAS III.
 - The CG tasks would include the planning and organization of a thematic workshop (as outlined in step 5 of the future work on indicators plan approved at HOD 57-2019) on food web indicators and assessment prior to the HOLAS III assessment.
 - The expertise of the CG would largely be sourced from already existing HELCOM groups which represent parts of the food web, but also bring food web specific expertise into the HELCOM structure.

The Meeting highlighted the potential for future cooperation with OSPAR on the topic of food webs, and that, should the groups mandate be extended, the possibility of a joint expert group on food webs could be explored.

The Meeting emphasized the central role of food webs in the ecosystem and the need to improve the information on the status of food webs in the next holistic assessment.

- **Commercial fish:** The Meeting supported arranging of a thematic workshop (as outlined in step 5 of the future work on indicators plan approved at HOD 57-2019) on commercial fish assessment for the purposes of HOLAS III. The workshop would focus on how existing ICES data and assessments could be utilized to assess commercial stocks from an ecosystem perspective.
- **NIS:** The Meeting supported closer future cooperation with OSPAR on non-indigenous species, possibly through a joint group, and that for the purpose of HOLAS III focus on continued work with the experts already involved in the work on NIS indicators.
- **Pelagic habitats:** The Meeting suggested organizing a thematic workshop (as outlined in step 5 of the future work on indicators plan approved at HOD 57-2019) on pelagic habitat assessment. The workshop should include both the HELCOM phytoplankton and zooplankton networks, as well as include expertise on abiotic aspects relevant for a pelagic habitat assessment. The Meeting encouraged increased cooperation between the two expert groups and recognized that a platform for cooperation is needed and agreed to explore this further.

Agenda Item 5J Development and implementation of Recommendations

5J.1 The Meeting took note of the overview of planned reporting on HELCOM Recommendations under the remit of the State and Conservation Working Group (document 5J-1), as presented by the Secretariat and agreed to come back to discussion on the reporting at STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

5J.2 The Meeting welcomed the information that Germany will prepare a reporting template for Recommendation 40/1 and will send it out for review to State and Conservation WG prior to STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020, and that Poland will commence work on developing a reporting template for Recommendation 17/2, a draft of which will be submitted to STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

5J.3 The Meeting took note of the observed possible update needs for Recommendation 35/1 (document 5J-2), as presented by Finland, and noted the comment by Denmark that the updated Recommendation should strive to have as long a shelf life as possible without losing the level of ambition and that relevant outcomes from the BSAP update are important to be included in the update and by CCB whether synopses related to MPAs will be scrutinized when updating the Recommendation and whether the Aichi targets mentioned on the first page will be updated based on the new CBD biodiversity targets stemming from the post-2020 process.

5J.4 The Meeting welcomed written comments also from other Contracting Parties to be submitted to Finland (lasse.kurvinen@metsa.fi) before STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020 and agreed to come back to the discussion on the revision of the Recommendation 35/1 at STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

RECOMMENDATION 24/10 IMPLEMENTATION OF INTEGRATED MARINE AND COASTAL MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN ACTIVITIES IN THE BALTIC SEA AREA

5J.5 The Meeting took note of the progress on arranging a joint scoping workshop with HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, as presented by the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 7J Future work

7J.1 The Meeting recalled that STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020, focusing on Biodiversity and conservation and Joint sessions, will be held on 5-9 October 2020 and welcomed the offer by Estonia to host the meeting.

7J.2 The Meeting preliminarily agreed to organize an intersessional online meeting of STATE & CONSERVATION on 15 February 2021 for the approval of key messages for the Baltic Sea Climate Change Fact Sheet by EN CLIME.

7J.3 The Meeting agreed to organize STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021 on 3-7 May 2021 and welcomed the offer by Sweden to explore the possibility to host the meeting.

Agenda Item 8J Any other business

8J.1 The Meeting took note of the comment by Germany regarding the possible consolidation of HELCOM and EU requirements on Marine Reporting Units regarding division of HELCOM assessment unit open Sea areas to territorial waters and EEZ.

8J.2 The Meeting noted that Estonia has made changes in its coastal water bodies under WFD in the Gulf of Finland and divided Gulf of Riga to three coastal water bodies and welcomed that Estonia will provide the shapefiles to the Secretariat (in WG84 format) to be included in the update of HELCOM Assessment Unit Level 4.

8J.3 The Meeting revised the list of contacts and observers of State and Conservation, as included in document 8J-2-Rev.1

Agenda Item 9J Outcome of the Joint themes

9J.1 The Meeting adopted the outcome of the Joint session via correspondence and noted that the outcome will be available (together with outcome of the monitoring and assessment session) at the STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020 Meeting Site, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting.

Monitoring and assessment

Agenda Item 1MA Adoption of the Agenda: Monitoring and assessment

1MA.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda items 1MA-3MA as well as 5MA-6MA as contained in document 1-2 Rev.3.

Agenda Item 2MA Matters of relevance for the Meeting and information from the Secretariat

2MA.1 The Meeting noted that measures related to COVID-19 outbreak are likely to also have affected monitoring efforts and that this might in turn affect quality of data for 2020.

2MA.2 The Meeting welcomed the results of the BONUS FUMARI (Presentation 11), as presented by Mr. Kristian Meissner and BONUS SEAM (Presentation 12), as presented by Mr. Urmas Lips, Estonia, BONUS INTEGRAL, as presented by Mr. Gregor Rehder, Germany (Presentation 13), and IMAGE/mereRITA (Presentation 14), as presented by Georg Martin, Estonia.

2MA.3 The Meeting took note of the invitation to an upcoming webinar arranged jointly by a number of BONUS projects, including FUMARI, the invitation for which will be share with State and Conservation WG by the Secretariat.

2MA.4 The Meeting expressed interest in considering a more structured HELCOM approach for how to include novel monitoring methods in the HELCOM monitoring processes as well as a for how monitoring methods and programmes are included in the HELCOM monitoring manual and agreed to include the process diagrams developed in the FUMARI project in further deliberations.

2MA.5 The Meeting took note of the German view that in relation to benthic monitoring EU MSFD criteria and requirements have been evaluated, but those from the Habitats Directive as well as from the historic HELCOM monitoring should also be included.

2MA.6 The Meeting took note of the policy briefs produced by BONUS SEAM and BONUS FUMARI projects as contained in document 2MA-1.

2MA.7 The Meeting took note of the views by Germany that the components are very differently aligned (page 2, box 2 in the document), and that a better alignment would be needed (e.g. first line: MSFD/Biodiversity, BSAP: clear water, WFD: biological components). Also, the text seems to be very negative regarding the current HELCOM monitoring manual, which may be reconsidered.

2MA.8 The Meeting took note of the clarifications by the BONUS FUMARI that the intention of the document is to support and improve the current HELCOM monitoring manual, not detract from existing efforts.

2MA.9 The Meeting agreed to share the policy briefs contained in document 2MA-1 to the relevant expert networks.

Agenda Item 3MA Development and implementation of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 10/1 ABNORMAL SITUATIONS IN THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

3MA.1 The Meeting took note of the EuroSea project activities (document 3MA-1 and Presentation 15), as presented by Estonia.

3MA.2 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to reflect on their expectations regarding regular assessment reports on marine extreme events (e.g. what are the events to be included in the service?, how often the reports should be made available?, who should be informed?, should it be available as an HELCOM factsheet?) and inform Estonia (oliver.samlas@taltech.ee) by **4 June 2020** on their conclusions.

3MA.3 The Meeting invited the EuroSea project to share the status of its activities to STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021.

RECOMMENDATION 19/3 MANUAL FOR THE HELCOM JOINT COORDINATED MARINE MONITORING

3MA.4 The Meeting took note of the overview of reported data and gaps from the different data repositories (document 3MA-16), as presented by the Secretariat.

3MA.5 The Meeting took note of the information by Finland that on the pelagic table, there has been a monitoring gap due to the renovations of the research vessel Aranda, thus these data will not be available. In relation to zooplankton data, Finland is investigating the causes of the gap in reporting as data are available.

3MA.6 The Meeting emphasized the need for consistent reporting also for data that is not set as mandatory in the guidelines, e.g. in relation to dredging data under Guideline 36/2, as these data are needed for both indicator based assessments and cumulative impacts assessment.

Monitoring of beach litter

3MA.7 The Meeting noted that HOD 56-2019 in principle approved the HELCOM monitoring sub-programme on beach litter, taking into account that editorial amendments may still be included.

Update of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual

3MA.8 The Meeting took note of the Article 11 guidance provided by the EU (document 3MA-2) to be used as needed when reviewing the updated HELCOM monitoring programmes.

3MA.9 The Meeting took note of the list of agreements from the two intersessional meetings of STATE & CONSERVATION 11 MA-2019 and STATE & CONSERVATION Extra MA-2020 (document 3MA-3), as presented by the Secretariat.

3MA.10 The Meeting took note of the clarification regarding division between categories 3 and 4 with regards to level of regional cooperation provided by the Secretariat, in accordance with what was agreed at STATE & CONSERVATION Extra MA-2020 ([Outcome of STATE & CONSERVATION Extra MA-2020](#), para. 1.5).

3MA.11 The Meeting acknowledged that a common understanding on the level of regional coordination was reached at STATE & CONSERVATION Extra MA-2020 ([Outcome of STATE & CONSERVATION Extra MA-2020](#), para. 1.6 and Annex 2).

3MA.12 The Meeting took note that Estonia regrets that they did not have capacity to prepare the introduction of the Monitoring Manual for review at STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020.

3MA.13 The Meeting took note that some input for the drafting of the introduction section has already been provided during the commenting period of the monitoring programmes and that the scope of the update is not foreseen to be very large.

3MA.14 The Meeting agreed that a revision of the introduction is needed in order to align the content with the new EU MSFD Guidance reporting Art. 11, update the terminology as well as consider a more general way of referencing the BSAP. The Meeting further agreed that Estonia will prepare a revised introduction text by **3 June 2020**, for commenting by Contracting Parties by **15 June 2020**. Estonia will subsequently address the input received and an improved version will be shared with State & Conservation contacts and observers, together with the revised monitoring programmes, by **11 August 2020**, for approval by **1 September 2020**, after when the finalised text will be published at the HELCOM website.

3MA.15 The Meeting considered the draft HELCOM monitoring programme on NIS (document 3MA-13), as presented by the COMPLETE project (Presentation 16). The Meeting suggested to split NIS Monitoring Programme and NIS monitoring guidelines into separate documents and that at this stage the priority should be given to (adoption of) the NIS Monitoring Programme.

3MA.16 The Meeting took note of the clarification by Finland that it may be possible in the future to conduct the assessment of the NIS indicator at level 3, depending on national efforts on monitoring as well as on the natural dispersal pattern of NIS.

3MA.17 The Meeting took note of the view by Poland that information on the abundance of individuals is currently not provided in the ICES database. Poland informed that for national purposes NIS found in samples are reported in a separate spreadsheet. Poland further encouraged countries to share information on detection of NIS.

3MA.18 The Meeting took note that Germany is not in the position to approve the monitoring programme on NIS at this stage, and that they would need additional time to comment on the text proposed.

3MA.19 The Meeting agreed that further comment to the NIS monitoring programme can be provided by 11 June 2020 to (Maiju.Lehtiniemi@ymparisto.fi) and the Secretariat (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi)

3MA.20 The Meeting agreed to arrange an on-line meeting of national NIS experts and the COMPLETE project representatives aiming at addressing the comments received, to be held on 17 June 2020 and invited countries to provide contact details of NIS experts to Finland (Maiju.Lehtiniemi@ymparisto.fi) and the Secretariat (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi).

3MA.21 The Meeting invited Finland to provide, based on the steps mentioned above, a revised monitoring programme on NIS to STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021.

3MA.22 The Meeting agreed to postpone decisions on the monitoring guidelines contained in document 3MA-13 to STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021.

3MA.23 The Meeting considered the draft update of HELCOM monitoring programmes (documents 3MA-5, 3MA-5-Rev.1), as presented by the Secretariat.

3MA.24 The Meeting took note of the comments by several Contracting Parties that they would need more time to comment on the draft monitoring programmes.

3MA.25 The Meeting took note of the information by Estonia that their revised MSFD Article 11 monitoring programme is under public hearing until 4 June 2020.

3MA.26 The Meeting discussed how to conclude the revision of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual and agreed as follows:

- Contracting Parties are invited to inform the Secretariat (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi) of their willingness to take lead on the revision of monitoring programmes by **8 June 2020**. The Meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to consider taking lead on four or more programmes/country, to ensure all programmes are covered and account for the ambitious deadlines required to ensure the updated monitoring programmes are available for national reporting purposes.
- countries as well as expert groups are invited to provide comments to the monitoring programmes by **15 June 2020** in track changes directly in the documents available in the workspace. One consolidated national view is encouraged when providing input through State and Conservation, to ensure access to the files. For expert groups experts can respond individually as all expert group members have access to the workspace;
- there is a need to revise the template for the monitoring programme to be aligned with the final version of the Art. 11 EU MSFD reporting guidance. Such an update will be conducted to the improved versions of the monitoring programmes;

- the finalised revised monitoring programmes will be made available to Contracting Parties by **11 August 2020** at the latest for final approval by **1 September 2020**, thus enabling those Contracting Parties that are also EU member states to utilize the information for national reporting purposes.

3MA.27 The Meeting took note of the information that Sweden is not in the position to continue leading the revision of the monitoring programmes of Coastal fish, Migratory fish, Fisheries bycatch, Contaminants in sediment, Contaminants in biota, Marine bird health, Imposex, Macrolitter characteristics and abundance/volume, Ambient noise and Registry of impulsive sounds.

3MA.28 The Meeting welcomed the offer by Germany to lead the revision of the monitoring programme on Contaminants in water.

3MA.29 The Meeting welcomed the offer by Estonia to lead the revision of the monitoring programmes on Microlitter, Water column chemical characteristics, Water column physical characteristics and Water column hydrological characteristics.

3MA.30 The Meeting considered the timeline and guidance for the next update of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual and agreed that the interval of six years should be maintained, with the process commencing no later than 18 months prior to the national reporting deadline for those countries which are also EU Member States. The Meeting emphasized the benefit of including the Expert Groups both more closely and earlier in the update process and considered that the existing lead countries for the Guidelines under the respective monitoring programme can be used to identify lead countries also for the update process.

Development of data arrangements for HELCOM monitoring data and assessments

3MA.31 The Meeting took note of current status of data flows supporting HELCOM assessments (document 3MA-14), as presented by the Secretariat and that the document will form the basis of the more elaborated gap analysis to be presented by HELCOM DataFlow project to STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020.

3MA.32 The Meeting took note of the comment by Sweden that it would be beneficial to include an analysis of data reporting barriers, i.e regarding what data is available from monitoring compared to what data is in fact reported, in order to be able to distinguish gaps in monitoring from gaps in data reporting.

3MA.33 The Meeting took note of HELCOM DataFlow project (document 3MA-8), as presented by the Secretariat.

3MA.34 The Meeting took note of the suggestion by Germany to also consider the views of expert groups in relation to lessons learnt from the HOLAS II process. Also, reference should be included in the project to ensure that links between HELCOM and the EU MSFD in relation to monitoring and reporting are considered in the work.

3MA.35 The Meeting took note of the Baltic DataFlow project application process under CEF Telecom Public Open data call.

3MA.36 The Meeting took note of the clarification that in the Baltic DataFlow project there are also national institutions as partners in the project application and that focus is on long term development of harvesting-based reporting and further automatization of assessment processes, whereas the HELCOM DataFlow project ensures human resources in the Secretariat to improve the data flow solutions deemed to be most urgently needed for the HOLAS III process.

3MA.37 The Meeting considered the updated overview of deadlines for data reporting listed in HELCOM Monitoring Manual and guidelines (document 3MA-7), as presented by the Secretariat.

3MA.38 The Meeting approved the revised deadlines for data reporting to be included in the HELCOM Monitoring Manual as contained in the document 3MA-7-Rev.1.

COMBINE database usability and reporting

3MA.39 The Meeting took note of the outcome of COMBINE data reporting workshop (document 3MA-10) organized for improving the reporting practices and quality of COMBINE biological community data (zooplankton, phytoplankton, zoobenthos).

3MA.40 The meeting considered the suggested actions from the data reporting workshop (listed in document 3MA-10) as presented by the Secretariat.

3MA.41 The Meeting took note of the comment by Finland that for Action 10 the suggested quality check value for SMVOL < 50 m³ is too low for Bothnian Sea areas and recommended it to be increased to over 60 m³.

3MA.42 The Meeting took note of the following comments in relation to the Action 12 on resubmission of historical data:

- Sweden: it would probably involve a lot of work, so a series of workshops may be convenient;
- Germany: there are concerns in relation to the resubmission of phytoplankton data;
- Estonia: it is very problematic due to extra workload and a making official specific data calls for the purpose would be preferable.
- Poland: it need additional effort and possibility of resources engagement must be checked.

3MA.43 The Meeting took note that Denmark has a study reservation on the document to be clarified by **4 June 2020** and will inform the Secretariat accordingly (joni.kaitaranta@helcom.fi).

3MA.44 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to consider the inclusion of Action 12 into the HELCOM DataFlow project tasks, and also to evaluate the steps needed for implementing actions contained in document 3MA-10.

3MA.45 The Meeting considered the reporting of “less-than” values and uncertainties for hazardous substances in COMBINE, as presented by the co-Chair of EN-HZ (document 3MA-12). The Meeting agreed on the approach for future reporting, as well as to distribute the information to relevant national data centers responsible for reporting hazardous substances data.

Review and update of HELCOM monitoring guidelines

Monitoring guidelines for physiochemical parameters

3MA.46 The Meeting took note that the Guidelines for biological material sampling and sample handling for the analysis of persistent organic pollutants (PAHs, PCBs and OCPs) and metallic trace elements; and chlorophyll a have been published on the [HELCOM website](#).

3MA.47 The Meeting took note of the lead and co-lead countries for HELCOM Monitoring Programme topics (document 3MA-9), as presented by the Co-Chair.

3MA.48 The Meeting took note of the following progress of work on monitoring guidelines:

- Monitoring of physical oceanography, Lead Country Sweden: Germany is not able to take co-lead on the guidelines;
- Chlorophyll a via EO, Lead Country Finland: conclusion on the guidelines will be conducted through correspondence, once it is confirmed that the study reservation by Germany is lifted. The Secretariat will assist Finland, Germany and Poland in the effort to ensure that all comments have been accounted for.
- HBCDD in biota and sediments, EN-HZ Chair: the guidelines will be submitted to the STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021 for consideration;

- Guidelines on chlorinated biphenyls and organochlorine pesticides in biota and Guidelines of determination of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in biota, Lead Country Germany/Co-Lead Countries Poland and Sweden: Germany informed that comments have been received by EN-Hazards, which will be addressed, and the guidelines submitted to STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021 for consideration.

3MA.49 The Meeting reviewed the draft HELCOM monitoring guidelines for PFAS/PFOS in biota (document 3MA-11), as presented by the co-Chair. The Meeting approved the guidelines for inclusion as part of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual and endorsed them for publication on the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment webpage.

3MA.50 The Meeting welcomed the information by Germany that the situation regarding the lead and co-lead for the 17 monitoring guidelines for hazardous substances has been resolved in the interim between STATE & CONSERVATION 11-2019 and STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020.

Monitoring guidelines for biota

3MA.51 The Meeting noted that the following monitoring guidelines for biota have been published on the HELCOM website:

- coastal fish monitoring;
- phytoplankton species composition, abundance and biomass.

Developing Monitoring guidelines for marine bird health

3MA.52 The Meeting took note that no Contracting Party is currently in the position to offer co-lead for the monitoring guidelines on marine bird health. The Meeting agreed to come back to the issue at STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021.

Developing Monitoring guidelines of seabirds at sea

3MA.53 The Meeting took note that, as a result of the measures related to the outbreak of COVID-19, work on the guidelines has not progressed as planned, however, the co-leads intend to prepare and submit the draft guidelines at a later date. The Meeting agreed to come back to the issue at STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021.

3MA.54 The Meeting took note of the overview of national offshore seabird monitoring programmes of the CPs in the HELCOM region (document 3MA-15), and thanked Germany for this compilation.

RECOMMENDATION 36/1 ON REGIONAL ACTION PLAN ON MARINE LITTER

3MA.55 The Meeting took note that HELCOM 41-2020 agreed to supersede the Recommendation.

Agenda Item 5MA Any other business

5MA.1 The Meeting agreed to the suggestion by Germany to include telephone numbers in the list of contacts to the next State & Conservation meetings, at the discretion of each member.

Agenda Item 6MA Outcome of the Monitoring and assessment session

6MA.1 The Meeting adopted the outcome of the monitoring and assessment session via correspondence and noted that the outcome will be available (together with the outcome of the joint session) at the [STATE & CONSERVATION 12-2020 Meeting Site](#) together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting.