



Document title	Outcome of GEAR 22-2020
Code	5-7
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	5 - Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups
Submission date	19.05.2020
Submitted by	Executive Secretary
Reference	

Background

The 22st Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 22-2020) was held on 27-28 April 2020 as an online Meeting. The informal session on informal exchange of Contracting Parties' national experiences in MSFD implementation originally planned as part of the first half day of the meeting (27 April) was postponed. The meeting was attended by Delegations from Denmark, Estonia, EU, Finland, Poland and Sweden. The Meeting was also attended by Observers from WWF Finland and WWF Sweden as well as invited guests from the ACTION and ROSEMARIE projects.

This document contains the Outcome of GEAR 22-2019 (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](#).

Cumulative Impact Scoping Exercise

GEAR 21-2019 considered the proposals for further improvements of the cumulative impact assessment in HOLAS III ([document 5-5](#)) and concluded ([Outcome of GEAR 21-2019](#), para. 5.18 and 5.23) to include BSPI/BSII as part of HOLAS III, but in what capacity and format needs further discussions. The meeting agreed to organize a workshop focusing on how to tackle cumulative impacts assessment and ecosystem analysis in the Baltic Sea region, originally proposed to be held on 23-24 April 2020. 57-2019 took note of the information that the proposed dates for the workshop on Cumulative Impacts Assessment and Ecosystem Analysis in the Baltic Sea Region (23-24 April 2020) overlap with the dates for PRESSURE 12-2020 and invited the Secretariat and the Gear group to consider alternative dates for the workshop, possibly back-to-back with an MSP workshop on cumulative impacts assessment currently being planned for autumn 2020 ([Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#), para. 4.35).

The meeting reviewed the proposed alternative arrangements for taking the work on Cumulative Impacts Assessment forward, taking into account the link between the scoping process and the MetDev project plan, as well as the timelines for submission and approval to autumn Working Groups meetings and HOD 59-2020. The meeting agreed on a three-step approach including a questionnaire, a scoping meeting and a technical workshop (as contained in the timeline in Annex 3 of the full outcome). The indicated length of the scoping meeting and technical workshop are provisional and will be decided on based on the input received through the questionnaire and further discussions in the TG. Both events will likely be held in an online format.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- [take note](#) of the outcome in general;

- take note of the alternative arrangement agreed on in relation to the cumulative impacts assessment scoping exercise,
- approve that GEAR 23-2020 will take place in Berlin (9-11 November 2020, dates already approved at HOD 57-2019).
- approve that GEAR 24-2021 will be convened on 18-20 May 2021, venue TBD.
- approve that GEAR 25-2021 will be convened on 8-10 November 2021, venue TBD.



Outcome of the 22nd Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (HELCOM GEAR 22-2020)

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda	2
Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from other meetings of relevance to GEAR	2
Agenda Item 3 Regionally coordinated implementation of MSFD	3
Agenda Item 4 Implementation and update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan	3
Agenda Item 5 Activities of relevant HELCOM projects or processes	7
Agenda Item 6 Future work and meetings	11
Agenda Item 7 Outcome of the Meeting	11
Annex 1 List of participants	12
Annex 2 Concretization and rephrasing of paragraphs from MD 2018 related to GEAR Group	13
Annex 3 Process and timeline for identifying needs for further work on Cumulative Impacts Assessment	16

Outcome of the 22nd Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (HELCOM GEAR 22-2020)

Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the outcome of GEAR 21-2019 (Paragraph 6.1) and HOD 57-2019 (Paragraph 4.34), the 22nd Meeting of the Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 22-2020) was held on 27-28 April 2020 as an online Meeting. The informal session on informal exchange of Contracting Parties' national experiences in MSFD implementation originally planned as part of the first half day of the meeting (27 April) was postponed. Any identified urgent EU MSFD - related matters can be considered under CG MSFD, as outlined in the Agenda.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by Delegations from Denmark, Estonia, EU, Finland, Poland and Sweden. The Meeting was also attended by Observers from WWF Finland and WWF Sweden as well as invited guests from the ACTION and ROSEMARIE projects. The List of Participants is contained in **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Meeting was welcomed by Mr. Rüdiger Stempel, HELCOM Executive Secretary, acknowledging the critical time the HELCOM work is facing through the coronavirus situation, which is not preventing HELCOM work to continue aiming at achieving its ambitious aims for 2021 in relation the BSAP update and the conduction of the SOM analysis.

0.4 The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Andrea Weiss, Germany, Chair of the GEAR Group. Ms. Jannica Haldin, Professional Secretary and Ms. Marta Ruiz, Associate Professional Secretary acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda as contained in **document 1-1** and noted the annotated Agenda in **document 1-2** and **1-2 Rev. 1**.

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

2.1 The Meeting took note that in light of the changed format of the meeting due to the COVID-19 measures and in the effort to shorten it no separate overview had been produced. However, any relevant information has been provided on the cover pages of the documents to the Meeting.

2.2 The Meeting took note of the new initiative to establish an EU stakeholder forum dedicated to oceans and seas worldwide - the International Ocean Governance Forum (IOG Forum), as well as the outcome of the [first meeting](#) held on 24 April 2020 as an online meeting as presented by the HELCOM Executive Secretary. The first meeting had three Thematic Working Groups (TWG):

- TWG 1 – "[Improving the international ocean governance framework](#)";
- TWG 2 – "[Reducing pressure on oceans and seas and creating the conditions for a sustainable 'blue' economy](#)"; and
- TWG 3 – "[Strengthening the ocean knowledge system](#)".

2.3 The Meeting took note of the content of the [UN CBD zero draft document](#) outlining proposals for new global targets for biodiversity, to supersede the current so-called Aichi targets.

2.4 The Meeting took note of the regional voluntary commitments for the Oceans Conference (dates TBD), as agreed on by HELCOM 41-2020 (Annex 2 of the [Outcome of HELCOM 41-2020](#)).

Agenda Item 3 Regionally coordinated implementation of MSFD

3.1 The Meeting took note that due to the outbreak of Covid-19, and the subsequent change of GEAR 22-2020 from a three -day physical meeting to a two day online meeting, the Chair, together with the Secretariat, agreed that the informal session of GEAR 22-2020 will be postponed and any matters related to the MSFD deemed urgent are to be considered under an intersessional informal session planned for **4 June 2020** or under the umbrella of CG MSFD.

Agenda Item 4 Implementation and update of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan

BSAP Update workplan

4.1 The Meeting took note of the accomplished and upcoming activities of the BSAP update as contained in **document 4-3**.

4.2 The Meeting took note that, in relation to the tasks and timeline presented in the document, there might be additional tasks related to the update of the BSAP for the Gear group by decision of HOD 58-2020.

4.3 The Meeting took note that the Baltic Sea Action Plan Update (BSAP UP) workshops planned for May 2020 have been postponed to August-September 2020 due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

4.4 The Meeting took note that the SOM topic reports are going to be available in September so that they can be submitted to the fall working group meetings for consideration.

4.5 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 21-2019 was informed on the ongoing development of criteria by the HELCOM SOM Platform, led by Latvia and Sweden, for supporting the evaluation of the proposed new actions at the thematic BSAP UP workshops in spring 2020 ([Outcome of GEAR 21-2019](#), para 4-28). HOD 57-2019 agreed that the criteria should be endorsed by the GEAR Group ([Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#), para 3.15).

4.6 The Meeting took note that the endorsement (cf. para. 4.5) took place via correspondence, where input was provided by Denmark. The implementation of the criteria was considered at HELCOM SOM Platform 3-2020, held online on 24-26 March 2020.

4.7 The Meeting took note that HOD 57-2019 agreed in principle on the revised set of ecological and management objectives while keeping it open for adjustments to individual objectives or proposals on additional objectives as found relevant in the further BSAP update process (Annex 2 of the [Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#)). Open issues from HOD 57-2019 were further considered by an ad hoc Group of Chairs of the relevant Working Groups and an updated proposal on the objectives was circulated to HOD for intersessional commenting before being finalized and submitted for consideration by HELCOM 41-2020.

4.8 The Meeting took note that an outline of how to take the overall work on the updated BSAP forward will be prepared for HOD 58-2020 to supplement the information included in the current BSAP UP workplan.

4.9 The Meeting took note of the summary of the considerations and agreements so far on the outline, content and style of the updated BSAP, including the provisional agreement on the structure and objectives for the updated BSAP (**document 4-2**).

4.10 The Meeting took note of the clarification that more concrete proposals for taking the work on drafting the updated BSAP forward, including a proposed timeline and division of tasks, is being prepared for HOD 58-2020. The Meeting also took note that there are no offers yet by Contracting Parties to lead the drafting of any segment.

4.11 The Meeting suggested that a mock-up of what the operative sections of the BSAP segments could look like would be included in the document to HOD 58-2020, including proposals for differencing between measures that can contribute directly to improving the state of the Baltic Sea and actions that are aimed at supporting implementation of actions or other HELCOM activities (e.g. actions related to databases, mapping, assessments, guidelines).

Progress on Sufficiency of Measures Analysis

4.12 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the Third Meeting of the ad hoc HELCOM Platform on sufficiency of measures ([SOM Platform 3-2020](#)).

4.13 The Meeting took note of the updated methodology and progress of the SOM analysis (**document 4-4** and **Presentation 1**).

4.14 The Meeting took note of the clarification that document 4-4 includes the final version of the methodology but the way of presenting it will be further clarified and improved at later stages, e.g. when it will be published as a background report for the BSAP update.

4.15 The Meeting considered the updated methodology for the SOM analysis, and provided the following views:

- the uncertainties related to the expert responses are sufficiently described but there should be a more thorough description of the uncertainties related to the methodology itself and how these might affect the results, to be included in the section on simplifications and assumptions of the method;
- it would make the SOM model more understandable if there was a worked case example included in the report.

4.16 The Meeting took note that the SOM model is written in Python programming language and the code will be published at the end of the ACTION project in late 2020.

4.17 The Meeting took note that the number of expert responses will be included in the SOM results report.

4.18 The Meeting suggested to, where possible, complement the topic-specific SOM reports with information on other HELCOM reports of the same topics and invited the topic teams to provide input on suitable additional material.

4.19 The Meeting took note that the range (2030-2035) of the end year for the business-as-usual (BAU) scenario is not considered to greatly affect the outcomes of the SOM model compared to having a single end year. It has been assumed that all existing measures will be implemented by the end of the BAU scenario.

4.20 The Meeting discussed that the majority of the measures focus on reducing future input of pressures and only a few of them focus on reducing the level of existing pressures. The Meeting took note that, in the SOM analysis, it is assumed that the effect of existing measures on reducing pressures is fully realized within the timeframe of the analysis. Supporting information on time-lags on the pressure reductions and environmental state is also included. In principle, the SOM methodology accounts for the effect of measures that reduce existing levels of pressures, e.g. nutrient concentrations in the sea, in a similar manner as measures that reduce the input of pressures by considering them jointly as net flow. This information will be included in the SOM methodology document and addressed in the SOM topic reports.

4.21 The Meeting endorsed the updated methodology for the SOM analysis.

4.22 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to send editorial comments on document 4-4 to the Secretariat (Heini.ahtiainen@helcom.fi) **by 12 May 2020**.

4.23 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to include in the document to be submitted to HOD 58-2020 a timeline for the SOM analysis and results.

4.24 The Meeting took note of the clarification on the consideration of the SOM results. The methodology has been endorsed by GEAR and the validation of the input data to the SOM analysis will take place by the Working Groups. The results of the SOM analysis will be presented for consideration to the Working Groups in autumn 2020. The Meeting acknowledged that the Working Groups can give valuable input on the interpretation and contextualization of the results.

4.25 The Meeting took note that linking the SOM results with the HOLAS III will be considered in the WP2 of the HELCOM Holistic Assessment Methodology Development Project (MetDev). The Meeting also took note that the SOM Platform is considering organizing a meeting in November to discuss how to further use and develop the SOM work in the future.

4.26 The Meeting took note of the methodology for conducting the cost-effectiveness analysis of new measures and the steps involved, as well as a guidance for providing cost data (**document 4-5 and Presentation 2**).

4.27 The Meeting took note that Denmark will need at least three months to form a national position on the results of the cost-effectiveness analysis.

4.28 The Meeting took note that the interim results of the cost-effectiveness analysis should be ready in September 2020 and that the first results will likely need to be updated after the BSAP UP workshops that could provide missing information for the analysis.

4.29 The Meeting took note of the clarification that the HOD 59-2020 meeting will be the first time that the full draft of the updated BSAP will be presented to the Heads of Delegation, but that the drafting, including the agreement on new measures, will continue in 2021. The Meeting suggested that the Secretariat provides a proposal for the 2021 timeline of the Baltic Sea Action Plan update process, including but not limited to the drafting of the updated Plan, to the HOD 58-2020 meeting for consideration and possible approval.

4.30 The Meeting took note that the cost-effectiveness analysis aims to define an optimal set of measures but also to give cost and effectiveness estimates of separate measures. The Meeting further took note that the role of the cost-effectiveness analysis in the BSAP update is to provide additional information to support the decision-making process but that there are also other factors to consider in deciding the set of actions to be included into the updated BSAP.

4.31 The Meeting invited the ACTION project to produce a clear template outlining gaps in relation to the cost estimates and invited the EN ESA to support the collection of the national information to fill said gaps. The Meeting noted that the information on the cost estimates is also valuable for the national work on the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

4.32 The Meeting recalled that conducting a cost-benefit analysis was not included as part of the ACTION project, but that SOM Platform 1-2019 suggested that the economic benefits of the BSAP as a whole could be assessed. The Meeting noted that no cost-benefit analysis has been planned for the BSAP UP process. The Meeting highlighted that evaluation of new measures could be supported by considering the wider benefits of proposed measures to the environment and to society, as use of cost-effectiveness analysis alone risks taking a narrower sectoral focus on certain measures. It was suggested that, in the absence of a formal cost-benefit analysis, a more qualitative approach could be considered. The Meeting welcomed the offer by the Secretariat to explore the possibility of conducting a benefit assessment in autumn 2020, noting that it is only possible to make the analysis for the BSAP as a whole and not at the topic, pressure or state component level due to the lack of data.

4.33 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to send comments on document 4-5 to the ACTION project (liisa.saikkonen@ymparisto.fi; Heini.ahtiainen@helcom.fi) **by 12 May 2020**.

Actions and measures for the updated BSAP

4.34 The Meeting took note that HOD 57-2019 considered how to draft the updated BSAP ([document 3-5](#)), provided input and noted that proposals on the formulation of actions will be provided by the HELCOM Working Groups, based on ongoing activities to review existing actions and proposals on new actions to be considered in spring 2020 and further worked on at autumn meetings in 2020 with the aim of having a first full draft available at HOD in December 2020.

Rephrasing of existing HELCOM actions

4.35 The Meeting recalled that the 2018 HELCOM Ministerial Declaration includes a number of paragraphs related to activities under the mandate of the GEAR Group (Annex 1 to [document 5-2](#)). These

paragraphs give the direction for HELCOM work in the upcoming years, but some need further specification in order to be turned into concrete tasks for the Working Groups or associated networks. The aim is that the concretized actions that are not carried out by the end of 2020 will be included in the updated BSAP to be agreed in 2021.

4.36 The Meeting further recalled that GEAR 21-219 considered the proposals on concretized HELCOM actions as contained in [document 4-6](#) and agreed that the actions are to be presented as work in progress at HOD 57-2019. The meeting invited EN-ESA to provide proposals for concretizations to the three first actions outlined in the document, possibly using the ESA roadmap, and submit the proposal to the Secretariat. The meeting agreed that for the remaining two actions GEAR contacts will provide suggestions for concretizations to the Secretariat who will collate the proposals, combine them with those received from EN-ESA and send out a revised document containing all proposals to GEAR contacts for review and subsequent approval at an intersessional GEAR online meeting on 27 February 2020 ([Outcome of GEAR 21-2019](#), para. 4.39-4.41).

4.37 The Meeting took note of the change in plan for endorsement of the concretized actions (**document 4-6** and **document 4-6 Add. 1**). However, the Meeting took note that due to the latest developments the contents of document 4-6 Add. 1 are no longer valid, but instead, latest proposals for actions stemming from the intersessional EN ESA meeting held on 24 April 2020 as included in **Presentation 3** are to be considered (also included as **Annex 2** to this Outcome).

4.38 The Meeting considered the way forward to finalize the concretized actions for para. 49, 50 and 51 and agreed as follows:

- GEAR contacts and observers to review the latest proposals for actions stemming from the intersessional EN ESA meeting held on 24 April 2020 and provide input by **13 May 2020, 12:00h Finnish local time** to the Secretariat (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi);
- based on the input provided, a consolidated version of the proposals will be prepared by the Chair and Co-Chair of GEAR in cooperation with the Secretariat and submitted to HOD 58-2020 for approval by **18 May 2020**;
- if major issues are identified during the preparation of the consolidated version, an online GEAR meeting will be held on **25 May 2020** to resolve them; and
- a possible revised document will be submitted to HOD 58-2020 latest by **27 May 2020**.

Proposed new actions and measures for the updated BSAP

4.39 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 21-2019 took note that the template for synopses on potential new HELCOM actions was submitted to HELCOM subsidiary bodies including Observers to the Groups, as agreed by HELCOM 40-2019, and also distributed to BONUS projects. The synopses that have been received are collated at a dedicated [workspace](#) on the HELCOM Meeting portal.

4.40 The Meeting took note of the guidance provided to the Working Groups to support the technical review of the synopses of new measures (**document 4-1**).

4.41 The Meeting took note that the deadline for submitting synopses on new measures has passed but the Working Groups will, as part of the technical review in the spring meetings, identify possible gaps and, based on the gap analysis, can submit or invite relevant organizations or projects to submit synopses to fill the gaps.

4.42 The Meeting highlighted that as a principle, all measures should go through the same process of technical review by Working Groups and evaluation in the BSAP UP workshops. The Meeting noted, however, that the process is dynamic and when the Working Groups in their autumn meetings review the results of the SOM analysis and the outcomes of the BSAP UP workshops, they may still find gaps in the set of suggested new measures and find a need to complement the set by suggesting additional measures or shifting the focus of the suggested measures.

4.43 The Meeting took note that the results of the SOM analysis will be submitted to the BSAP UP workshops. The Meeting also took note that the full topic specific SOM reports will not be ready by the BSAP

UP workshops since contributions by topic teams and experts are needed still and that the aim is to have the reports ready in September 2020 to be submitted to the autumn Working Groups meetings.

4.44 The Meeting took note that there are some existing HELCOM actions that are currently being rephrased but their final formulation is pending on the outcomes of ongoing global processes such as the update of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020 targets.

4.45 The Meeting took note and welcomed the recommendations for the further development of the content of the BSAP update as contained in the "[Baltic Shadow Plan: For the future of the Baltic Sea](#)" (**document 4-7** and **Presentation 4**).

4.46 The Meeting took note of a verbal update by the Secretariat outlining the experiences and progress of HELCOM Working Groups regarding the process to review the possible new actions proposed for inclusion in the updated BSAP and submitted through the synopses submission process.

Agenda Item 5 Activities of relevant HELCOM projects or processes

Planning for HOLAS III and associated processes

5.1 The Meeting took note that HOD 57-2019 welcomed the proposed provisional timeline and preliminary plan for HOLAS III, acknowledged that the plan is a living document and that changes might occur as the process is further refined ([document 4-19](#)), agreed to aim to include a full six years of data wherever possible. The meeting took note that, while Poland in general supports the plan, they retain their study reservation on the proposed assessment period (2016-2021) and that Russia placed a study reservation on the preliminary plan. The meeting invited Russia and Poland to clarify their positions by end of January 2020, with the aim to submit the preliminary plan and associated documents for approval to HELCOM 41-2020, thus enabling the work to continue ([Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#), para. 4.37, 4.39-4.40 and 4.43-4.44).

5.2 The Meeting took note that HOD 57-2019 also invited the Secretariat to, should the preliminary plan be approved at HELCOM 41-2020, prepare a more elaborate workflow for the assessment phase, outlining the timing of approval for the respective work strands as well as proposals for at what organizational level the approval is to take place ([Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#), para. 4.45).

5.3 The Meeting took note that Poland lifted their study reservation on the proposed assessment period (2016-2021) for HOLAS III.

5.4 The Meeting took note that following amendments to the structure of the HOLAS III process, Russia lifted their study reservation on the workplan and timeline. The Meeting took note of and considered the concern expressed by Russia regarding the participation of Russian experts in the HOLAS III assessment and associated processes.

5.5 The Meeting took note of the overview presentation of the HOLAS III work and the links between the various work processes and the documents submitted under agenda item 5 (**Presentation 5**).

5.6 The Meeting took note of the approved overview and provisional timeline of preparatory work processes to support the Third State of the Baltic Sea report, noting that changes might occur as the process is further refined (**document 5-1**).

5.7 The Meeting took note of the approved provisional timeline and preliminary plan for the HOLAS III assessment phase, noting that changes might occur as the process is further refined (**document 5-2**).

5.8 The Meeting considered the elaborated timeline for the HOLAS III assessment process, as prepared by the Secretariat (**document 5-3**), noting that it has also been submitted for review and input to STATE&CONSERVATION 12-2020 ([document 4J-3](#)) and that changes to the timeline might still occur as the process progresses.

5.9 The Meeting took note of the information by Poland that national consultation on the content of the timeline is still ongoing. The Meeting invited Poland to provide any further input to the document by **5 May 2020**.

5.10 The Meeting took note of the following clarifications by the Secretariat in relation to questions raised by the Meeting:

- data approval occurs online, which gives more flexibility to the approval process;
- there are no foreseen implications of the provisional timeline for the HOLAS III assessment phase presented in document 5-3 with the draft project plan for HELCOM Holistic Assessment Methodology Development Project (HELCOM MetDev) contained in document 5-4 as these two processes do not overlap;
- the timelines for the indicator approval and the indicator report drafting have been split up in two to address input by Contracting Parties and indicator leads. Separating the approval of the indicator results from that of the reporting ensures that the production of indicator reports is based on approved information. However, the partial overlap of the approval and the report writing enables experts to start working on the contextual information for the indicators report even when indicator data results are in the process of approval, thus adding a few weeks to the report writing process;
- it is not possible to extend data reporting for 2021 data to the third quarter of 2022 and still maintain a timetable that enables national consultation in all Contracting Parties. In exceptional cases, and based on prior agreement by the Contracting Parties, data reporting might be extended into the data approval phase. Contacts with data providers (e.g. ICES) have been initiated to ensure that the timeline proposed in relation to the 2021-year data is feasible also at the receiving end;
- the DataFlow project will start by producing a gap analysis indicating for which dataflows reporting of 2021 data might prove challenging, both overall and, where possible, by Contracting Party;
- the approval of the contents of the summary report will be presented for approval at the June HOD meeting in 2023, with any input by the meeting to be incorporated following the meeting. The final layout version of the document, including e.g. associated websites etc. will be published at the latest by the end of 2023;
- further consideration of the workflows in relation to the Working Groups, Expert Networks and the need for possible additional structure to support the assessments will be considered in autumn 2020, using the specified timeline as a basis.

5.11 The Meeting agreed that no additional data will be accepted after the data approval process is finalized and that there will not be any re-runs of assessment in order to include late data.

5.12 The Meeting acknowledged that Contracting Parties need to establish early dialogue with their respective national data rapporteurs and inform them regarding the shortened timeline for data reporting for 2021 data in 2022.

5.13 The Meeting invited the HELCOM Data Flow Project (DataFlow) to provide an overview of which data strands are foreseen to be problematic in terms of timely delivery at the next GEAR meeting.

5.14 The Meeting endorsed the elaborated timeline for the HOLAS III assessment process as contained in document 5-3.

Funding the HOLAS III assessment and associated work process

5.15 The Meeting took note that HOD 57-2019 noted that in the current plan for funding the successful implementation of work related to HOLAS III is dependent on the approval of the HELCOM budget as proposed to HOD 57-2019. HOD 57-2019 supported that resources from the HELCOM budget can be used to support the work towards HOLAS III ([Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#), para. 4.60-4.61).

5.16 The Meeting took note that HOD 57-2019 invited the Secretariat to elaborate a more detailed plan outlining the magnitude and temporal distribution of the foreseen resource needs for the various work strands under HOLAS III ([Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#), para. 4.59).

5.17 The Meeting took note of the provisional outline of foreseen resource needs for the production of the Third State of the Baltic Sea report (**document 5-6 Rev. 1**). The Meeting noted that involvement of

possible external partners in the preparatory work is provisional and will be updated based on further correspondence.

5.18 In relation to the usefulness and appropriateness of the estimates provided for national resources, the Meeting was of the view that the document presents appropriate information and an appropriate level of detail for HODs to consider. The Meeting supported the submission of the revised document (to be amended based on the results of the EU CEF Telecom Committee call for proposals, cf. para. 5.21) to HOD 58-2020.

HOLAS III Associated Processes

HELCOM Data Flow Project (DataFlow)

5.19 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 21-2019 took note of the HELCOM Data Flow project proposal ([document 5-6](#)), endorsed it and agreed to submit it to HOD 57-2019 for approval ([Outcome of GEAR 21-2019](#), para.5.14-5.17). HOD 57-2019 reviewed the project proposal for HELCOM Data Flow project ([document 4-21](#)) and in principle approved the project, pending securing of funding to cover the work ([Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#), para. 4.52., 4.55, 4.57).

5.20 The Meeting took note that HELCOM 41-2020 considered and adopted the draft budget for the financial period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021 (Annex 11 of the [Outcome of HELCOM 41-2020](#)) thus enabling the DataFlow project to begin according to the proposed schedule.

5.21 The Meeting recalled that a sister project, presented at GEAR 20-2019, complementary to the work planned under the HELCOM Data Flow Project was submitted to the EU CEF Telecom Committee call for proposals in 2019 and had recently passed the initial approval stage. Final decision on the proposal is expected in May 2020.

HELCOM Holistic Assessment Methodology Development Project (MetDev)

5.22 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 20-2019 invited the Secretariat and the relevant Expert Groups to prepare more specific information on identified gaps and development needs for the various assessment work strands not covered by the indicator work, namely the Cumulative Impacts assessment and the ESA work, as identified in the HOLAS II process or in subsequent work. GEAR 21-2019 agreed to continue the discussion in GEAR 22-2020 with the intention to develop a concrete proposal for how to take this work forward, building on the work done for indicators and dataflows, for consideration at HOD 58-2020.

5.23 The Meeting reviewed the draft project plan for HELCOM Holistic Assessment Methodology Development Project (HELCOM MetDev) noting that the content outlined in the document will evolve as the process develops and that the involvement of possible external partners in the project plan is provisional (**document 5-4 Rev.1**).

5.24 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to more clearly highlight in the text for WP2 of the project plan how the work and progress made under the BSAP UP SOM work could be utilized for the HOLAS III process.

5.25 The Meeting supported the proposal that clear links to relevant Working and Expert Groups be included in the project plan as well as plans for reporting on progress, review of work done and providing guidance.

5.26 The Meeting took note of the information by the EU on an ongoing project, initiated last year, on policy integration across Habitats and Birds Directives and the MSFD for marine species. The results of the project are envisaged to be available for the 2024 EU MSFD reporting.

5.27 The Meeting took note of the information by the EU of an ongoing initiative on further streamlining reporting for 2024 Article 8 MSFD reporting, including extending exporting of data to include results of the integrated assessments. Both OSPAR QSR and the HELCOM HOLAS reports are producing valuable information for EU MSFD reporting under Art. 8, thus the idea is to minimise the national efforts needed by EU countries by, where possible, using the already available regional assessments.

5.28 The Meeting agreed to continue the discussion on this topic at the upcoming CG MSFD meeting to be held on 4 June 2020.

5.29 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to prepare information on their national experiences in using HOLAS II information for national reporting under the EU MSFD Art.8 in 2018 to be shared and considered at the CG MSFD meeting.

5.30 The Meeting invited the EU to submit a document providing an outline of the EU suggested approach, reporting requirements etc. which can be used as a basis for further discussion at the CG MSFD in June 2020.

5.31 The Meeting agreed that, where relevant, considerations on the compatibility with EU reporting requirements should be included as part of the MetDev project. The Meeting invited the EU together with the Secretariat to begin the process by comparing the reporting prepared for the previous Article 8 reporting with regards to HOLAS II with the new reporting requirements in order to identify any gaps. Identified gaps can then be considered for inclusion on MetDev, or possibly HELCOM DataFlow.

5.32 The Meeting took note that the work packages under the MetDev project will also be presented to State and Conservation 12-2020 for review and input ([document 4J-6](#)).

5.33 The Meeting took note and endorsed that, in line with the supported plan for HOLAS III, the outline and aim of the HELCOM Holistic Assessment Methodology Development (MetDev) Project, including preliminary work package information, will be presented to HOD 58-2020 for information, with the intention that the full project plan be submitted to HOD 59-2020 for approval, enabling the work to start in early 2021.

MetDev Cumulative Impacts Assessment work package

5.34 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 21-2019 considered the proposals for further improvements of the cumulative impact assessment in HOLAS III ([document 5-5](#)) and concluded ([Outcome of GEAR 21-2019](#), para. 5.18 and 5.23) to include BSPI/BSII as part of HOLAS III, but in what capacity and format needs further discussions. The meeting agreed to organize a workshop focusing on how to tackle cumulative impacts assessment and ecosystem analysis in the Baltic Sea region proposed to be held on 23-24 April 2020.

5.35 The Meeting took note that HOD 57-2019 took note of the information that the proposed dates for the workshop on Cumulative Impacts Assessment and Ecosystem Analysis in the Baltic Sea Region (23-24 April 2020) overlap with the dates for PRESSURE 12-2020 and invited the Secretariat and the Gear group to consider alternative dates for the workshop, possibly back-to-back with an MSP workshop on cumulative impacts assessment currently being planned for autumn 2020 ([Outcome of HOD 57-2019](#), para. 4.35).

5.36 The Meeting took note of the draft Terms of Reference for the Cumulative Impacts Assessment and Ecosystem Analysis in the Baltic Sea Region Workshop (**document 5-5** and **Presentation 6**).

5.37 The Meeting acknowledged that there is a need to clarify and come to a shared understanding of what is meant by cumulative impacts.

5.38 The Meeting took note of the comments by the EU regarding the potential to use the cumulative pressures and impacts assessment data for indicator evaluations and whether the impact index, which is essentially a model, is validated.

5.39 The Meeting took note of the clarifications from the Secretariat as follows:

- a proposed definition of the term “cumulative impacts” could be included in the proposed questionnaire. The responses to the questionnaire, as well as the discussion at the workshop can function as important stepping stones towards a shared understanding of the term in HELCOM work;
- some of the data used for cumulative impact assessment is shared with the indicators, but the cumulative impacts assessment for HOLAS II also included data for activities (and subsequent pressures) for which no indicators are currently available. For ecosystem components distributional information is used, together with sensitivity scores;

- there is currently no validation of the cumulative impact results but the possibility of validation, as well as the practical approach of conducting such validation could be further discussed as part of the development process;
- due to the proposed alternative way forward, it is not foreseen that further work on the ToRs in their current format will take place. The content of the ToRs has been used when elaborating the new process and can be used to guide further work.

5.40 The Meeting reviewed the proposed alternative arrangements for taking the work on Cumulative Impacts Assessment forward (as outlined in presentation 6), taking into account the timelines for submission and approval to autumn Working Groups meetings and HOD 59-2020. The Meeting agreed on a three-step approach including a questionnaire, a scoping meeting and a technical workshop, as contained in the timeline in **Annex 3**. The indicated length of the scoping meeting and technical workshop are provisional and will be decided on based on the input received through the questionnaire and further discussions in the TG. Both events will likely be held in an online format.

5.41 The Meeting invited the Planning Team to consider the possibilities of preparing background documents to support the questionnaire as well as the scoping meeting.

[HELCOM Expert Network on Social and Economic Analyses \(EN ESA\)](#)

5.42 The Meeting recalled that GEAR 21-2019 considered the update of the roadmap for continued HELCOM work on ESA ([document 5-2](#)), and agreed in principle with the roadmap with the understanding that it will be revised based on the input from the meeting, including the addition of a timeline for the work ([Outcome of GEAR 21-2019](#), para. 5.33-5.35).

5.43 The Meeting took note that the [roadmap for continued HELCOM work on ESA](#) has been updated.

Agenda Item 6 Future work and meetings

[Next meeting of GEAR](#)

6.1 The Meeting noted that the next meeting of the GEAR WG will take place in Berlin, 9-11 November 2020.

6.2 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to consider their possibilities to host future meetings of the Group.

6.3 The Meeting agreed to hold GEAR 24-2021 on 18-20 May 2021 and GEAR 25-2021 on 8-10 November 2021.

[Any other business](#)

6.4 The Meeting took note of the progress within the BONUS ROSMARIE project to finalise in June 2020 (**document 6-2** and **Presentation 7**).

6.5 The Meeting took note of the invitation by the BONUS ROSMARIE project to provide input to the output of the project (Soile.M.Oinonen@ymparisto.fi).

6.6 The Meeting invited countries to check and update the List of Contact Addresses and Observers of HELCOM GEAR and inform the Secretariat (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi) by **5 May 2020 (document 6-1)**.

Agenda Item 7 Outcome of the Meeting

7.1 Meeting participants were provided with the draft Outcome of the Meeting by **30 April 2020**. Meeting participants were invited to provide comments to the draft Outcome by **6 May 2020 noon**. The Secretariat circulated an updated Outcome by close of business **7 May 2020** for tacit approval by close of business **8 May 2020**.

7.2 The final adopted Outcome of the Meeting was made available in the HELCOM Meeting Portal.