



Document title	Initial draft of a HELCOM Recommendation on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG)
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Background

The [Baltic Sea Action Plan](#) (BSAP) adopted in 2007 includes an agreement to raise awareness of the negative environmental and economic effects of marine litter in the marine environment, including effects of “ghost fishing” of lost or discarded fishing gear. The BSAP also encourages projects by local governments and communities to remove litter from the coastal and marine environment, such as beach clean-up operations, “Fishing for Litter” initiatives and local litter campaigns.

The HELCOM Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter ([HELCOM Recommendation 36/1](#)) enacts actions on abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) (e.g. RS 6, RS 7 and RS 10, RS 11 and RS 12).

This document provides a suggestion for a new HELCOM Recommendation on abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) including e.g. gear marking, designation of hot-spots, safety retrieval of fishing gear, processing and waste management in support of actions addressing ALDFG in the RAP ML. The recommendation can be drafted based on the experience gained, *i.a.*, through the MARELITT project and in view of FAO guidelines on gear marking.

This document has been also submitted to the Workshop on implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter ([document 5](#)), which will precede the Meeting. Suggestions by the Workshop regarding the new HELCOM Recommendation and provisional steps to develop it further will be provided to PRESSURE 7-2017.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to [note](#) of the information.

Initial draft of HELCOM Recommendation on abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG)

Introduction

This initial draft is organised following the common structure of HELCOM Recommendations. It is to be further elaborated in view of the feedback provided by the workshop.

Preamble section

This is an initial proposal which, based on the Preamble section of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, aims at pointing out the relevance of ALDFG as source of marine litter:

[THE COMMISSION,

RECALLING the 1992 Helsinki Convention and its Article 8 and the Annex IV on Prevention of pollution from ships, including Regulation 6 on Mandatory discharge of all wastes to a port reception facility,

RECALLING ALSO the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (2007) agreement to raise public awareness of the negative environmental and economic effects of marine litter in the marine environment, including effects of “ghost fishing” of lost or discarded fishing gear, and related HELCOM Recommendations, among others Recommendation 28E/10 on application of the No-special-fee system to ship-generated wastes and marine litter caught in fishing nets in the Baltic Sea Area,

RECALLING FURTHER the 2010 Ministerial Declaration with agreement to take further steps to identify sources of litter and encouragement the development of fishing gears and techniques to avoid negative impacts on the marine environment, and 2013 for further coherent action in addressing the pollution of the marine environment by litter, prevention and reduction of marine litter from land- and sea-based sources,

RECALLING ADDITIONALLY related agreed HELCOM actions to reduce litter input in the Baltic Sea environment, especially via Recommendations 10/5 concerning guidelines for the establishment of adequate reception facilities in ports (1989); 10/7 concerning general requirements for reception of wastes (1989); 19/14 concerning a harmonized system of fines in case a ship violates anti-pollution regulations (1998); 19/9 (supplemented by 22/1) concerning the installation of garbage retention appliances and toilet retention systems and standard connections for sewage on board fishing vessels, working vessels and pleasure craft (1998) and 31E/4 concerning proper handling of waste/landfilling (2010),

RECALLING FINALLY actions in the on Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter (HELCOM 36/1, 2015) addressing abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) (e.g. RS 6, RS 7 and RS 10, RS 11 and RS 12),

RECALLING the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and its obligations for States to protect and preserve the marine environment (Art 192) including to take measures to prevent, reduce and control pollution (Art 194) and related United Nations General Assembly Resolutions on Oceans and the Law of the Sea, recently Resolution A/RES/68/71 (2013) and earlier submissions,

RECALLING ALSO the London Convention 1972 and the 1996 Protocol thereto aiming to promote the effective control of all sources of marine pollution and to take all practicable steps to prevent pollution of the sea by dumping at sea of wastes and other matter generated on land,

RECALLING FURTHER the provisions on reporting of accidental loss or discharge of fishing gears that pose a significant threat to the environment under Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships,

RECALLING ADDITIONALLY that the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) expert workshop in 2014 identified ALDFG as one of the four main areas to be addressed in relation to sea-based sources of marine litter, urging for further action for the adoption of gear-marking systems (UNEP/CBD/MCB/EM/2014/3/2),

RECALLING FINALLY for those HELCOM countries being EU member, regulations of the European Union e.g. the Commission implementing regulation (EU) No 404/2011 of 8 April 2011 laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009 establishing a Community control system for

ensuring compliance with the rules of the Common Fisheries Policy in relation to marking fishing gear (Art. 8) and retrieval of lost gear (Art. 48); and relevant regulation of Russian Federation (to be elaborated).

ACKNOWLEDGING marine litter to be one of the eight contaminant categories of UNEP's Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Sources (GPA) as well as one of the key issues of the Regional Seas Programme (RSP) of UNEP,

BEING AWARE of estimations indicating that each year up to 10 thousand nets are lost or abandoned in the Baltic Sea (WWF Poland, 2011),

BEING ALSO AWARE that the lack of gear marking is one of a number of contributing factors to ALDFG where it can have both direct and indirect causal factors;

BEING CONCERNED of the harmful effects of ALDFG on the marine ecosystem such as continued catch of target and non-target species, entanglement of biota in ALDFG, ingestion by marine organisms, to damage and degradation of marine habitats; as well as on the human beings, including safety risks caused by marine litter such as entanglement of divers and of risk to navigation safety at sea,]

Recommendation section

Initial suggestions for this section are as follows:

[RECOMMENDS to the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

- a) marking fishing gear following best available techniques (BAT) and best environmental practice (BEP) as well as international developments,
- b) to organize systematic collection of information on lost fishing gear including reporting and surveying of the territorial water area to designate and map areas/sites where ALDFG accumulates (hot spots),
- c) the retrieval of ALDFG when they pose a threat to the environment and it is environmentally safe and economically feasible,
- d) the use of best available techniques (BAT) and best environmental practice (BEP) for a safe and sustainable retrieval of ALDFG,
- e) to assure environmentally safe utilization of the retrieved fishing gear preventing pollution or littering of the environment through promotion of ALDFG recycling,
- f) use of best available techniques (BAT) and best environmental practice (BEP) for a safe and sustainable disposal of the retrieved ALDFG,
- g) to establish national programs or other financial tools to support regular activities to minimize environmental impact caused by ALDFG,
- h) to enhance international cooperation including exchange information on the ALDFG hot spots, methods of their identification as well as technics and practices to retrieve and utilize ALDFG,
- i) reporting on their first activities taken to implement this Recommendation in 2021, and thereafter according to the agreed schedule, using an appropriate template to be developed,
- j) other issues as identified.]