



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Ninth Meeting of the Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area

PRESSURE 9-2018

Riga, Latvia, 10-12 October 2018

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### Background

HELCOM 39-2018 (5 March 2018) considered the contribution provided by OSPAR to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2018 and the proposal for further collaboration between OSPAR and HELCOM, *inter alia*, in the field of biodiversity, underwater noise, invasive species and marine litter as well as for emerging issues such as climate change and contamination by pharmaceuticals.

HELCOM 39-2018 welcomed the presentation by the OSPAR Commission and highlighted in particular the cooperation in the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. The Meeting further pointed out the collection of fisheries data from ICES and assessing potential impacts of fisheries on the marine environment as other examples of collaboration

GEAR 18-2018 took note of the OSPAR contribution to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting and possible areas of cooperation and welcomed the opportunity for closer cooperation with OSPAR and supported further exchanges on prioritizing and identifying topics cooperation would provide added value.

GEAR 18-2018 agreed to initiate a process of engaging HELCOM groups to further detail the practical way forward for cooperation with OSPAR on the issues mentioned in the OSPAR letter under the overall guidance by GEAR.

GEAR 18-2018 agreed that a letter thanking OSPAR for their contribution to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, expressing HELCOMs willingness to cooperate and providing information on steps taken within HELCOM towards future cooperation should be presented at the OSPAR Commission meeting taking place 25-29 June 2018.

HOD 54-2018 agreed on the response by HELCOM and the letter was submitted to OSPAR for their annual meeting in June 2018.

To support identifications of possible further cooperation with OSPAR all Working Groups are invited to, as part of the review of implementation of measures under Recommendations and the current BSAP, consider which of the actions could be suitable for cooperation. Wherever possible, the information should be divided into the ongoing/agreed cooperation and new needs/opportunities.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the letter by OSPAR (**Attachment 1**) and the reply by HELCOM (**Attachment 2**) and to discuss the need and possibilities for new areas of cooperation concomitantly with the review of the level of implementation of Recommendations as part of the BSAP update.



*Protecting and conserving the  
North-East Atlantic and its resources*

The Helsinki Commission

Chair of HELCOM – Ms Marianne Wenning

21 December 2017

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Dear Ms Wenning,

## HELCOM Ministerial Meeting, 6 March 2018

The OSPAR Commission (OSPAR) reiterates its support to HELCOM's continued commitments to contribute to global efforts for protection of the marine environment, healthy and productive oceans and seas and welcomes the possibility to submit views and suggestion on areas of further cooperation between HELCOM and OSPAR in preparation of the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in March 2018. OSPAR thanks the HELCOM Parties and in particular the EU, the current chair of HELCOM, for inviting representatives of OSPAR to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting.

HELCOM and OSPAR have a common vision of an ecosystem approach to managing human activities impacting on the marine environment as reflected by the joint adoption of the "Statement on the Ecosystem Approach to the Management of Human Activities" at the joint Ministerial Meeting held in Bremen in June 2003 (Annex 5 to the Report of the Joint Ministerial Meeting, 2003).

OSPAR congratulates HELCOM for the State of the Baltic Sea report HOLAS II and acknowledges the cooperation in relation to indicators that we have in common in both HOLAS II and the OSPAR Intermediate Assessment 2017.

OSPAR welcomes HELCOM's engagement in the global process of fulfilling the UN Sustainable Development Goals, especially goal 14 'Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development'.

HELCOM and OSPAR have collaborated closely on a wide range of topics for many years. The cooperation between HELCOM and OSPAR during the last 4 years has led to efficiency gains and in some cases is a prerequisite for effective measures. Among the efficiency gains are joint requests to ICES, joint work on indicators, sharing databases and jointly developing measures under both Conventions on the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. In the development of effective measures regarding invasive species, underwater noise and migratory birds, cooperation is an advantage.

OSPAR welcomes further discussions with HELCOM to identify new issues of common concern that will contribute to supporting the implementation of SDG 14 and in this regard welcomes further cooperation in existing work.

HELCOM and OSPAR also count on the particular role of some countries (Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden) that are Contracting Parties to both Conventions and have, from that position, contributed towards the enhancement of common knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, with the Kattegat the two Conventions share a particular transition area, where the North Sea and the Baltic Sea connect. It is in this transition area and the North Sea/Baltic Sea that the most opportunities for enhanced collaboration and cooperation exist.

Amongst a wider scope of opportunities for HELCOM and OSPAR to join efforts in the future, some of the steps already taken on specific areas of work can be further developed through cooperation at thematic, regional, European and global levels, along with opportunities for collaborative activities.

We would propose exploring further collaboration around the following topics/themes, in particular:

### **Biodiversity**

Our two regional seas are directly connected and there has always been an exchange of biota between the two Convention areas in particular OSPAR Region II. In the past, concrete proposals for cooperation on biodiversity indicators by making best use of synergies between the two RSCs, have been made as a result of the joint meeting of the HELCOM and OSPAR expert groups working on developing indicators in October 2014. Several strands of cooperation have been developed. Building upon these, future possibilities for successful cooperation could include increasing efficiency by developing compatible monitoring procedures and data management (e.g. at sea bird surveys) or sharing databases (e.g. seabirds, marine mammals) as well as assessment of by-catch of seabirds and marine mammals.

This could build on the common indicators by the OSPAR-HELCOM-ICES Joint Working Group on seabirds (JWGBird). HELCOM would also be welcomed to join the OSPAR Seabird database, hosted by ICES. OSPAR has also developed a marine mammal database, hosted by ICES, which could become of future interest to HELCOM.

Future collaboration on the two respective MPA networks presents an opportunity for exploring connectivity, coherence and effective management of MPAs. Potential cooperation between HELCOM and OSPAR on relevant species which both Conventions have listed as declining or threatened could also be explored.

Possibilities also arise for synergies and for future cooperation in relation to managing and assessing seafloor habitats in both Convention areas. These activities could build on continuation of making joint requests by HELCOM and OSPAR to ICES for the development of regionally comparable data products.

### **Environmental Impact of Human Activities**

OSPAR underlines the importance of joint and/or concerted action *i.a.* through regular informal meetings of Secretariats of European RSCs, on common aspects and synergies in the implementation of the respective Regional Action Plans on Marine Litter. OSPAR particularly proposes that the HELCOM and OSPAR Secretariats and the relevant task managers / RAP coordinators keep in contact in order to facilitate exchange and coordination in this important and developing field.

In relation to underwater noise continued sharing of information and methodological development as well as giving dedicated feedback on their respective agendas, is of relevance for harmonization and to avoid duplication of work. The jointly established registry on impulsive noise should be seen as an important first step for any further joint developments in this emerging issue.

Enhanced collaboration as regards knowledge and measures on invasive species could increase effectiveness and feasibility, in line with existing work on the jointly agreed regional recommendations concerning ballast water exchange. This joint HELCOM and OSPAR venture has continued within a dedicated joint expert group, which has resulted in joint harmonised procedure (JHP) covering all the necessary steps in granting exemptions under regulation A-4 of the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention.

### **Hazardous substances**

Following HELCOM's utilisation of OSPAR's contaminants assessment tool for processing the data reported to ICES, as endorsed by Contracting Parties in HELCOM, the development of a joint HELCOM and OSPAR platform to operationalise the calculation of hazardous substances indicators, is an example of collaborative work. OSPAR believes that this platform, along with a common methodology, will improve the potential for both independent and collaborative work and will facilitate comparability of evaluations in the neighbouring regions.

## **European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive**

OSPAR, HELCOM and the European Commission also assist those Contracting Parties that are EU Member States to deliver their commitments under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The most recent examples are the OSPAR's Intermediate Assessment 2017 (<https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/intermediate-assessment-2017/>) and HELCOM's HOLAS II (<http://stateofthebalticsea.helcom.fi/>) that can be used by Member States for reporting purposes under MSFD if they so wish.

An opportunity for closer cooperation between EU MS in the two regions is the future work on the EU Commission decision 2017/848/EU. This work directly links to ongoing cooperation regarding indicator development.

Furthermore, HELCOM and OSPAR could look into opportunities to develop synergies and improve cross-regional coherence in our work to support the assessments, target setting and monitoring programmes of Contracting Parties that are EU Member States.

### **Emerging and horizontal issues**

There are several emerging issues as well as more horizontal issues where HELCOM and OSPAR in future could explore synergies and efficiency for collaboration. One such issue is regional approaches to ecosystem based management as well as adaptation to climate change and ocean acidification

Another emerging issue is pharmaceuticals where HELCOM and OSPAR also could explore opportunities to share information, methodologies and data.

### **Global commitments**

In conclusion and bearing in mind OSPAR's example of good collaboration between Regional Sea Conventions, OSPAR will endeavour to collaborate with HELCOM, and to draw from each other's relevant experience and support our Contracting Parties on the implementation of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goal issues, addressing subjects of regional concern and common interest.

Yours sincerely



Laura Piriz  
Chair of OSPAR



19 June 2018

To: The OSPAR Commission  
Ms Laura Piriz  
Chair of OSPAR

Dear Ms Piriz,

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) would like to express its gratitude for the contribution by the OSPAR Commission to the HELCOM 2018 Brussels Ministerial Meeting organized under the EU Chairmanship in HELCOM. HELCOM would also like to reiterate its continued close cooperation with OSPAR, to support the shared commitments to contribute to global efforts for protection of the marine environment, healthy and productive oceans and seas.

HELCOM and OSPAR have a history of close collaboration, which has resulted in increased competence and efficiency in both organizations, especially as several topics of work in both organizations exhibit a strong intersection. HELCOM supports the topics for cooperation identified by OSPAR in your letter, as expressed in the adopted HELCOM Brussels Ministerial Declaration (Attachment 1).

The responsible Ministers and the EU Commissioner agreed to step up cooperation with other Regional Sea Conventions in our work to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations Agenda 2030. Furthermore, the Brussels Ministerial Meeting agreed to strengthen the fruitful cooperation with OSPAR on transboundary issues and common challenges to gain efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of SDGs - such as ballast water management and introduction of invasive alien species, the issue of underwater noise, micro-plastic, migratory birds, MPa network and management, and threatened and endangered species.

We are currently exploring potential avenues of collaboration for several of the mentioned topics. As an example, HELCOM is embarking on reviewing and further improving the HELCOM core indicators. A joint OSPAR-HELCOM workshop relating to indicator work within the two organizations, currently proposed to take place in spring 2019, is an excellent opportunity to investigate possible synergies and specific areas where cooperation could bring added value. This also concerns Commission Decision 2017/848/EU as far as Contracting Parties being EU member states are concerned. Similarly, and under the same topic, HELCOM has shown strong interest to join the planned OSPAR workshop on by-catch.

The Brussels Ministerial Meeting reached an agreement to strengthen the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and to update the Action Plan by 2021. A common thread to the decisions made at the Meeting were the SDGs. The countries around the Baltic Sea have previously agreed to use HELCOM as the regional arena for coordinating work on those SDGs that relate to marine and water issues.

Particular focus will be put on addressing those pressures that the "State of the Baltic Sea" report identified as most widely-distributed and harmful, including excess nutrients, contamination, invasive alien species, extraction of fish, underwater noise and physical disturbance of the seabed.

Furthermore, an analysis of sufficiency of measures to reach good environmental status is foreseen to play a major role to support the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan (Attachment 2 provides further details on the update).

HELCOM is looking forward to the continued close collaboration with OSPAR, which I am convinced will be of mutual benefit also in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Marianne Wenning  
HELCOM Chair