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<b>Agenda Item</b>	7 - Response on the shore and wildlife response
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## Background

The 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 14-2021) was held online on 9 February 2021. The Outcome of the Meeting is set out in the attachment to this document but matters of specific interest to the Response Working Group are also outlined below. The complete Outcome of the Meeting, including all Annexes can be found through this [link](#).

### Agenda Item 4 EWG OWR activities

4.7 The Meeting supported the extension of the Terms of Reference for EWG OWR to 2022-2023 (document 4-2). The Meeting discussed the proposal on simplifying the name of the Group and agreed to propose to RESPONSE 29-2021 that the name is changed to HELCOM Wildlife Response Group, abbreviated WILDLIFE.

The 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 18-2021) was cancelled due to only five Contracting Parties having registered to the Meeting. According to the decision by RESPONSE 27-2020, two thirds of the Contracting Parties (6 of 9) are to be registered to attend a EWG OWR meeting for the meeting to be held (c.f. Outcome of RESPONSE 27-2020, paragraph 8.3). A new date for the next meeting of the Group will be decided via correspondence.

## Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and make use of it as appropriate.



## Outcome of the 17th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 17-2021)

### Introduction

0.1 The 17th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response (EWG OWR 17-2021) was held as an online meeting on 9 February 2021. The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Hugo Nijkamp, Sea Alarm, Chair of EWG OWR.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by representatives from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany and Latvia, observers from Sea Alarm and WWF and the Vice-Chair of the Response Working Group as an invited guest. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

0.3 Ms. Laura Meski, Associate Professional Secretary, acted as secretary of the Meeting.

### **Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda**

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

### **Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from other HELCOM activities**

2.1 The Meeting took note of the Outcome of the 28th Meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group (RESPONSE 28-2020), which was held online on 3-5 November 2020 (document 2-1), particularly of the matters of specific interest to EWG OWR:

- the meeting adopted the annual EWG OWR report on oiled wildlife response activities and preparedness (cf. [document 8-3-Rev.1](#));
- the next meeting of the Response Working Group (RESPONSE 29-2021) will tentatively be held in end of September 2021.
- Mr. Bernt Stedt (Sweden) was elected as the Chair and Mr. Torben Iversen (Denmark) was elected as the as the Vice-chair of the Response Working Group (2021-2022).

2.2 The Meeting also took note that Mr. Jens Rauterberg (Germany) was elected as the Chair for the HELCOM Expert Coordination Network on Response on the Shore by SHORE Network 5-2021 held in January 2021.

2.3 The Meeting took note of the Outcomes of HELCOM 41-2020, HOD 58-2020 and HOD 59-2020 (document 2-2), particularly of the matters of specific interest to EWG OWR.

2.4 The Meeting also took note that the next HELCOM Ministerial Meeting will be held on 20 October 2021 in Lübeck, Germany. The updated Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) is envisaged to be adopted by the Ministerial Meeting alongside a number of documents to support the implementation of the BSAP.

2.5 The Meeting further took note that the draft revised HELCOM Response Manual, the draft Joint Inter-Regional Marine HNS Response Manual and revised HELCOM Recommendation 31E/6 on integrated wildlife response planning in the Baltic Sea area were approved by HOD 59-2020 with the view to adoption by HELCOM 42-2021 in March 2021.

2.6 The Meeting noted that the revised Recommendation 31E/6 and the updated chapter 7 on co-operation in oiled wildlife response in the updated Response Manual form a good basis for further work of EWG OWR together with the proposed new actions for the updated BSAP on 1) a framework for holistic/integrated management of marine pollution incidents, 2) risk analysis for oil and HNS pollution of the marine environment and 3) strengthening mutual assistance for oiled wildlife response.

2.7 The Meeting took note that BALEX 2021 will be hosted by Finland in end of August 2021 (week 34). The Initial Planning Conference was held online on 19 January 2021 and the Main Planning Conference will be held online on 17-18 March 2021. The on-shore response and oiled wildlife response exercise will take place on 23-24 August. Detailed planning will be done during the spring and summer. The tasks will be cleaning oil from shore (real oil on a test pool), OWR in bird cleaning containers – including SCAT at islands and transport logistics for the oiled birds from islands to the containers, shallow water response, logistics, and command and control.

2.8 The Meeting further took note of the information by WWF Finland on volunteers participating in the national shore exercise of BALEX 2021 where the main focus will be on search and rescue and SCAT. Involvement of EUROWA will be considered as well as the possibilities for observers to participate in the exercise. Financing of the national exercise is difficult due to the unsettled situation of OWR responsibilities in Finland.

2.9 The Meeting took note that Germany will host HELCOM BALEX 2022. Initial planning has started but not yet on including OWR. The Meeting invited Germany to keep the Group updated on integrated wildlife exercise opportunities when the planning evolves.

2.10 The Meeting also took note that the EUROWA-2 project has training and exercise possibilities that could be used for BALEX 2022.

### Agenda Item 3

#### Update and planning/preparedness in Contracting Parties

3.1 The Meeting took note of the following national OWR planning and preparedness activities which have taken place since the last meeting:

- Denmark: The update of the management for marine mammals is (close to) finished. A review of the OWR management plan is in the pipeline but has not yet started. A new date has not been set for the exercise which was to be held in April 2020 but was cancelled due to COVID-19.

The primary oiled wildlife response strategy in Denmark is field euthanasia but rehabilitation of wildlife can be considered in special cases when the responsible party (e.g. Shell) has the required equipment and resources.

- Estonia: The contract between the Ministry of Environment and the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) has been signed. Estonia will consider involving ELF in the work of EWG OWR.
- Finland: Discussions between the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Interior are ongoing for clarifying the responsibilities between the Borders Guard and the Finnish Environment Institute (Syke). A decision is expected in early autumn 2021.

WWF Finland will organize a virtual refresher course on OWR on 12 and 16 March 2021. The POSOW manual has been translated to Finnish. WWF Finland will participate in the OIL SPILL project webinar.

Germany: The common plan on OWR has been updated with practical issues. A OWR working group meeting was held in November 2020 with many new enthusiastic persons from ministries and agencies. The next meeting of the working group will be held in February 2021. Exercises has been organized in the form of table tops as COVID-19 situation prevents organizing other types of exercises. Interaction between NGOs, authorities and ministries is new in Germany. Germany will consider involving NGOs in the work of EWG OWR.

- Latvia: The national OWR plan is expected to be adopted by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development by the end of 2021. There has been no progress regarding involvement of NGOs.

- WWF Poland: There has been no authority activity on OWR. A meeting on OWR will be held in March 2021. WWF Poland has translated a responder manual to Polish which will be circulated to volunteers.

3.2 The Meeting discussed and shared experiences on effects of oil on seals and rehabilitation of oiled seals and invited Contracting Parties and Observers to share additional information with the Group.

3.3 The Meeting appreciated the information exchange between Contracting Parties and Observers and underlined the importance of having all Contracting Parties attending the meetings of EWG OWR.

#### **Agenda Item 4 EWG OWR activities**

4.1 The Meeting recalled that according to the Terms of Reference of EWG OWR the Group is to produce annual reports covering the OWR activities in the Contracting Parties using the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) and that the next EWG OWR report covering the OWR activities in 2021 is to be submitted to the Response Working Group meeting in spring 2022.

4.2 In preparation of the next EWG OWR report, the Meeting decided to update the authority responsibilities, NGO-authority relationships and equipment stockpiles tables (cf. EWG OWR Workspace) prior to the next meeting of the Group.

4.3 The Meeting discussed the proposal by Germany to include contact details in the authority responsibilities table but decided to use the existing contact details in the HELCOM Response Manual for formal communication in case of incidents. Contact details of the EWG OWR contacts are available in e.g. document 6-2 for informal communication.

4.4 The Meeting requested the Secretariat to include the link to the updated HELCOM Response Manual, when available, to the EWG OWR Workspace for easy access. EWG OWR could discuss how to improve the contact details in the response Manual concerning EWG OWR.

4.5 The Meeting took note that Sea Alarm is still looking into transitioning the Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) into an online format and agreed to discuss the practicalities further at the next meeting of the Group.

4.6 The Meeting took note of the update on the EUROWA-2 project in document 4-1, which lists issues of explicit interest for EWG OWR. Information on dates for courses and events within the project will be communicated to the Group when available.

4.7 The Meeting supported the extension of the Terms of Reference for EWG OWR to 2022-2023 (document 4-2). The Meeting discussed the proposal on simplifying the name of the Group and agreed to propose to RESPONSE 29-2021 that the name is changed to HELCOM Wildlife Response Group, abbreviated WILDLIFE.

#### **Agenda Item 5 Training and information activities to support work of EWG OWR**

5.1 The Meeting took note that the online EWG OWR seminar on euthanasia by Sea Alarm, which was planned for 19 January 2021 was postponed due the small number of registered participants.

5.2 The Meeting regretted that the seminar had to be postponed as the topic is of interest to many Contracting Parties and noted that the time for spreading the information on the seminar to relevant national contact points was short due to holiday season.

5.3 The Meeting agreed on a new date for the online seminar on euthanasia being 20 April 2021 and invited Sea Alarm to circulate the invitation as soon as possible to the EWG OWR contacts for the Contracting Parties and Observers to have time to distribute the invitation nationally. The seminar will also be open to participants outside the Baltic Sea if there is space.

5.4 The Meeting welcomed the offer by Denmark to provide a presentation on the Danish approach to mass euthanasia at one of the EWG OWR meetings if needed.

**Agenda Item 6**

**Any other business**

6.1 The Meeting took note of and confirmed the list of contact persons for EWG OWR (document 6-1). Contracting Parties are invited to inform the Secretariat ([laura.meski@helcom.fi](mailto:laura.meski@helcom.fi)) on changes to contact persons for the Group.

6.2 The Meeting reviewed the information pertaining to their national Sea Alarm Country Wildlife Response Profile (document 6-1) and invited the Contracting Parties to provide any updates to Sea Alarm ([nijkamp@sea-alarm.org](mailto:nijkamp@sea-alarm.org)) at the latest **by 23 February 2021**.

**Agenda Item 7**

**Next meeting**

7.1 The Meeting decided that the next meeting of the Group (EWG OWR 18-2021) will be held on 14 September 2021 as an online meeting.

**Agenda Item 8**

**Outcome of the Meeting**

8.1 The Meeting adopted the draft Outcome of the Meeting via correspondence.

8.2 The final Outcome of the Meeting has been finalized by the Secretariat and made available on the EWG OWR 17-2021 [Meeting Site](#) in the HELCOM Meeting Portal together with meeting documents considered during the Meeting.