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Agenda Item	1 - Adoption of the Agenda
Submission date	17.8.2018
Submitted by	Secretariat and Chair
Reference	SEAL 11-2017, Outcome Annex 4

Background

The 12th Meeting of the HELCOM *ad hoc* Seal Expert Group (SEAL 12-2018) will be held on 10-12 October 2018 in Tallinn, Estonia, at the premises of Estonian Ministry of the Environment (Narva mnt 7a, 15172 Tallinn).

The Meeting will be chaired by Mr. Anders Galatius, Chair of the *ad hoc* Seal expert group.

The Meeting will start on Wednesday, 10 October at 11.00 and will end on Friday, 12 October by 14.00.

The focal items of the Meeting are to review the activities of the Contracting Parties related to implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 27/28: 'Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea area', to follow up on work related to harbour porpoise, including the revision of HELCOM Recommendation 17/2, and to plan for continued work on indicators related to marine mammals.

Meeting documents will be submitted by the Secretariat to the [document library](#) of the [SEAL 12-2018 meeting site](#) via the [HELCOM Meeting Portal](#). The Secretariat has prepared [a document template](#) and recommends using the template when submitting documents to the Secretariat.

Those Meeting participants that wish to provide their contributions for the Meeting are requested to submit the documents in electronic format to Professional Secretary Ms. Jannica Haldin (jannica.haldin@helcom.fi). The Secretariat kindly requests the Contracting Parties and Observers to observe the deadlines for submission of documents to a HELCOM meeting. The basic documents and documents requiring action or a decision to the Meeting should be submitted **by 18 September 2018**. Bulky documents should include abstracts embodying the essence of the proposals and action requested from the meeting. Documents containing comments to the basic documents as well as information documents should be provided to the Secretariat by **3 October 2018**.

Please register for the Meeting by answering the [Participation Survey](#) in the HELCOM Meeting Portal by **3 October 2018**. Instructions for the use of the new Meeting Portal are available on the [HELCOM Website](#).

Provisional Annotated Agenda

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

The Meeting is invited to adopt the Provisional Agenda, as contained in document 1-1.

Agenda Item 2 Information by the Chair, Secretariat and Contracting Parties

The Secretariat will inform the Meeting of the outcomes of recent State and Conservation Working Group and Fish Group meetings as well as other relevant recent HELCOM meetings (document to be submitted later).

The Secretariat will inform the Meeting of the finalization of the State of the Baltic Sea report, published in July 2018.

The Chair and the Contracting Parties are invited to inform the Meeting of any relevant information.

The Meeting is invited to take note of the Terms of Reference for the Meeting agreed by SEAL 11-2017 and amended and endorsed by STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017 (document 2-1).

Agenda Item 3 Activities under the Seal Expert Group teams

The leaders of intersessional teams Mr. Ivar Jüssi for seal populations, Mr. Mart Jüssi for seal distribution (pending confirmation as the new team leader) and Ms. Ursula Siebert for seal health, are invited to present information on the recent activities of the teams.

Agenda Item 4 Management of marine mammals and human induced pressures

National management plans for marine mammals

SEAL 7-2013 started the work on harmonizing national management plans as required by the Recommendation 27-28/2 and 'Guidelines for seal management plans' were developed by SEAL 8-2014 (Annex 2 of the [Outcome](#)).

SEAL 9-2015 agreed to review any new or revised national management plans to assess the use of the guidelines and further agreed that Contracting Parties inform the Secretariat when new plans are adopted and make them available in advance of the annual HELCOM Seal meetings.

Information on the status of national management plans for marine mammals was updated by SEAL 11-2017, and a new column entitled 'hunting and regulation quotas' has been added, as included in document 4-1.

Contracting Parties are invited to review the information in the document and to inform the Secretariat (jannica.haldin@helcom.fi) on possible new or updated management plans as well as to update information on the current status of management plans for marine mammals and information on hunting and regulation quotas **by 18 September**.

Marine mammals-fisheries interaction

The Meeting is invited to note that FISH 8-2018 agreed to organize a HELCOM workshop on seals-fisheries interactions and emphasized that the workshop could provide an opportunity to discuss solutions, recognizing the different point of views on the topic and that it should be organized during 2019.

FISH 8-2018 welcomed the offer by Denmark to host the workshop and co-lead the preparatory work, and the offer by Poland to consider to be the second co-lead. The meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to inform the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi and markus.helavuori@helcom.fi) on their interest in taking part in the planning of the workshop.

Agenda Item 5 Monitoring, data collection and reporting

Database for seals

The Contracting Parties are invited to report 2017 data on seals via an excel template (document to be submitted at a later stage) to the Secretariat by **18 September** and the Meeting is invited to review the status of the database and reported data, to be presented by the Secretariat.

Registered mortality of marine mammals

The Seal Expert Group has agreed to annually update information on registered seal mortality.

Contracting Parties are invited to update the reported information, especially data for 2017 (document to be submitted later) and send it to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) by **18 September**.

In accordance with the ToRs for SEAL 12, Denmark is invited to report mortality data also from previous years from Kattegat by **18 September**.

The Meeting is invited to discuss harmonizing of the marine areas used by Contracting Parties when reporting mortality data.

Germany is invited to inform the Meeting on the progress within OSPAR and ASCOBANS to develop databases for collecting detailed data (including geographical information) of mortality, necropsies and dead bodies, and to propose how to harmonize the HELCOM data collection with these other activities.

Monitoring guidelines

Germany and Sweden are invited to present progress on further improving the guidelines for monitoring reproductive and nutritional status of marine mammals.

The Meeting is invited to take note that STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018 in principle endorsed the guidelines on seal abundance and distribution, noting that Denmark and Sweden will provide editorial comments to the guidelines to the Secretariat. After STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018, Germany has also provided comments on the guidelines. The Meeting is invited to agree on the updated guidelines (document to be submitted later).

Estonia is invited to inform the Meeting on the progress with updating the algorithm for submitting telemetry data, so that only aggregated data is presented in the HELCOM Map and Data service.

Agenda Item 6 Core indicators

The Secretariat would like to express their thanks for the collaborative work of the experts in finalizing the indicators used in the final State of the Baltic Sea report, and to inform that in July the indicators were released online.

The Secretariat will present general information on the current and future process on updating HELCOM core indicators (document to be submitted later). The Meeting is invited to provide information for the plan on the future development of the core indicators, and to plan their own current work on indicators accordingly.

GEAR 18-2018 discussed the policy needs and requirements related to the HELCOM indicators and the indicator project, and agreed to prepare a template for expert networks to fill in regarding the relevant

indicators for each group. The Meeting is invited to complete the template/questionnaire and submit it to the Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi) in readiness for GEAR 19-2018 (deadline to be confirmed).

‘Distribution of Baltic Seals’

This indicator report is available online and can generally be considered an operational indicator.

For future updates, and as part of the future work on indicator plans, the Meeting is invited to discuss the following items: clarity on data reporting and definition, clarity on indicator calculation, links between this indicator and others, further information and developments related to Limfjord population, terminology used to define aggregated assessment units, and the splitting of indicators into individual species.

‘Population trends and abundance of seals’

This indicator report is available online and can generally be considered an operational indicator.

For future updates, and as part of the future work on indicators plans, the Meeting is invited to discuss the following items: clarity on data reporting and definition, clarity on indicator calculation, links between this indicator and others, further information and developments related to Limfjord population, terminology used to define aggregated assessment units, and the splitting of indicators into individual species.

‘Nutritional status of seals’

This indicator remains relatively underdeveloped, though is operational and published online in its current form. Further data relevant to this have also been generated and provided to the Secretariat with the purpose of enabling further discussion on the next development stages.

The Meeting is invited to discuss approaches to further develop this indicator, where necessary taking into account the health group organization aspects and the planning for future indicator work process.

‘Reproductive status of seals’

This indicator remains relatively underdeveloped, though is operational and published online in its current form. Further data relevant to this has also been generated and provided to the Secretariat with the purpose of enabling further discussion on the next development stages.

The Meeting is invited to discuss approaches to further develop this indicator, where necessary taking into account the health group organization aspects and the planning for future indicator work process.

Sweden and Germany are invited to present the status of development of new indicators for the health status of seals and porpoises.

‘Harbour porpoise distribution and abundance’

STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018 took note of the correspondence with the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group (document 3N-3), as presented by the Secretariat, and welcomed the information on the willingness of the Jastarnia Group to review relevant new indicators on harbour porpoise as they become available and acknowledged that work on the harbour porpoise indicators is currently ongoing.

Mr. Sacha Viquerat, Germany, and Ms. Julia Carlström, Sweden, in cooperation with Denmark, Finland, Poland and Sweden are invited to present the status of work with developing the core indicator on ‘Harbour porpoise distribution and abundance’. The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and provide input to further developing the indicator report.

‘Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gears’

Mr. Sven Koschinski, Germany, in collaboration with Poland and Sweden and supported by the bycatch subgroup, is invited to inform the meeting of further work on the development of the pre-core indicator

'[Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gears](#)', as well as to inform on the related data discussions held by the HELCOM Fish and CG FISHDATA groups.

Agenda Item 7 Baltic Sea harbour porpoise

The Meeting is invited to review the status of the [HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database](#). The Contracting Parties are invited to report updates to the database by filling in the [reporting form](#) and sending it to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) by **18 September**.

STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017 considered and supported the proposed revision of HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on Protection of harbor porpoise in the Baltic Sea area for countries being also ASCOBANS parties, welcomed the offer of Poland to amend the Recommendation according to the proposal, for consideration of the meetings of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group in March 2018 and HELCOM SEAL 12-2018 before submitting it for endorsement to STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018 and subsequently for adoption by HODs and the annual Commission meeting in Spring 2019.

STATE & CONSERVATION 8-2018 welcomed the draft proposals for amendments of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbor porpoise (document 3N-5), as presented by Poland, and thanked Poland for initiating the process. The meeting revised and agreed on the Recommendation, as presented in document 3N-5-Rev.1.

Poland is invited to submit a proposal for revising Recommendation 17/2, and to report on the development of the reporting form for the Recommendation based on work done under ASCOBANS.

The Meeting is invited to review and update Recommendation 17/2 as needed.

Ms. Penina Blankett, Vice-chair of the ASCOBANS AC, is invited to report on activities related to Baltic Sea harbour porpoises under ASCOBANS AC and Ms. Ida Carlen, Chair of Jastarnia Group, is invited to report on activities of the Jastarnia Group.

Contracting Parties are invited to inform of any relevant national activities concerning harbour porpoise.

Agenda Item 8 Any other business

The Meeting is invited to agree on the Terms of Reference of the next meeting including main tasks and objectives as well as the arrangements of intersessional activities, to be submitted for endorsement by STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018.

The Meeting is invited to decide on the time and place of the next meeting of the group. The list of recent Seal Expert Group meeting hosts is included in document 8-1.

The Meeting is invited to consider any other business of relevance for the group.

Agenda Item 9 Outcome of the Meeting

A draft Outcome of the Meeting will be presented by the Secretariat for consideration and approval by the Meeting participants. The final Outcome, together with documents and presentations considered at the Meeting, will be made available on the [SEAL 12-2018 Meeting site](#) under [Meeting Documents](#) on the [HELCOM Meeting Portal](#).