



Draft Outcome of the Twelfth meeting of HELCOM Ad hoc Seal Expert Group (SEAL 12-2018)

Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the decision of SEAL 11-2017 (Outcome paragraph 9.8), the twelfth Meeting of the HELCOM *ad hoc* Seal Expert Group (SEAL 12-2018), was held on 10–12 October 2018 in Tallinn, Estonia, at the premises of Estonian Ministry of the Environment.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties except the EU. The Meeting was also attended by observers from Coalition Clean Baltic, Nordic Hunters Alliance, WWF, Pro Mare NGO, Baltic Ringed Seal foundation, Swedish Association for Hunting and Wildlife Management. The List of Participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Meeting was chaired by Ms. Line Anker Kyhn, Denmark, temporary Chair of the Seal expert group, Ms. Jannica Haldin, Professional Secretary, acted as secretary of the Meeting.

0.4 Ms. Eda Andersmaa welcomed the participants to Tallinn on behalf of the host Ministry of Environment.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda

Documents: 1-1, 1-2

1.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda as contained in document 1-1 and 1-2.

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

Documents: 2-1, 2-2, 2-3, 2-4, 2-5, 2-6

2.1 The Meeting took note of the Terms of Reference for the meeting, adopted by STATE & CONSERVATION 7-2017 (**document 2-1**).

2.2 The meeting took note of the Outcome of the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting including the adopted Declaration of the Ministers of the Environment of the Baltic Coastal Countries and the EU Environment Commissioner, HELCOM Brussels Declaration 2018 (**document 2-3**)

2.3 The Meeting took note of extracts from recent HELCOM meetings of relevance for Seal (**document 2-4**).

2.4 The Meeting took note of the State of the Baltic Sea report and its dedicated website, published in July 2018, including the information and results on marine mammals. The Meeting welcomed the finalization of the State of the Baltic Sea report (<http://stateofthebalticsea.helcom.fi>) and associated products.

2.5 The Meeting took note of the information on the outcome of CBD Regional Workshop to Facilitate the Description of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSA) in the Baltic Sea (**presentation 1**)

2.6 The Meeting took note of information regarding the update of the Baltic Sea Action Plan beyond 2021 as available in the BSAP update strategic plan (**cf. HOD 54-2018 document 3-4 Rev.2**).

2.7 The Meeting took note of the information on two upcoming international conferences on marine mammals in 2019: [5th conference on Marine Mammal Protected Areas](#) and the [2nd World Marine Mammal Science Conference](#).

2.8 The Meeting took note of the following information from the Contracting Parties:

- Germany: The first instance of a grey seal birth on the Baltic Sea coast of Germany in the last 100 years has been recorded. Further the German monitoring scheme for harbor porpoises is currently being revised from classical observation to digital observation. The first trial year has already ended and data is expected to be available soon.

Agenda Item 3 Activities under the Seal Expert Group teams

Documents: 3-1,

3.1 The Meeting took note of recent activities of intersessional team for seal populations by Mr. Ivar Jüssi as follows:

Grey seal population data for 2018 data has not yet been reported to the database. In Estonia 2018 monitoring provided very high numbers of individuals, due to optimal monitoring conditions. Russian data on grey seal was collected by plane for the first time and the survey resulted in twice the expected number of individuals. Swedish and Danish monitoring data is not yet available but will be reported before EG MAMA 13-2019 (c.f. outcome 8.6). Finland did not count grey seal in 2018, in line with the decision by the Finnish government presented in SEAL 11-2017. The Meeting regretted that there are no Finnish data, as gaps in the regional data cover impedes the drawing of conclusions on e.g. the rate of population growth.

Ringed seal population was monitored by Sweden in the Bothnian Bay and by Russia, Estonia and Finland for the southern areas of distribution in 2018. The data are available for the Gulf of Finland in **presentation 2**.

3.2 The Meeting took note of recent activities of intersessional team for seal distribution by Mr. Mart Jüssi.

3.3 The Meeting agreed on the need for more precise maps for seal distribution, in order to maximize the use of data on seal distribution on a sub-regional scale (e.g. in planning and management).

3.4 The Meeting supported that the work on collation of data on distribution of seals on a regional scale should continue and that it should build on the work of the BALSAM project, to ensure that HELCOM continue to function as a reliable platform to collate and access seal distribution data.

3.5 The Meeting concluded that the information on seal distribution currently available in the HELCOM Map and Data Services is from a limited number of telemetry devices only and needs to have a clear caveat stating that the current results and maps are only to be used for display purposes.

3.6 The Meeting took note of recent activities of intersessional team for seal health by Ms. Kristina Lehnert and the report of the HELCOM Seal health team 2017 (document 3-1).

3.7 The Meeting took note of the information by Sweden in relation to the further development of the indicators nutritional status and reproductive status that Sweden confirmed that the national indicator lead for seals is Sara Persson..

3.8 The Meeting welcomed the information by Germany that they are willing to lead the work on the development of the new health indicators and support Sweden in their activities in the Marine Mammal Health team. The Meeting agreed that a drafting group was established to plan the further work and presented the plan to the Meeting (as contained in Annex 3 in this Outcome).

3.9 The Meeting took note of the proposed plan and endorsed the proposal.

Agenda Item 4 Management of marine mammals and human induced pressures

Documents: 4-1, 4-2, 4-3

4.1 The Meeting took note of the concern by CCB with regards to German ship shock trials (document 4-2).

4.2 The Meeting took note of information by several group members that in general such trials, as well as other use of naval underwater explosives, are commonly conducted in areas where other explosives are regularly tested, to limit the impacted area. The naval forces often have a code of conduct for mitigating the impact of explosives (e.g. bubble curtains and use of harassment devices before explosion events).

4.3 The Meeting invited Germany to further explore how and what mitigation measures were used during the ship shock trials and report back to EG MAMA 13-2019.

4.4 The Meeting recommended that in general underwater explosion events organized by naval forces in the region (e.g. such as minesweeping) should always be coordinated with appointed local marine mammal expert to strive to minimize impact and support the use of mitigation measures.

National management plans for marine mammals

4.5 The Meeting took note of information on seal management plans in Finland (**presentation 4**). The Meeting expressed great interest in the work and the presented results of the national questionnaire.

4.6 The Meeting invited Finland to keep the EG MAMA informed of the efficiency and spatio-temporal effects of targeted removal of specialist grey seal individuals using ethical traps.

4.7 The Meeting discussed the general need to increase the confidence in data on by-catch of seals reported by the fisheries industry, as there are indications that such by-catch is severely under-reported. The Meeting concluded that an open dialogue with, and trust between, the stakeholders and managing authorities are considered vital to support the work.

4.8 The Meeting took note of clarification by Finland on the legislative background, and use of, compensations schemes and methods for assessing the magnitude of compensation.

4.9 The Meeting took note of the latest available information on the status of national management plans for marine mammals as updated by SEAL 11-2017 (**document 4-1, 4-1-Rev.1., 4-1-Rev.2., 4-1 Rev.3**)

4.10 The Meeting took note of the information that Sweden provided further information on hunting quotas for 2018.

4.11 The Meeting welcomed the information by Sweden that the harbor porpoise management plan is expected to be ready in the spring of 2019 and invited Sweden to update the information in document 4-1, and to present the work and the finalized plan at EG MAMA 13-2019.

4.12 The Meeting took note of the information by Denmark that the Danish seal management plan is currently under revision. The plan is expected to be ready by spring 2019. The Meeting invited Denmark to present the updated plan at EG MAMA 13-2019 and amend document 4-1 based on the updated information once it becomes available.

4.13 The Meeting took note of the information by Russia that there is no official management plan for the marine mammals in the Russian part of the Baltic Sea. Ringed and gray seals of the Baltic Sea are protected as a species of "Red data book of Russian Federation". Problems are caused by by-catch in fishing nets in areas where half of the population is located. The risks factors for seals in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland are increasing. From anthropogenic impact the risks are: increase of disturbance, by-catch, increase of traffic of large-capacity vessels, use of explosives and an oil disaster possibility. Another risk is warm winters with lack of ice and snow with increase of predation risk and disturbance. Plans for the 2019 are to make aerial survey of ringed and grey seals in the Gulf of Finland in collaboration with Estonia and Finland. A study of seal distribution using GSM tagging is ongoing to gather data on foraging areas and moving of seals in time when they are not on haul outs. Telemetry study of seals will be done in international collaboration with Estonian specialists. The work

with seals rehabilitation, survey of gray and ringed seals on haul outs and register of seals mortality will continue in the 2019.

Marine mammals-fisheries interaction

4.14 The Meeting took 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 to identified issues stemming from such interactions, recognizing the different point of views on the topic. The workshop is intended to take place during 2019.

4.15 The Meeting welcomed the information that Germany is interested in participating in the planning of the workshop.

4.16 The Meeting took note of the information that BaltFish are planning a symposium on seal-fisheries interactions in 2019.

4.17 The Meeting encouraged the Secretariat and Contracting Parties taking part in the planning to communicate with BaltFish in order to avoid overlap in content of the two initiatives and thus ensure maximizing the added value of the processes.

4.18 The Meeting took note of the clarification that the HELCOM OSPAR By-catch workshop is intended to work the more narrow scope of seal fisheries interactions of identified common issues related to development of indicators for by-catch.

4.19 The Meeting took note of the invitation and programme for fisheries conference in Simrishamn, Sweden (**document 4-3**) and welcomed the information that Swedish representatives of HELCOM SEAL EG intend to take part in the conference.

Agenda Item 5 Monitoring, data collection and reporting

Documents 2-2, 5-1, 5-2

5.1 The Meeting took note of information on 2018 aerial survey of ringed seals in the Russian part of the Gulf of Finland (**document 2-2**), as presented by Mr. Mikhail Verevkin. The ringed seal numbers are still very low with maximum of 113 individuals on ice for the whole Gulf of Finland. The Meeting noted and agreed with the comment by WWF that the results of only 100 seals is alarming as the survey conditions this year were very favorable.

5.2 The Meeting took note of information by Russia on the following national activities: studies are based on the personal activities of scientists and sponsor support. Telemetry studies have been done in 2017 and 2018. Russian ringed seals survey and telemetry studies were supported by company Nord Stream 2 AG. Possibility of aerial survey of ringed seals on haul outs in molting time after melt of is tested with the support from company "Rosterminalugol". The result of this work will help to understand a seal population trend in warm winters with the lack of ice. Seals rehabilitation, survey of gray and ringed seals on haul outs and registration of seal mortality was also performed in 2018. The seals on the haul outs are in the focus, there are good haul outs in the southern GOF near Kurgalsky peninsula.

5.3 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Mr. Markus Ahola, Sweden, on the monitoring methods, results and abundance indices of the three seals species found in the Baltic Sea (**presentation 5**), in line with the methods suggested in the monitoring guidelines for seal abundance and distribution (**document 5-2**).

5.4 The Meeting discussed the division of the sea areas used when summarizing and analyzing the monitoring results, as well as the possibility to compare data across countries. The Meeting further discussed the hypothesis that outliers in the ringed seal data from the Northern Baltic represent sub-adult individuals, and that the observations of these individuals indicate a significantly larger total population size than previously considered.

5.5 The Meeting requested that the spatial information on the seal haul out locations related to the monitoring be made available in the HELCOM Map and Data Services. The Meeting agreed that the haul out location are to be presented in the HELCOM Map and Data Services using a grid of 10x10km to diffuse the precision of the underlying data and using a disclaimer in the metadata explaining that the represents limited time period and should be used for illustrative purposes only. The spatial dataset/layers will be provided by Sweden to the Secretariat by 15 January 2019.

5.6 The Meeting discussed the need to analyze possible repercussions of using a biennial approach for monitoring and for the subsequent abundance analysis. The Meeting invited Sweden to re-run two versions of the power analysis for population trends done in 2007. The first should include all data which has become available since the last analysis; the second should use data from the period 2000-2018 but only use every second year of data to be run twice using consecutive years as starting point. Sweden is invited to present the progress of the analysis at EG MAMA 13-2019.

5.7 The Meeting considered the comments and amendments provided by Germany, Sweden and Denmark to the monitoring guidelines for seal abundance and distribution in the HELCOM area (**document 5-2, 5-2 Att.1., 5-2 Att.2.**).

5.8 The Meeting discussed the intention behind, and use of, HELCOM guidelines and agreed to move the information on national approaches to monitoring to an annex of the guidelines. The annex is to function as a living document and the Meeting agreed that CP's will be asked to review and, as needed, provide updates to the document prior to every EG MAMA meeting.

5.9 The Meeting agreed to finalize the text of the Guidelines in a drafting group consisting of Germany, Finland, Poland and Sweden. Due to time limitations in the meeting the results of the drafting process was presented to EG MAMA for intersessional comments and approval (**document 5-2 rev.1.**), with the intention that the approved version of the guidelines be submitted for endorsement by STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018.

5.10 The Meeting took note of the information that since SEAL 11-2017 no progress on improving the guidelines for monitoring reproductive and nutritional status of marine mammals has taken place. The Meeting noted that Sweden and Germany are working bilaterally to establish a plan to take the work forward and expect to be able to present further developed guidelines for EG MAMA 13-2019.

5.11 The Meeting took note of the presentation on final results of the Polish pilot monitoring program for marine mammals (**presentation 6**) by Mr. Michal Malinga, Poland. The Meeting welcomed the information that the recommendation is for standard national monitoring programs for harbor porpoise and grey seals to be established.

5.12 The Meeting took note of the presentation of results from a telemetry studies of ringed seal in the Gulf of Finland, as presented by Mr. Mart Jüssi, Estonia.

5.13 The Meeting took note of the information that the algorithm for submitting telemetry data does not currently need further updating and results in only aggregated data being presented in the HELCOM Map and Data service.

5.14 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to share information on and result of national telemetry tagging activities as a reoccurring agenda item and activity at the annual SEAL EG meeting.

5.15 The Meeting agreed to, initially on a case by case basis, supply telemetry data to the Secretariat be presented in the HELCOM Map and Data Services using the algorithm developed for this purpose, and that information on sample size and capture site be included in the metadata

5.16 The Meeting agreed that the information on telemetry data be presented with the disclaimer inserted in the map that the information is presented for visualization purposes only and clearly stating that empty (white) areas represent regions where no telemetry data has been recorded. These empty areas do not necessarily represent areas without seals. .

Database for seals

5.17 The Meeting took note of the current status of HELCOM Seal database (**Presentation 7**). The Meeting requested that in relation to future data calls regarding distributional data for marine mammals the request should clearly state what type of data is needed, at what level of precision, as well as how the data is intended to be used, stored and presented.

Registered mortality of marine mammals

5.18 The Meeting took note of the registered mortality numbers for Baltic marine mammals from years 2008 to 2017 (**document 5-1**).

5.19 The Meeting took note that further information has been submitted by Sweden (for 2017) and by Lithuania. In addition Germany will provide data for suspected by-catch in Mecklemburg Pre-Pommerania for the year 2017 and Russia will submit further complimenting data prior to EG MAMA 13-2019.

5.20 The Meeting agreed to change the content of the mortality category “stranding” to include information on both the total number of animals found stranded and the number of those animals which are suspected to have died as by-catch in fisheries, as contained in **document 5-1 rev.1**.

5.21 The Meeting took note of the progress of the joint effort by marine mammal researcher in the OSPAR, HELCOM and ASCOBANS regions, at the initiative of Germany, to develop a step wise working plan to combine and analyse necropsies data from the various national stranding networks in an international database, to support HELCOM, OSPAR and ASCOBANS commitments and the obligations by CP who are also EU member states under the MSFD. The Meeting supported the work and asked Germany to inform EG MAMA 13-2019 of any further progress.

5.22 The Meeting took note of information regarding a currently ongoing project by the Zoological Society of London, to develop a web access data portal for collecting detailed data (including geographical information) of mortality, necropsies and dead bodies.

Agenda Item 6 Core indicators

Documents: 6-1 Att. 1-12, 6-2

6.1 The Meeting took note that the core indicators were released online in July 2018. Secretariat thanked the experts for the collaborative work in finalizing the indicators used in the final State of the Baltic Sea report.

6.2 The Meeting took note of the information on future work on HELCOM indicators (**document 6-1**).

6.3 The Meeting took note that 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.

6.4 The Meeting took note that the questionnaire package has been uploaded to the meeting site document library as **document 6-1 att.2-8**.

6.5 The Meeting took note of the pre-filled content of the indicator questionnaire document as provided by the indicator leads. The Meeting discussed and amended the prefilled information as contained in **document 6-1 Att. 9-12 rev.1**. The Meeting took note of the information and it will be integrated into the future work on HELCOM indicator process.

6.6 The Meeting agreed that Sweden, as the indicator lead for the indicators on nutritional status and reproductive status, will fill in the respective indicator questionnaires and send them for review and comment to the Health Team, incorporate any suggested amendment and send the filled in questionnaire to the HELCOM Secretariat (owen.rowe@helcom.fi) by **31 January 2019** at the latest.

6.7 The Meeting took note of the information on progress in development of a marine mammal health, nutritional status and reproductive status indicator (**presentation 8**), as presented by Ms. Kristina Lehnert, Germany.

6.8 The Meeting agreed that the results presented are good indicators for the various topics. In some countries there are resource limitations and variation in monitoring methods across the region which may impede the operationalization of the suggested methods. Future guidelines for health indicators will outline best practices.

6.9 The Meeting noted the possibility i to further develop the proposed methods and to bring the information from an individual to a population level.

6.10 The Meeting agreed that further discussion on these topics should take place in the Health Team, preferably to begin during their first physical meeting.

6.11 The Meeting took note of the comment by CCB that they strongly encourage the Baltic Sea countries to explore the possibility to provide the funds needed to operationalize the health, reproductive and nutritional status indicators.

6.12 The Meeting took note of the information on progress on the harbor porpoise distribution and abundance indicator as presented by Sacha Viquerat, Germany (**presentation 9**). The Meeting welcomed the suggestion, and justification for, splitting the indicator into two and asked that this information be forwarded to State and Conservation 9-2018.

6.13 The Meeting agreed to form a Harbour Porpoise Team subgroup consisting of Mr. Sacha Viquerat, Germany, Mr. Michael Dähne, Germany, Ms. Julia Carlström, Sweden, Signe Sveegaard, Denmark, Iwona Pawliczka, Poland, Olli Loisa, Finland, and Ida Carlén, Chair of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group (in line with the correspondence between the HELCOM State and Conservation Working Group and ASCOBANS).

6.14 The Meeting discussed the need to coordinate and cooperate the national harbor porpoise monitoring in order to achieve the sufficient data quality for the indicators to provide regional results. The Meeting agreed that the need to harmonize national work on a regional scale and that clear structures for this needs to be developed, with the EG MAMA harbor porpoise subgroup functioning as the coordinating platform and the indicator leads as contact persons on the topic.

6.15 The Meeting took note of the information on the draft Terms of Reference for the Joint OSPAR/HELCOM workshop on development of incidental bycatch indicators (**document 6-2**) and asked that efforts should be made to find synergies, and possible cooperation, with the ACCOBAMS&ASCOBANS bycatch working group to avoid overlap.

Agenda Item 7 Baltic Sea harbour porpoise

Documents: 7-1, 7-2, 7-3, 7-4, 7-5

7.1 The Meeting took note of the status of the HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database (**document 7-4**). The Meeting took note that since the last meeting of SEAL EG, Poland has reported data on bycatch, incidental sightings and strandings from 2005 to 2018. Finland has reported on incidental sightings from 2000 to 2016. No other data has been received.

7.2 The Meeting took note that additional information for the database will be provided by Germany (incidental sightings) and Poland (monitoring program results) before EG MAMA 13-2019. Sweden has not reported for the last two years due to national database updates, but they hope to be able to report before EG MAMA 13-2019

7.3 The Meeting recalled that incidental sightings should be reported from the Baltic proper only.

7.4 The Meeting took note of the draft proposals for amendments of the HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 on protection of harbor porpoise.

7.5 The Meeting agreed to further update the text of the Recommendation in a drafting group consisting of Denmark, Finland, Germany, Poland, and Sweden. The Drafting Group agreed that the recommendation part should remain as it is in the actual valid version of the Rec. from 1996 (revised 2012), because the task given to the group was to update the Recommendation, not to revise it.

However, two technical changes should be made in the recommendation part and the changes that were made in the preamble should remain. The results of the drafting process was presented to the Meeting for approval (**document 7-1 rev.1**).

7.6 The Meeting agreed that changes to the recommendation part were outside of the mandate of the update process. This should be reported to State and Conservation 9-2018. The Meeting invited State and Conservation 9-2018 to consider the need for a revision of the recommendation and forward a respective proposal to the HODs, as some new developments such as the ASCOBANS Conservation Plan for the Harbour Porpoise Population in the Western Baltic, the Belt Sea and Kattegat and the MSFD for those Contracting Parties who are also EU Member States, and these should be recognized also in the recommendation part.

7.7 The Meeting approved the updated HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 as contained in **document 7-1 rev.1**, and agreed to submit it for consideration of STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018.

7.8 The Meeting took note of the list of Action Points agreed at the 24th ASCOBANS Advisory Committee Meeting, including information on the work under the [ACCOBAMS & ASCOBANS WG bycatch](#) and their work on by-catch thresholds. The Meeting further took note of the work on guidelines for evaluating causes of standings through necropsies, as well as that work is ongoing on updating the reporting formats in order to improve usability of the reported information (**document 7-3**).

7.9 The Meeting took note of further information on the mandate and working procedures of the Advisory Committee and invited Ms Ida Carlén, Chair of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group and Ms Penina Blankett, Chair of the ASCOBANS Advisory Committee to keep SEAL EG informed on the progress of work under action point 9 on cost benefit analyses and action point 12 on by-catch work.

7.10 The Meeting took note of the report from the 14th meeting of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group (**document 7-2, presentation 3**).

7.11 The Meeting took note of information by Germany that it has been confirmed by the German minister for the Environment that currently plans for a scientific follow up of the German PAL use are developed.

7.12 The Meeting welcomed the information that there is an initiative ongoing for a SAMBAH II project (intended to start in 2020). The Meeting noted the invitation for management authorities in the CPs to consider joining the potential project consortium.

7.13 The Meeting took note of the invitation to Contracting Parties by the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group to increasing the frequency of SCANS surveys to every six years to better align with MSFD reporting.

7.14 The Meeting took note of the list of nominated national contacts for updating the HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database (**document 7-5**). The Meeting noted that Denmark will provide updated information to the list before EG MAMA 13-2019.

7.15 The Meeting took note of the presentation on the BALHAB project results on the feeding behavior of harbor porpoises based on data collected during the SAMBAH project, as presented by , Ms Ida Carlen, CCB (**presentation 3**).

7.16 The Meeting took note of the national activities concerning harbour porpoise:

- Germany: Michael Dähne informed the meeting that the number of porpoise strandings along the Mecklemburg-Pre Pommeranian coast have been increasing in the last couple of years, but especially in 2018, and asked other CPs to provide information on if this is a local or a regional phenomenon. Poland and Denmark are unable confirm or deny this due to limited data.
- Finland: has continued the C-POD surveys in the Southern part of the Åland Sea and based on this information there seems to be a population spending the winters in the area. In general, incidental sightings have increased, the confidence in the sightings is however limited as this

increase is believed to partly be a result of increased awareness of harbor porpoise by the public.

- Sweden: has a program for reporting sightings and strandings but highlighted that sample collecting only take place for the very recent strandings to ensure high quality information.

Agenda Item 8 Any other business

Document: 8-1, 8-2

8.1 The Meeting took note of the list of recent Seal Expert Group meeting hosts (**document 8-1**).

8.2 The Meeting welcomed the offer by the Secretariat to host the next Meeting of the expert group at the HELCOM Secretariat in Helsinki, Finland, on the 24-26 September 2019.

8.3 The Meeting took note of the questions with regards to seal management discussions at upcoming joint BALTFISH/HELCOM meeting (**document 8-2**).

8.4 The Meeting took note of information by Sweden that there is an ongoing project screening seals and fish for nematode infections. The Meeting invited Sweden to present the results of the work in EG MAMA 13-2019.

8.5 The Meeting took note that there is no scientific evidence of grey seal population affecting other marine mammal populations negatively, however, there are publications and material available on aggressive behavior of grey seal towards other seal species and the Meeting invited CCB and Mr. Mart Jüssi to provide further information at EG MAMA 13-2019.

8.6 The Meeting agreed to change the name of the group to HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA), in line with the mandate and scope of the groups work. The Meeting further agreed to align the work within the group so that issues related to seals are considered under one session and harbor porpoises in one session, allowing for more focused work and expertise and to support further intersessional work.

8.7 The Meeting reviewed the ToRs for SEAL 12-2018 and drafted and agreed on draft ToRs for EG MAMA 13-2019 as contained in Annex 2 of this Outcome and endorsed their submission to State and Conservation 9-2018 for approval.

Agenda Item 9 Outcome of the Meeting

9.1 The Meeting adopted the draft outcome of the Meeting. The Outcome of the Meeting, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting are available in the [HELCOM Meeting Portal](#)

Annex 1 List of Participants

Name	HELCOM Contracting Party, Observer or other organization	Affiliation	Email address
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Annex 2 Draft Terms of Reference for EG MAMA 13-2019

The HELCOM Expert Group on Marine Mammals (EG MAMA) will during its 13th meeting, and in the intersessional period leading up to the meeting, do the following:

1. Indicators:
 - a. The health team will further develop existing, and start developing new, indicators for the health status of seals and porpoises.
 - b. Mr. Sacha Viquerat, Germany, and Ms. Julia Carlström, Sweden, Signe Sveegaard, Denmark and Iwona Pawliczka, Poland, and Olli Loisa, Finland, Ida Carlén (Chair of the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group) will continue the work on developing the indicator on 'Harbour porpoise distribution and abundance', splitting the indicator into two separate indicators, one on abundance and trends in abundance, and a second on distribution, and report to **EG MAMA 13-2019**.
 - c. Mr. Sven Koschinski, Germany, in collaboration with Poland and Sweden and supported by CG FishData and the planner joint HELCOM and OSPAR workshop on by-catch indicator development, will continue the work on the development of the indicator 'Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gears' and report to **EG MAMA 13-2019**.
2. Management plans:
 - a. Review current national management plans and their implementation in light of the Recommendation 27-28/2 as well as the management plan guidelines developed by SEAL 8-2014.
 - b. Review new and updated national management plans, to be circulated for discussion at **EG MAMA 13-2019**.
3. Database for abundance and distribution data on seals:
 - a. The Secretariat to present changes to the HELCOM Data and Information Strategy.
 - b. Countries to report on ongoing telemetry data initiatives to SEAL 13/2019 and consider presenting the results in the HELCOM Map and Data Services.
4. Monitoring guidelines:
 - a. The guidelines for monitoring reproductive and nutritional status of marine mammals will be further improved in cooperation between Germany, Sweden, Denmark and the health team **by EG MAMA 13-2019**.
5. Additional work on Baltic Sea harbour porpoise:
 - a. Information to the HELCOM/ASCOBANS database is to be updated by filling in the [reporting form](#) and sending it to the Secretariat (jannica.haldin@helcom.fi) **in advance of EG MAMA 13-2019**.
 - b. Nomination of national contacts for updating the HELCOM/ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database to be submitted to the Secretariat (jannica.haldin@helcom.fi).
 - c. Follow up on issues related to the update of Recommendation 17/2.
 - d. Review the situation with the reporting form for Recommendation 17/2 based on developments in State and Conservation 9/ 2018 and in ASCOBANS at **EG MAMA 13-2019**.
 - e. Ms. Penina Blankett, Vice-chair of the ASCOBANS AC to report on activities of ASCOBANS and Ms. Ida Carlén, Chair of Jastarnia Group, to report on activities of the Jastarnia Group at **EG MAMA 13-2019**.
9. Registered mortality of marine mammals
 - a. Denmark to report mortality data from previous years from Kattegat **in advance of EG MAMA 13-2019**.
 - b. All Contracting Parties to provide data on the mortality of marine mammals for year 2018 **in advance of EG MAMA 13-2019**.
 - c. Germany, to inform **EG MAMA 13-2019** 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 initiatives.
10. Marine mammals - fisheries interaction:

- a. Present outcome and results from the various seal/fisheries interaction initiatives taking place in 2019, CCB to present from the BaltFish symposium and the Secretariat to present the result of the HELCOM workshop on seal fisheries interactions.
 - b. Continue discussion on the interactions between mammals and fisheries in cooperation with the HELCOM Fish group.
 - c. Present progress from the ASCOBANS&ACCOBAMS working group on bycatch.
11. Intersessional activities of the teams
- a. The seal health team is requested to inform on their intersessional activities **at EG MAMA 13-2019.**
 - b. The seal distribution team is requested to inform on their intersessional activities **at EG MAMA 13-2019.**
 - c. The seal population team is requested to inform on their intersessional activities **at EG MAMA 13-2019.**
 - d. The harbor porpoise team is requested to inform of their intersessional activities **at EG MAMA 13-2019.**

Annex 3: Outcome of the Drafting Group of the SEAL EG Health Team

Participants:

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The DG discussed future work of the Health team (within the Seal Group) and it should include:

1. the further development of existing core indicators “Reproductive Status of Seals” and “Nutritional Status of Seals”, in particular to make them operational for all countries
2. work on new indicators on health status of marine mammals. The long term aim is to develop health indicators for all marine mammals (grey seal, harbor seal, ringed seal and harbor porpoise).
3. Complete/fill the questionnaire related to indicators
4. Complete/develop monitoring guidelines for marine mammal indicators.

To fulfill these tasks a strategy is needed which includes a work programme with an agreed time line.

Such a strategy should be developed in a face to face meeting in early 2019 and the outcome presented to HELCOM S&C 10 in May 2019. The following meetings can be conducted online.

It was agreed that Sweden should lead future work on the already existing indicators and Germany should lead the new health indicator. The leads are responsible for the preparation of the face to face meeting (*this needs to be confirmed*).

The HELCOM secretariat is invited to join this first meeting in order to explain for what HELCOM requires indicators and to give advice on requested core content.

It is important that all indicators are easily operational, comparable, cost effective, reflect the environmental status of the Baltic Sea and threshold values for the GES can be developed.