



Document Title	Provisional Annotated Agenda
Code	1-1
Category	CMNT
Agenda Item	1 - Adoption of the Agenda
Submission date	17.9.2014
Submitted by	Secretariat
Reference	Outcome of HELCOM SEAL 7-2014 (Paragraph 8.3.)

Background

The Eighth Meeting of the *ad hoc* HELCOM Seal Expert Group (HELCOM SEAL 8-2014) will be held in Turku, Finland, on 21-23 October 2014.

The Meeting will start at **10.00 on 21 October 2014** and will finish by **16.00 on 23 October 2014**. The Meeting will be held at the conference centre of Ruissalo Spa Hotel (Ruissalon puistotie 640, 20100 Turku).

The general objective of the Meeting is to review the activities of the Contracting Parties related to the implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 27/28: Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea area. Additionally, based on the discussion during HELCOM SEAL 7-2014 (paragraph 8.3 of the Outcome of the meeting), the more specific objectives of the Meeting are to discuss the by-catch of marine mammals and cooperation with other relevant actors and to consider the HELCOM marine mammal core indicators and their updating on a regular basis.

The Meeting will be chaired by Mr. Anders Galatius, Denmark.

Those participants that wish to provide their contributions for the Meeting are requested to submit the documents in electronic format to Assisting Professional Secretary Ms. Petra Kääriä (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) **at the latest by 29 September 2014**.

Documents for the Meeting will be made available in the new [HELCOM Meeting Portal](#). Please find [here instructions](#) for signing up as a *first time user* of the new Meeting Portal. The participants are kindly invited to sign up to the new Meeting Portal at their earliest convenience. Once you have signed up to the Meeting Portal, the Secretariat will need to grant you separate permission to access the restricted meeting document library on the [SEAL 8-2014 Meeting Site](#). After signing up, the participants are kindly requested to sign in and register to the Meeting by answering the [Participation Survey](#) not later than **14 October 2014**.

Agenda Item 1 Adoption of Agenda

The Meeting is invited to adopt the Agenda (document 1-1).

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

The Chair is invited to inform the Meeting of any relevant information.

The Secretariat will inform the Meeting of outcomes of recent HELCOM meetings relevant for the group (document to be submitted later on).

HELCOM SEAL 7-2013 agreed that results from various projects regarding seals, once finished, should be reported to the SEAL group. The Contracting Parties are invited to inform of their activities, e.g. projects related to protection of seals as well as fisheries and seals interactions and management related issues.

The Meeting is invited to note the invitation by HELCOM FISH/ENV Forum 10-2014 for Latvia to attend the Meeting of SEAL 8-2014, noting the concerns of fisheries sector in Latvia on seals-fisheries interactions.

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Agenda Item 3 Progress with National Management Plans

HELCOM SEAL 7-2013 agreed that improved practices for harmonization of management plans within the Baltic Sea region should be employed and agreed to set up an ad hoc sub-group with the tasks to intersessionally review summaries of draft or existing national management plans and to provide comments on them from the point of view of promoting regional harmonization and submit a summary report to HELCOM HABITAT 16-2014. The report (document 3-1 to this Meeting) was submitted to HELCOM HABITAT 16-2014 with the conclusion that the English summaries of the management plans need to be more comprehensive or the future evaluation should be based on the full management plans to allow for a thorough review. The future review/evaluation should also await the publication of management plans from Estonia and Poland that are currently being developed.

The summary report on management plans is based on the document including the status of national seal management plans (document 3-2) which was last updated in February 2014.

The Meeting is invited to update the information regarding national seal management plans by amending document 3-2 and sending it to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) preferably before the Meeting.

The Meeting is further invited to take note of the report produced by the sub-group (document 3-1) and discuss producing the seal management plans in English to facilitate a future review and harmonization of the plans, as well as to further the work on the implementation of the Recommendation 27-28/2 Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea, as requested by HABITAT 16-2014.

Agenda Item 4 Monitoring of seals

HELCOM SEAL 7-2013 agreed to use the updated HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy in planning of the work of HELCOM SEAL in such a way that the activities are in line with the Strategy.

The Meeting will be informed of the latest developments of the HELCOM projects BALSAM and MORE regarding seals and marine mammals.

The Meeting is invited to endorse the guidelines on monitoring of seals developed through the BALSAM project WP3 Seals and seabirds, as well as discuss the upcoming deliverables, including the common database for seal monitoring data and integrated distribution data from available telemetry studies of seals.

Agenda Item 5 Assessment of seals

The team leader on the distribution of seals, Mr. Olle Karlsson, is invited to report on the activities of the intersessional team.

The team leader on seal populations, Mr. Markus Ahola, Finland, is invited to present information on its intersessional activities.

The health team leader, Ms. Ursula Siebert, is invited to present the current and the desired level of data flow for all seal species for the pregnancy rate and nutritional status core indicators as well as any other aspects of the intersessional work of the team.

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and agree as appropriate.

Core indicators for marine mammals

The Meeting will be updated on the HELCOM work regarding core indicators for marine mammals by the experts nominated as Task Managers in CORESET II (document to be submitted at a later stage).

HELCOM SEAL 7-2013 discussed and agreed on the work flow and deadlines for up-dating the operational core indicators in the long term as follows:

- most recent available data from Contracting Parties to be reported to the team leader (and ultimately when available, through e.g. BALSAM project, to a common database) by **March each year**,
- data to be analyzed, necessary graphs updated and text of the core indicator report amended by the **end of August each year** with the view that there will be a submission of proposals for updates to the four marine mammal core indicators to HELCOM SEAL by **mid-September**, and
- annual HELCOM SEAL meeting in October to consider the updates and agree on publishing the updated core indicator reports.

HELCOM SEAL 7-2013 considered the necessity for harbor porpoise to be included in the core indicator for nutritional status of seals. Ms. Iwona Pawliczka is invited to report on the issues of data and methodology available to consider including the harbor porpoise in the nutritional status core indicator (paragraph 5.28 of the outcome of HELCOM SEAL 7).

The Meeting is invited to review the work related to the operationalization of the core indicators, consider updates to the core indicators and discuss how the group will support the process of and the long-term up-dating.

The Meeting is invited to consider the information and agree as appropriate.

Agenda Item 6 Human induced pressures and management of marine mammals

HELCOM SEAL has agreed to annually update the information on human induced mortality of seals. The information made available by the Contracting Parties is contained in document 6-1.

The Meeting is invited to review the existing information and provide updates, especially for year 2013 to the table on human-induced mortality of seals containing information on deliberate killings and numbers of hunted, by-caught and stranded animals.

Regarding the human induced mortality tables, HELCOM SEAL 7-2013 stated that the figures on by-catch included in the tables are far smaller than the actual numbers and expressed doubt as to the usefulness of compiling information on by-catch in the way it is currently done. The Meeting was of the opinion that the Group should step up its work on the issue of by-catch.

SEAL 7-2013 agreed to form a by-catch sub-group for marine mammals and welcomed the willingness of Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland, Mr. Karl Lundström, Sweden, and Mr. Krzysztof Skora, Poland, to take part in the group. The sub-group is invited to prepare a presentation and proposals on by-catch for HELCOM SEAL 8-2014 and how to enhance the cooperation of HELCOM SEAL with ICES EGBYC, including also the ASCOBANS Jastarnia Group in these endeavours.

The Meeting is invited to take note of the report and further discuss by-catch issues of marine mammals as well as consider including data to the core-indicator “Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear”.

Sweden is invited to report the results of the project on fisheries and seals interactions and human impacts on seals (paragraph 6.17 of the Outcome of SEAL 7).

The Contracting Parties are invited to report on current activities on monitoring of by-catch in the countries and on mitigation measures for by-catch and seal damage.

Agenda Item 7 Work on Baltic Sea harbour porpoise

HELCOM SEAL 4/2010 agreed to review the status of the [HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database](#) in each future meeting of HELCOM SEAL. The meeting also agreed to include static acoustic monitoring data and other observations of harbour porpoises as that data is made available to the Secretariat. Further, the meeting agreed that any updates to the harbour porpoise database should be reported to the Secretariat.

The Contracting Parties are invited to report updates to the harbour porpoise database by filling in the [reporting form](#) and sending it to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) and also to inform the Meeting of any updates.

Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland is invited to report on activities related to Baltic Sea harbour porpoises under ASCOBANS and the Jastarnia Plan.

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

The Meeting is invited to take note of an information leaflet on Baltic Sea harbor porpoise produced by CCB (document 7-1).

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information and consider how HELCOM SEAL can contribute to further activities on the protection of the harbor porpoises.

Agenda Item 8 Any other business

The Meeting is invited to consider any other business.

The Meeting is invited to consider and decide on the time and place of the next meeting of the Group, main objectives of the Meeting, as well as the arrangements of intersessional activities.

Agenda Item 9 Outcome of the Meeting

The draft outcome of the Meeting will be presented by the Secretariat for the consideration and approval at the end of the Meeting. The final outcome, documents provided for the Meeting as well as presentations given at the Meeting will be made available on the [SEAL 8-2014 Meeting site](#) under [Meeting Documents](#) on the [HELCOM Meeting Portal](#).