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<b>Document Title</b>	Provisional Annotated Agenda
<b>Code</b>	1-2
<b>Category</b>	CMNT
<b>Agenda Item</b>	1 - Adoption of the Agenda
<b>Submission date</b>	21.10.2015
<b>Submitted by</b>	Secretariat
<b>Reference</b>	SEAL 8-2015 (Outcome, Paragraph 8.2)

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## Background

The Ninth Meeting of the *ad hoc* HELCOM Seal Expert Group (HELCOM SEAL 9-2015) will be held in Berlin, Germany, at the premises of Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety (Stresemannstraße 128 – 130, 10117 Berlin) on 2-4 December 2015. The Meeting will be chaired by Mr. Anders Galatius, Chair of the ad hoc Seal Expert Group.

The Meeting will start at **10.00 on 2 December 2015** and will finish by **16.00 on 4 December 2015**.

The general objective of the Meeting is to review the activities of the Contracting Parties related to implementation of HELCOM Recommendation 27/28: Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea area. The more specific objective of the Meeting is to consider the further development HELCOM marine mammal core indicators and their updating on a regular basis, including needs for data arrangements.

Meeting documents will be submitted by the Secretariat to the [Document Library](#) of the [SEAL 9-2015 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. 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 in electronic form to Assisting Professional Secretary Ms. Petra Kääriä ([petra.kaaria@helcom.fi](mailto:petra.kaaria@helcom.fi)) **by 10 November 2015**. 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 **25 November 2015**.

Please register for the Meeting by answering the [Participation Survey](#) in the HELCOM Meeting Portal **by 25 November 2015 the latest**. Instructions for the use of the new Meeting Portal are available on the [HELCOM Website](#).

**Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda**

The Meeting is invited to adopt the Agenda (documents 1-1 and 1-2).

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

The Secretariat will inform the Meeting of the outcome of Fish 3-2015, and other relevant recent meeting outcomes (document to be submitted later).

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

**Agenda Item 3 Progress with national management plans**

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](#)). The Meeting is invited to consider revising the national seal management plans according to the new guidelines and agree on the timetable for the revision.

Contracting Parties are invited to update information on the current status of management plans (document 3-1) and to submit updates to the Secretariat ([petra.kaarja@helcom.fi](mailto:petra.kaarja@helcom.fi)) by **25 November 2015**.

**Agenda Item 4 Limit reference level for harbour seals**

Seal 8-2014 stated that the 10 000 limit reference level does not apply to harbour seals because of the more complicated population structure compared to other seal species as well as influx migration from other areas. The meeting agreed to start work to define a different LRL for harbour seals as compared to the other Baltic seal species.

The Meeting is invited to define a new LRL for harbour seals.

**Agenda Item 5 Monitoring and data collection**

Within the Baltic Sea Pilot Project 'Testing new concepts for integrated environmental monitoring of the Baltic Sea (BALSAM)' (2013-2015) WP3, information on abundance of grey, harbour and ringed seals was gathered by the Expert Group based on counted seals. The data is available on the [HELCOM Website](#). Seal 8-2014 agreed that the abundance data should be updated by the Seal Group annually as new results become available.

A process to further develop the database for seals will be carried out in the BalticBOOST project under the work package 'WP1.2 Database and data arrangements for coastal fish, birds and seals'. The WP will investigate if current data formats need to be revised or if transformation services are needed in order to be in compliance with international level standards, taking into account existing data formats and the need to fulfil the data requirements for the relevant HELCOM core indicators. The WP will recommend permanent data flow arrangements to enable regular and timely reporting for HELCOM assessment purposes.

The Meeting is invited to discuss the future data reporting to the database and guide the work on further development of the seal database in the BalticBOOST project.

State and Conservation Working Group is reviewing the current HELCOM monitoring guidelines and harmonizing their outline. The Meeting will be informed of the outcome of the review process and possible needs to adjust the outline of the Guidelines on seal monitoring.

**Agenda Item 6 Core indicators and other activities under the Seal Expert Group teams*****Marine mammal core indicators***

In June 2015, the [HELCOM HoD 48-2015](#) meeting agreed on new GES-boundaries for core indicators and a shift in category from candidate to pre-core indicators (paragraphs 3.63-3.67). HOD 48-2015

agreed that further indicator development in HELCOM (documents 3-13 and 3-21) will be based on a Lead Country approach, and Contracting Parties were invited to inform on their willingness to take on the Lead or co-Lead in the continued indicator development and to appoint national experts.

The HOD 48-2015 meeting also requested all HELCOM groups, projects and networks to act as platforms for discussing and reviewing the development of the indicators carried out by Lead and co-Lead countries and also to provide support for HELCOM assessments and to make arrangements for the work as necessary (paragraphs 3.65).

The Meeting will be informed on the arrangements for continued development of indicators and the longer-term needs for regular updates of indicators and data needs for the 2<sup>nd</sup> HELCOM Holistic assessment that will be finalized in mid-2018 (document to be submitted later) and to which the Seal expert group is anticipated to contribute.

The Lead Country representatives, Mr. Tero Härkönen and Mr. Markus Ahola, are invited to present further work related to the core indicator *'Population trends and abundance of seals'*.

The Lead Country representative Mr. Tero Härkönen and Ms. Karin Hårding, are invited to present further work on the core indicators *'Nutritional status of marine mammals'* and *'Reproductive status of marine mammals'*.

The Lead Country representative Mr. Markus Ahola is invited to present further development work on the core indicator *'Distribution of Baltic Seals'*, especially regarding further development on the definition of GES for ringed seal.

The Co-Lead Country representatives, Mr. Anders Galatius and Ms. Penina Blankett, are invited to present further work on the candidate indicator *'Harbour porpoise distribution and abundance'*, recognizing that indicator targets and assessment protocols must be adopted by HELCOM Heads of Delegation in December 2016 in order to be fully included in the second holistic assessment.

The Meeting is invited to consider the development and updates to the HELCOM core indicator *'Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear'* as well as the possible candidate indicator *'Seal pup weight at weaning'*, as proposed by Seal 8-2015 (Outcome of Seal 8-2014, paragraph 5.18).

#### **Work under the intersessional teams**

The leaders of intersessional teams Mr. Markus Ahola for seal populations, Mr. Olle Karlsson for seal distribution and Ms. Ursula Siebert for seal health, are invited to present information on the recent activities of the teams.

#### **Agenda Item 7 Work on Baltic Sea harbour porpoise**

The Meeting is invited to review the status of the [HELCOM-ASCOBANS harbour porpoise database](#) (as agreed by Seal 4-2010). Country-wise information on reporting gaps and last reporting years is available on document 7-1. 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](mailto:petra.kaaria@helcom.fi)).

Ms. Ursula Siebert and Ms. Iwona Pawliczka are invited to present a suggestion for a format for acoustic data, to be included in the current reporting form for the database.

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

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

**Agenda Item 8 Human induced pressures and management of marine mammals**

The seal expert group has agreed to annually update information on registered seal mortality. The information made available by Contracting Parties is contained in document 8-1.

The Meeting is invited to review the existing information and provide updates, especially for year 2014.

The by-catch subgroup for marine mammals, established by Seal 7-2013, is invited to present its recent activities regarding bycatch, including a report on the current state of knowledge and possible actions to obtain further information on by-catch including ongoing and future initiatives in different countries, as well as establishing communication and cooperation with the HELCOM Fish Group, as agreed by Seal 8-2014.

**Agenda Item 9 Evaluation of Recommendation 27-28/2**

State and Conservation 2-2015 recalled that the effectiveness of the Recommendation 27/28-2 *Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea Area* should be assessed every 5 years, next time in 2016. The meeting recommended that this issue should be addressed at the SEAL 9 meeting in autumn 2015 and that the group should be requested to provide input for such assessment. The Seal expert group was also requested to evaluate if it currently follows-up the Recommendation as a whole or if complementary reporting is required.

The Meeting is invited to plan the 2016 assessment of the Recommendation and to consider whether the Recommendation is currently being sufficiently followed-up by the expert group.

**Agenda Item 10 Any other business*****BalticBOOST pilot study on comparing MSFD and HD criteria***

HELCOM EU Member States provide assessments of the state of the Baltic Sea seal species based largely on the same monitoring data for BSAP and MSFD purposes of assessing GES, as well as for assessing the Favourable Conservation Status (FCS) under the Habitats Directive (HD). Ongoing work on developing HELCOM core indicators for assessing GES has identified marine mammals as a good case study for streamlining the reporting and aligning the assessments for the mentioned legislative needs. A work package of the EU financed HELCOM coordinated BalticBOOST project will carry out a pilot study to evaluate the possibility to align the HD and MSFD assessments regarding seal abundance and distribution.

The Meeting will be informed on the intended study and is invited provide guidance to its development.

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

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 11 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 9-2014 Meeting site](#) under [Meeting Documents](#) on the [HELCOM Meeting Portal](#).