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Agenda Item	7J – Progress of relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects
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Submitted by	EN-HZ co-Chairs
Reference	

Background

The HELCOM Expert Network on Hazardous Substances (EN-HZ) held their 10th meeting on 4-5 April 2019 at the Headquarters of ICES, Copenhagen. The meeting addressed a wide range of issues, but two major topics were the focus of discussion: developments to date of the automated indicator evaluation system and developing the workplan and timeline to accompany the group's Terms of Reference (see separate document 7J-5). A number of related issues or questions were also raised including those that may require clarification in the future, particularly related to the role or interaction of EN-HZ. The full outcome of the meeting and documents are available at the meeting site – [EN-HZ 10-2019](#).

The group nominated and unanimously elected new co-Chairs from Germany (Berit Brockmeyer) and Finland (Jaakko Mannio), and thanked the Swedish co-Chairs (Sara Danielsson and Elisabeth Nyberg) for their work in leading the group for the previous years.

Main topics or issues raised were:

1. The Meeting reviewed the current developments of the automated indicator evaluation system for hazardous substances and welcomed the development. The Meeting also provided several questions and suggestions for adjustments and further developments that would help future assessments, national checking and clarity/transparency issues.
2. Monitoring and Assessment Guidelines the group is responsible for were discussed and plans made for further developing them for PFOS in biota were established (Estonia to draft), with further preparation for HBCDD underway, and other finalized guidelines to be submitted to State and Conservation 10-2019.
3. Analysis of pollutants in sediments and normalization procedures were discussed with further work and initial evaluations of data planned. The group discussed the possibility to jointly develop a Baltic Sea Environmental Proceedings (BSEP) on the topic of application of sediment sampling and dated sediment core sampling for assessment of hazardous substance trends in the Baltic Sea region.
4. The inclusion of Zebra mussels in future assessments was discussed with the group supporting that the proposal should be tested to evaluate the need for any technical adjustments (e.g. species specific threshold values) that may be needed.
5. The Meeting discussed the role and available monitoring and data related to copper and concluded that it should be developed further as a candidate indicator as it provides an assessment of pollution derived from activities taking place directly in the marine environment.
6. The Meeting noted that there had been good progress related to existing study reservations on certain threshold values, with further news expected shortly.
7. Conversion factors for tissue type, trophic level, and the potential application to utilize current assessments to also address pollutants in food stuffs was discussed and will be further developed.

8. Other topics where discussion was initiated included: hazardous substances released due to cleaning of transport tanks and cases where co-occurrence of pressures had negative impacts on the ecosystem, yet hazardous substances were not clearly higher in concentration than other areas.
9. The Meeting also discussed work associated with the HELCOM SOM Platform (and associated HZ Topic Team), the BSAP UP Project, and the EU co-funded ACTION project. The group expressed their willingness to support these initiatives and were keen to offer input related to appropriate measures and future needs.

Related issues raised included:

10. The hosting of the White-tailed Sea Eagle indicator was raised at the meeting, as had previously been discussed at State and Conservation 9-2018 ([Outcomes paragraph 7J.14](#)). Other discussion on the indicator related to: if it is fully representative of coastal ecosystems, if better considered as a biodiversity indicator (i.e. since hazardous substances are addressed as pressures), if a group considering top predators could be relevant, and if egg shell thickness could be explored since this parameter has been shown to directly link to hazardous substances (i.e. biological effect) - though noting it is still a very valid effect based indicator.
11. Relationship between dumped munitions and marine litter, and release of hazardous substances.
12. Cooperation with biodiversity aspects to develop overview and interlinkages across food webs and ecosystem, including supporting any work developed in mammal health team that examines hazardous substances directly.
13. Re-look at developments for Fish Disease Index that have taken place in HELCOM and OSPAR region, and a general information sharing related to developments in biological effects. The value of an extended meeting to focus in this topic in the future was discussed and a request for national support to request a review by ICES WGBEC is being developed.
14. Bringing information from MSFD Descriptor 8/9 workshop (in May 2019) back to the group via participants in both organizations.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to:

- take note of the progress within EN-HZ.
- consider the proposal to develop a BSEP on sediment analyses of hazardous substances (point 3).
- endorse the further development of a candidate indicator to address copper (point 5).
- consider the role and hosting of the white-tailed sea eagle indicator (point 10).
- consider the role of EN-HZ and need for work related to munition and litter related releases of hazardous substances.
- comment on proposals to further develop aspects related to biological effects of hazardous substances.