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Background

This document contains extracts from relevant HELCOM meetings held since the fourth meeting of the State and Conservation Working group:

1. [HOLAS II 5-2016](#), Helsinki, Finland, 26-28 April 2016,
2. [PRESSURE 4-2016](#), Gothenburg, Sweden, 19-21 April 2016,
3. [GEAR 14-2016](#), Gothenburg, Sweden, 10-11 May 2016
4. [FISH 4-2016](#), Gothenburg, Sweden, 11-12 May 2016
5. [HOD 50-2016](#), Laulasmaa, Estonia, 15-16 June 2016
6. [HOLAS II 6-2016](#), Helsinki, Finland, 4-6 October 2016.

Also note the outcome of the following HELCOM Expert Group meeting and workshops of relevance to the State and Conservation Working Group:

- 10th Meeting of ad hoc Seal Expert Group ([SEAL 10-2016](#)), Hel, Poland, 5-7 October 2016
- HELCOM BalticBOOST Workshop on Underwater Noise ([HELCOM BalticBOOST Noise WS 1-2016](#)), Copenhagen, Denmark, 5-6 October 2016
- Second meeting on the draft Recommendation on biotopes ([BIOTOPES REC 2-2016](#)), Online meeting, 30 September 2016
- Fourth meeting of the Intersessional Network on Eutrophication ([IN-EUTROPHICATION 4-2016](#)), online meeting, 30 September 2016
- 1st HELCOM TAPAS workshop on benthic habitat indicators ([TAPAS benthic indicator WS 1-2016](#)), Tallinn, Estonia, 27-28 September 2016
- 4th Meeting of the HELCOM expert network on hazardous substances ([EN-HZ 4-2016](#)), Online meeting, 23 September 2016
- 2nd BalticBOOST Workshop to support the development of the HOLAS II Biodiversity assessment tool ([BalticBOOST Biodiv WS 2-2016](#)), Copenhagen, Denmark, 14-15 September 2016
- 2nd BalticBOOST Workshop on HOLAS II hazardous substance assessment ([BalticBOOST HZ WS 2-2016](#)), Copenhagen, Denmark, 13-14 September 2016
- 2nd HELCOM TAPAS Workshop to support the development of the Baltic Sea Pressure and Impact index ([TAPAS Pressure Index WS 2-2016](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 6-7 September 2016
- First meeting on conservation of threatened species and biotopes ([CONSERVATION PLANS 1-2016](#)), Online meeting, 5 September 2016
- 2nd Meeting of the HELCOM expert network on hazardous substances ([EN-HZ 2-2016](#)), Online meeting, 28 June 2016
- Third meeting of the Intersessional Network on Eutrophication ([IN-EUTROPHICATION 3-2016](#)), Online meeting, 2 June 2016
- HELCOM BalticBOOST Theme 3 Workshop ([BalticBOOST Theme 3 WS 1-2016](#)), Copenhagen, Denmark, 2-3 June 2016

- 6th Meeting of the HELCOM Expert Group on Monitoring of Radioactive Substances in the Baltic Sea ([MORS EG 6-2016](#)), Uppsala, Sweden, 24-26 May 2016.
- HELCOM workshop on fish indicators ([FISH IND WS 2016](#)), Gothenburg, Sweden, 10 May 2016
- 2nd Meeting of the Task Force on migratory fish species ([FISH-M 2-2016](#)), Gothenburg, Sweden, 9 May 2016
- Meeting of the HELCOM Phytoplankton Expert Group 2016 ([PEG-2016](#)), Rostock, Germany, 25-29 April 2016.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

1. 5th Meeting of the project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II 5-2016), Helsinki, Finland, 26-28 April 2016

HOLAS II Overview

- The Meeting stressed the need to fill critical gaps in the set of core indicators compared to the main required compartments under the MSFD (i.e. ecosystem elements and pressure-based descriptors) and encouraged Lead and co-Lead countries to prioritize in particular the work on indicators related to seafloor integrity and marine litter.
- The Meeting discussed the HELCOM indicators on fish and birds where some indicators are currently developed as multi-species indices while the draft Commission decision on GES criteria proposes integration through a 'per-species' approach for the highly mobile species. The Meeting noted that it is feasible to disaggregate the bird indices to functional groups of birds but that the agreed GES boundary, which is expressed as % species meeting the boundary, does not support species specific assessments, and further noted that fish community indicators such as the LFI cannot be easily disaggregated to support a 'per-species' integration.
- The Meeting supported that the assessment of birds and fish in HOLAS II and under the MSFD should be carried out by species groups and proposed to HELCOM countries being EU Member States to convey this view in the consultation on the draft Commission Decision on GES criteria.
- The Meeting recalled previous discussions on the use of indicators additional to the core indicators in HOLAS II (cf. HOLAS II 3-2015, para 3.13). The Meeting took note of the view by Germany and Sweden that the use of additional indicators in HOLAS II may result in a regionally incoherent assessment and proposed to first evaluate the effects of including additional indicators which are planned to be tested in the development of the biodiversity assessment tool (document 4-1). The Meeting elaborated on the conditions for use and agreed on a way forward as outlined in **Annex 2** including as a first step for the Contracting Parties to submit proposals on additional indicators to the Secretariat by **26 May 2016** (lena.bergstrom@helcom.fi) using a template to be distributed by the Secretariat.

Development of tools and frameworks

- The Meeting took note of the development of workspaces to serve HOLAS II assessment data acceptance process (document 4-7, **Presentation 5**) as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that HELCOM indicator workspaces in the meeting portal are designed to be tools and online working environments for expert groups to prepare indicator reports, review used raw data (data acceptance process) and resulting data products.
- The Meeting took note of the development of a hazardous substance assessment tool under WP 2.1 of the HELCOM coordinated EU co-financed BalticBOOST project as presented by the Secretariat and Lead partner NIVA Denmark (document 4-2, **Presentations 6 and 7**).
- The Meeting was of the view that the CHASE 2.0 tool provides an important complement to the GES/sub-GES assessment of individual indicators and the proposed integration approach in the draft Commission Decision on GES criteria (i.e. the application of the OAO integration between indicators), and supported the further development of the CHASE 2.0 tool with the view of testing the assessment options for HOLAS II.
- The Meeting recalled that at STATE & CONSERVATION 4-2016 some countries expressed the wish to consider further the use of the four compartments within which indicators are integrated in CHASE 2.0 (biota, sediment, water, bio-effects). The Meeting noted the clarification by Sweden that they support the use of the four compartments. The Meeting noted that Germany confirmed the study

reservation on the use of the bio-effect indicators and compartment as part of the integrated assessment of hazardous substances.

- The Meeting took note of the development of a biodiversity assessment tool under WP 1.1 of the HELCOM coordinated EU co-financed BalticBOOST project as presented by the Lead partner SYKE, Finland (document 4-1, **Presentation 8**).
- The Meeting recommended the BalticBOOST project to take into consideration the draft Commission Decision in the further testing of the tool, including to :
 - test the proposal to end the integration at the level of the ecosystem elements (birds, fish, mammals, pelagic and benthic habitats) vs to make an overall biodiversity assessment (figure 1, Annex 3),
 - test the use of the OOA approach vs (weighted) average at different steps of integration,
 - to test the recent proposals from the Article 8 assessment workshop to use the so called species approach vs the criteria approach when integrating indicators for birds, fish and mammals (figures 2-3 Annex 3).
- The Meeting took note of the development of a framework for economic and social analyses (ESA) under the TAPAS project (document 4-6, **Presentation 9**) as presented by the Secretariat. The ESA conceptual framework to be produced with the project is to be based on 1) the use of marine waters and 2) cost of degradation, and it combines components of the 'Marine Water Accounting approach' and the 'Ecosystem services approach'.
- The Meeting welcomed that the analysis of use of marine waters can be linked to and included in the assessment of human activities and pressures of the HOLAS II report, as opposed to a separate component, and further noted that the analysis of benefits lost if GES is not met (cost of degradation) could potentially be integrated with the status assessment in the HOLAS II report.
- The Meeting expressed the wish for continuing and possibly expanding the ESA work beyond the lifetime of TAPAS project (ESA component ends in 2016) and encouraged continuous involvement of the Contracting Parties in the work of the HOLAS II ESA network. The Meeting welcomed that the continuation of the ESA work in HELCOM can be addressed at the upcoming GEAR 14-2016 meeting. The Meeting invited the TAPAS project partners and the HOLAS II network of national ESA experts to outline a roadmap by September 2016 on the anticipated further steps to finalize the HOLAS II report regarding ESA components up to the release of the updated HOLAS II in 2018.
- The Meeting took note of the data collation process of human activities and pressures (document 4-3, **Presentation 10**) and that it is based primarily on utilizing existing reporting requirements of HELCOM Recommendations, output of HELCOM assessments, and other sources (e.g. international sector organizations or open sources), while a national data call was issued for selected datasets by 15 April 2016 and that six countries have responded to the call.
- The Meeting discussed the spatial datasets for which difficulties to retrieve data or proxy data have been identified (Table 1, document 4-3) and recognized that the following activities and pressures will not be possible to represent by spatial data in HOLAS II: recreational fishing activity, recreational boating and sports activity (at sea), fishing harbours, hazardous wrecks, dumped hazardous waste and incidental catches. The Meeting however stressed that these pressures could still be addressed descriptively in the HOLAS II report, highlighting in particular recreational fishing activities, hazardous waste and incidental catches.

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- The Meeting noted the further development of the Baltic Sea pressure and impact index (BSPI/BSII) under the HELCOM coordinated EU co-financed TAPAS project as presented by the Lead partner SYKE, Finland (document 4-4, **Presentation 11**).
 - The Meeting took note that for the BSII about 44 pressure data sets are expected to be used that will be aggregated into circa 19 layers to avoid biases in the index as the number of data sets that represent different pressures varies. The data sets are planned to be aggregated in GIS, after having been normalized to equal (or representative) quantitative scale. This procedure will reflect the combined distribution of all spatial data sets included in the aggregation. 34 ecosystem components layers (Annex 1, document 4-5), also developed under the TAPAS project, will tentatively be used pending availability of data.
 - The Meeting noted that for several data sets that represent pressure at sources (e.g. input from land) it will be necessary to estimate a spatial gradient of the pressure from the source. The project will explore if such spatial gradients can be based on existing models but will also seek information from scientific literature to support, if needed, a more pragmatic approaches to extrapolate available input data.
 - The Meeting discussed other ways of representing input of nutrients and hazardous substance in the BSII and requested the project to test:
 - o the use phosphorus concentration as proxy for internal loading and to aggregate this layer together with input of nutrients to reflect also pressure from accumulated nutrients in the Baltic Sea,
 - o to use the output of the CHASE tool (excluding bioeffects) to represent pressure from hazardous substances as an alternative to using data on input of separate hazardous substances from different sources.
 - The Meeting supported the proposal to also include changes in climate as a pressure with the view to test the effects on the impact index. Relevant data sets available at the Baltic Sea scale are e.g. information on the deviation from the long term average in temperature, pH, or salinity during the assessment period.
 - The Meeting took note of the draft questionnaire to assign impact scores for use in the Baltic Sea Impact Index (document 4-5, **Presentation 12**) as presented by the TAPAS Lead partner NIVA Denmark. The survey is designed to collect expert opinions on impacts on coastal and marine ecosystem components in the Baltic Sea from anthropogenic pressures. The impact score will be calculated as a function of tolerance and recovery as well as directly as a sensitivity score. The questionnaire will also include questions related to impact distance. The Meeting agreed that the distribution of the questionnaire nationally will be done by the HOLAS II core team and State and Conservation contacts.

Assessment of the pressure-based indicators

- The Meeting took note of the proposal for the assessment of permanent hydrographical changes (Descriptor 7) in offshore areas (document 5-1, Presentation 14) as introduced by Finland.
- The Meeting agreed to compile national information on the assessments made on hydromorphological changes under the WFD and requested the Secretariat to submit an information request to the Contracting Parties to inform on this matter in advance of HOLAS II 6-2016.
- The Meeting took note of the proposed assessment of marine litter and underwater noise in HOLAS II (document 5-2, Presentation 15), noting that it is structured around the evaluation of status, for indicators where this is possible, as well as an evaluation of ongoing trends.

- The Meeting agreed to use a descriptive approach in the presentation of marine litter and underwater noise in the HOLAS II report due to the fragmented availability of data while also including a forward looking view on monitoring and ongoing knowledge building on these topics.
- The Meeting took note of the proposal on key pressures to present in more detail in the HOLAS II report (document 5-3, **Presentation 16**) as presented by the Secretariat.
- The Meeting agreed that the selection of key pressures to be presented in more detail in the HOLAS II report should be based on the following principles:

Pressures that:

- were identified as most importance in HOLAS I
- have a strong influence according to the BSII
- are of high public interest
- are considered as emerging pressures
- can be represented by data on both spatial and temporal information
- are reflected in the HELCOM core pressure indicators.

Any other business

- The Meeting agreed to convene the next meeting of HOLAS II-2016 4-6 October 2016 and invited the Contracting Parties to consider hosting the meeting.

2. 4th Meeting of the Working Group on Reduction of Pressures from the Baltic Sea Catchment Area (PRESSURE 4-2016), Gothenburg, Sweden, 19-21 April 2016

Follow up on marine litter and underwater noise

Marine litter

- The Meeting emphasised the need to set up regional dialog especially for the task leads and co-leads of the different actions to follow up the implementation of the RAP ML and address the issues to the relevant audience, e.g. HELCOM Working Groups and stakeholders outside the immediate HELCOM structure.
- The Meeting also stressed the importance of cooperation between European Regional Sea Conventions to exchange experience and to discuss progress in the implementation of regional action plans and identify areas for joined action.
- The Meeting agreed to arrange the workshop back-to-back with PRESSURE 5-2016 and invite national coordinators, experts from EN-Marine Litter, experts who are task leads and co-leads of actions, and authorities and other stakeholders to discuss practical aspects of the RAP ML implementation and to identify fora to follow up the implementation of the particular actions. The Meeting noted the link between discussion on implementation of the national programmes of measures in the frame of the MSFD and the RAP ML. The Meeting also invited PA Hazards to cooperate with HELCOM in the organization of the regional dialog on implementation of the RAP ML in particular with regard in microplastics.

Underwater noise

- The Meeting took note of the progress in setting up the OSPAR-HELCOM registry of underwater noise (doc. 3-2, Presentation 1). The Meeting also took note that the reporting format for reporting data to the OSPAR-HELCOM impulsive noise events registry had been evaluated by EN-Network. Reporting has been tested by some countries and the Meeting approved the reporting format

(Annex of doc. 3-2), noting that it was coordinated with that developed within OSPAR and TG-Noise.

- The Meeting took note of the compilation of the internationally available reviews on underwater noise mitigation measures and of the questionnaire prepared by BalticBOOST, to be filled in by HELCOM countries in order to identify which of the listed measures are nationally implemented, planned to be, or have the potential to be implemented in the future as contained in document 3-5 (Presentation 2).

Dredging activities and extraction of mineral resources

- The Meeting took note of the information on the state of data reporting in accordance with the new reporting format and discussed the obstacles to provide complete national data sets (**Presentation 3**).
- The Meeting also took note of the information required for HOLAS II assessment of pressures caused by human activities and identified issues in the reporting template which should be modified to cater for the assessment.
- The Meeting discussed the suggested updates to the reporting guideline and format, listed in the Conclusions chapter of document 4-1, and decided to organize an expert skype meeting to discuss it.
- The Meeting took note of the information by the countries that some data on extraction of sand and gravel at the sea floor are available in the countries, but that the data set is not complete against the requirements of HELCOM Recommendation 19/1.
- The Meeting agreed on the need to update HELCOM Status Report on Marine sediment extraction in the Baltic Sea (1999), based on reliable, comprehensive, geo-referenced national data and agreed to conduct the reporting on marine sediment extraction in the Baltic Sea according to HOLAS II needs, and, subsequently, consider the need of regular reporting and revision of Recommendation 19/1. Denmark informed that they will inform the Secretariat on the data which are available for this assessment.

Hazardous substances

- The Meeting took note the draft Status report on pharmaceuticals in the Baltic Sea environment and welcomed the effort by the Secretariat and PA Hazards to preparation the report (doc. 6-1-Rev.1)
- The Meeting agreed that the report is the starting point for further development of the regional strategy.
- The Meeting agreed in principle on publication of the report, taking into account the comments by State&Conservation and Pressure Groups, and decided to establish a group to work further in order to suggest further actions on pharmaceuticals in the Baltic Sea region.
- The Meeting agreed to withdraw Chapters 4.1 and 6.3 from the report and move them to the annex. The Meeting also agreed to use the term “potential measures for further consideration” instead of “recommendation” in Chapter 8.4.
- The Meeting considered how the results of the Status report can be used for the revision of HELCOM Recommendation 31E/1 “Implementing HELCOM’s objective for hazardous substances” with regard to the list of priority substances and substances of concern as well as implementation of the new HELCOM action “Micropollutants in effluents from wastewater treatment plants” (cf. doc. 6-2).
- The Meeting noted that HELCOM 37-2016 had agreed on 13 future HELCOM actions as a result of the coordination efforts relating to national PoMs. The Meeting took note of the actions falling under the Pressure WG and agreed to incorporate the actions into its future work.
- The Meeting took note of the results of a questionnaire on the input of organic compounds (doc. 7-9 and **Presentation 4**) and discussed how the information can be utilized for implementation of the

action on micropollutants in effluents from WWTP and for reviewing the existing list of HELCOM priorities (HELCOM Recommendation 31E/1).

- The Meeting welcomed the results of the questionnaire noting that the collected information is a good starting point to identify the pollutants of high concern for the Baltic Sea region, containing also an overview of the availability of information on input of these substances into the Sea.
- The Meeting was of the opinion that the information should be coupled and correlated with the work on HELCOM core indicators in order to identify any discrepancy between the major concern in fresh water or coastal water and indicators of the ecosystem health of the Baltic Sea. The result should be a starting point to revise the list of priority substances of HELCOM Recommendation 31E/1.
- The Meeting suggested that the future PLC reporting should pay more attention to the hazardous substances. The Meeting requested the RedCore Drafting Group to consider the results of the questionnaire and elaborate a proposal for the Contracting Parties to compile more detailed national information on the substances which were prioritized.

Thematic session on input of nutrients

Overall planning of PLC-based assessment products

- The Meeting took note of the German position that the CART assessment should not be performed annually, but due to the fact that the assessment is based on the annually reported data, this product is included into the annual workflow.
- The Meeting discussed the timeframe for the PLC-8 assessment and was of the opinion that the results should cater for the reporting under the EU regulations for the EU member states. From this point of view, the suggestion for the timeframe of the PLC-8 assessment can also be discussed by GEAR 14-2016 (10-11 May). The Meeting also noted that Germany needs the assessment data latest in summer 2023. The Meeting agreed on a preliminary timeframe for the PLC-8 assessment, proposed by Germany at HOD 49-2015, as 2021 for monitoring and the assessment in 2023.
- The Meeting also noted that the position of Germany regarding the contents of the PLC-7 and the timeframe and contents of PLC-8 will be clarified at HOD 50-2016, due to ongoing national consultation.

PLC-6 assessment

- The Meeting agreed in general on the contents of the PLC-6 report, which had been prepared by the RedCore DG and the PLC-6 project team.
- The Meeting took note of the progress in the compilation of background and supporting data for the assessment report of the Sixth Baltic Sea Pollution Load Compilation (PLC-6), presented by Sweden (doc. 7-5).
- The Meeting took note of the status of the 2013-2014 annual PLC data reporting (doc. 7-11) and the status of the 2014 periodic PLC data reporting (doc. 7-13), provided by the PLC Data Manager. The Meeting was informed on the state of play of the reporting by all the countries.
- The Meeting expressed great concern on the feasibility of elaboration of the assessment products due to the delay of the data reporting.

Follow-up of the HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme

Preparation of policy message product on CART

- The Meeting exchanged views on the various aspects of the final products of the CART assessment and in general supported the current structure of the scientific report. Nonetheless, the Meeting was of the opinion that the scientific report should recommend a unified assessment methodology to avoid deviation in interpretation of the assessment data.

- The Meeting suggested several methods to assess the progress towards national reduction targets, e.g. using a 3- or 5-year averaging period or statistically adjusted data on the last year of the assessment. The Meeting noted that the Contracting Parties are not fully satisfied with the clarity of the policy message of the assessment 2015.
- The Meeting noted that countries are in favour of different averaging periods but agreed that the HELCOM policy message should be based on one agreed methodological approach.
- The Meeting agreed that the following questions should be included into the policy message:
 - o Whether the reduction target is achieved?
 - o What is the distance from the target, e.g. in tons?
 - o What is the trend in inputs?
- The Meeting agreed to arrange a workshop dedicated to MAI/CART assessment methodologies in autumn 2016. The Meeting pointed out that the workshop should be organized when the recent assessment results are as ready as possible in order to use its outcomes for e.g. MSFD reporting. The workshop will outline the policy message.
- The Meeting also encouraged the Contracting Parties to attend the workshop.

Accounting for extra reductions

- The Meeting took note the information on a methodology for accounting an extra reduction in CART follow-up (**Presentation 7**).
- The Meeting requested RedCore to elaborate more detailed documentation describing the methodology and limits for its application as well as provide examples. The Meeting also suggested to include the theme into the agenda of the workshop in the autumn 2016.

Future work and meetings

- The Meeting welcomed the offer by Poland to host PRESSURE 5-2016 in Warsaw on 25-27 October 2016 in the premises of the National Water Management Authority.

3. 14th Meeting of the Group for the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR 14-2016), Gothenburg, Sweden, 10-11 May 2016

Activities of relevant HELCOM projects or processes

- The Meeting took note of progress on BalticBOOST Work package 3.1 to develop joint principles for environmental targets for pressures affecting seabed habitats as presented by Lead partner SYKE, Finland (**document 3-6, Presentation 1**).
- The Meeting noted that the project will develop an approach to define quantitative targets. The Meeting acknowledged that while “environmental target” refers to the needed reduction in pressures, the project focuses on defining the maximum allowable pressure that is consistent with GES which in turn can form the basis for defining environmental targets.
- The Meeting took note that the approach will be based on an inventory of available knowledge on pressure and impacts on benthic habitats and that the approach will be tested in a number of case study areas of the Baltic Sea. Available evaluation of GES for benthic invertebrates (e.g. BQI) will, as far as possible, be used to verify the link between pressures and impacts on benthic communities in the test areas. A suggestion on how environmental targets could be formulated will be proposed for these case study areas and the results will serve as basis for development of guidelines (i.e. joint principles) that Contracting Parties can use to extend the approach to other areas.
- The Meeting requested the project to consider the following guidance:

- to consider the environmental target setting also from point of view of the state of the benthic habitats and not only from the point of pressures and human activities,
 - to consider the proposed assessment scales in the evolving Commission Decision on GES criteria and evaluate whether the assessment units used for the status assessments are relevant for the environmental targets or if they should possibly be linked to the scale of the pressures,
 - to consider if existing status indicators can be used to follow up achievement of environmental targets or whether there is a need to develop additional indicators for this particular purpose,
 - to consider the links between GES (Article 9), Environmental targets (Article 10), and Measures (Article 13) with the understanding that environmental targets should guide the needs for measures and not the other way around.
- The Meeting took note of the update on HELCOM work on underwater noise towards common principles for environmental targets as presented by the Secretariat (**document 3-7, Presentation 8**) as carried out under the BalticBOOST project. The Meeting noted an assessment of sound sensitivity of Baltic Sea biota have resulted in a draft list of six priority fish and mammals species and that the project is currently aiming at identifying sound sensitive areas for these species. The list of species is a living list. The information is anticipated to form the basis for formulating principles for GES for sound sensitive species and eventually environmental targets related to underwater noise. The Meeting reminded Contracting Parties to provide, through State and Conservation contacts, relevant information and proposals on how to define biologically sound sensitive areas and inform the Secretariat **by 1 June 2016** (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi). A HELCOM BalticBOOST workshop will be held 5-6 October 2016 to support the conceptual development of environmental targets.
 - The Meeting took note of the recent developments under the HOLAS II project and the outcome of HOLAS II 5-2016 as presented by the Project Coordinator (**document 2-2 and 3-2, Presentation 3**).
 - The Meeting took note that a process has been started to look into the use of indicators additional to the HELCOM core indicators (e.g. sub-regional or bilateral) according to principles developed by HOLAS II 5-2016. The outcome of selecting additional indicators will be presented for endorsement by STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016.
 - The Meeting noted that indicator evaluations on commercial fish species within D3 criterion 2, to be provided by ICES, are also planned to be included in the assessment of biodiversity in HOLAS II. The Meeting regretted that indicators and GES definitions on the size and age distribution of commercial fish species have not yet been developed. The Meeting noted that the 'Proportion of large fish in the community' (LFI), developed for the Baltic Sea by HELCOM, addresses the property of size of fish populations. The Meeting encouraged the Secretariat together with ICES to ensure availability of data to support the development and evaluation of the LFI indicator.
 - The Meeting took note of the status of adoption of GES boundaries and remaining study reservations, as well as the progress of development of pre-core and candidate indicators and their anticipated availability for HOLAS II as presented by the Secretariat (**document 3-4**).
 - The Meeting acknowledged the importance to clarify remaining study reservations by end of 2016 and encouraged Contracting Parties to resolve remaining issues through the ongoing discussions among national experts and relevant HELCOM expert groups and projects.
 - The Meeting took note of the work plan of TAPAS theme on economic and social analyses as presented by the Secretariat (**document 3-5, Presentation 6**).
 - The Meeting noted that the ESA work under HOLAS II is aiming to develop a coherent framework for ESA analyses in the Baltic Sea region aligned to the general guidance from the MSFD CIS ESA Working Group and that experts taking part in TAPAS are also participating in the MSFD CIS ESA Working Group. The Meeting recognized the importance to link the outcome of the TAPAS project to the national ESA work, and for national experts to take part in and provide feedback to the work of TAPAS ESA to ensure compatibility with national needs.

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- The Meeting noted that the ESA work is currently not linked to any HELCOM subsidiary body and was of the view that the Gear Group could act as the main Working Group for consideration of the ESA component in the TAPAS project.

Coordination and information related to the implementation of the ecosystem approach and related policies

- The Meeting recalled that the first version of the HOLAS II report will be prepared by mid-2017 and that comments to be considered in the updated version need to be available for the project by end of February 2018 (Outcome of GEAR 13-2016, para 4-14) so that the HOLAS II report can be updated by mid-2018. The Meeting recognized that this regional timetable is fixed. The Meeting invited Contracting Parties that have not yet done so to inform the Secretariat **by 1 June 2016** (ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) on the current status of planning of national consultation on HOLAS II as well as the timing and length of national consultation processes.
- The Meeting supported the proposal to carry out a regional consultation on the HOLAS II report as a way to involve observers and stakeholders as well as to get publicity for the assessment in the Baltic Sea region. The Meeting noted that the planned printable report and web-based presentation of results could serve as the basis for a regional consultation.
- The Meeting discussed tentative additional themes for development of coherent environmental targets in the Baltic Sea region. The Meeting noted the proposal from Finland to focus the selection of themes to the pressures of most concern in the Baltic Sea, e.g. based on the results from the Baltic Sea Impact Index, as well as to consider the pressure-based descriptors of the MSFD as well as the HELCOM BSAP. The Meeting noted the proposal from the European Union to focus on issues with highest needs for coordination of measures.
- The Meeting took note of the European Commission call on: "Implementation of the Second Cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive: achieving coherent, coordinated and consistent updates of the determinations of Good Environmental Status, initial assessments and environmental targets".
- The Meeting recommended to HODs to develop a coordinated HELCOM project proposal in response to the call, to ensure that a possible Baltic project directly support the needs of the countries as jointly identified in HELCOM. The Meeting requested the Secretariat to prepare an application based on the identified priority issues aligned with the objectives of the call.
- The Meeting discussed the need to continue the development of indicators and associated GES boundaries and noted the information by the European Union that priority area 'a) updated determination so GES' can be addressed even if projects will not be able to provide operational indicators and GES in time for use in HOLAS II. With this clarification the Meeting proposed to address priority area a) in the application. The Meeting further supported the proposal by the Secretariat to focus the application on priority area 'e) update environmental targets and associated indicators', the continued work on ESA beyond the TAPAS project, and the implementation of the assessments under the HOLAS II project in 2017, noting that the two latter topics fall under priority area 'b) update the 2012 assessment' which is not identified as a priority area for the Baltic Sea region.
- The Meeting took note of the HELCOM information of relevance to the MSFD CIS work programme 2016-2018 which has been finalized according to the new structure of the draft MSFD CIS work programme (**document 5-1**).

Future work and any other business

- The Meeting agreed to tentatively arrange the next meeting of the GEAR Working Group 17-18 November 2016, and to include on the agenda the preparation of the HOD meeting in December 2016 in the view adoption by HOD on indicators and assessment methodologies for use in HOLAS II.

4. 4th Meeting of the Group for Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries (FISH 4-2016), Gothenburg, Sweden, 11-12 May 2016

Matters arising from other HELCOM work of relevance for the Group

- The Meeting took note of the outcome of the HELCOM workshop on fish related indicators (FISH IND WS 1-2016) held on 10 May 2016, presented by Sweden and the Secretariat. The aim of the workshop was to discuss the linkage of assessments carried out under environmental- and fisheries policy and to finalize work on core indicators. The Meeting noted that the outcome of the workshop will be shortly published on the meeting site of FISH 4-2016.
- The Meeting noted the outcome of discussions of the workshop on developing a new GES boundary proposal for the core indicator 'Proportion of large fish in the offshore community' (LFI) and that a follow up online meeting will be arranged shortly to discuss the proposal to be submitted for endorsement in autumn to relevant HELCOM working groups.
- The Meeting noted the need to provide more data to the proposed indicator 'Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear'.

Interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems

- The Meeting took note of the future HELCOM actions of relevance for Fish including the actions 'Adjustment or utilization of EU data collection framework to retrieve data for assessments and the development of management measures related to by-catch of species' and 'Testing alternative fishing gears/fishing techniques to minimize incidental catch through joint project/projects' (document 4-3), as presented by Poland.

Adjustment or utilization of EU data collection framework

- The Meeting welcomed the draft letter to the European Commission on HELCOM data needs in the context of the ongoing Reform of the European Union system for fisheries data collection (document 4-1), presented by Poland and agreed in principle that it is a valuable contribution to the reform of European Union system for fisheries data collection.
- The Meeting agreed that the letter amended by Poland according to the comments (paragraph 4.9) will be circulated to the contacts of Fish as well as Heads of Delegations **by 13 May 2016**, requesting approval of the letter **by 25 May 2016**.

Testing alternative fishing gears/fishing techniques

- The Meeting further took note of a questionnaire on alternative fishing gears or fishing techniques (document 4-2), as an initial follow up activity to the action 'Testing alternative fishing gears/fishing techniques to minimize incidental catch through joint project/projects' presented by Poland and noted the suggestion by Sweden on a proposal to include reference to further context of the questionnaire as well as added benefits of the CFP landing obligation towards bycatch estimation.
- The Meeting agreed that Poland will send the amended excel file questionnaire to the contacts and observers of Fish and invited the Contracting Parties to provide comments to the questionnaire to Poland (katarzyna.kaminska@minrol.gov.pl) by **15 June 2016** after which Poland will redistribute the questionnaire for a further round of comments. The Meeting decided to discuss the questionnaire again at FISH 5-2016.
- The Meeting took note of the role of fish management for mitigating eutrophication effects in shallow coastal waters (document 4-6, **Presentation 1**), presented by Mr. Ulf Bergström, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), and noted that that the amount of predatory fish, via trophic cascades, has major effects on the level of eutrophication possibly as relevant as those of direct fertilization. The Meeting further noted that there are several examples from the North Atlantic and

Baltic Sea on the effects of predatory fish on the amount of filamentous algae and thus the level of eutrophication.

- The Meeting emphasized the relevance of the topic and suggested for HOLAS II to investigate the possibility to include the linkage of fisheries and eutrophication (D5) in the holistic assessment. The Meeting agreed to consider further steps regarding this topic at FISH 5-2016.

Fisheries and MSP

- The Meeting took note of the information on the results of the coastal fish essential habitats workshop held in Öregrund, Sweden, in June 2016, presented by Mr. Jens Olsson, Chair of FISH-PRO II, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) (**Presentation 2**). The Meeting noted that the main outcomes of the workshop were that essential coastal fish habitats are likely underestimated in fisheries management, a wide array of monitoring data from the Baltic Sea is available, conservation status of relevant coastal fish habitats is currently rather poor, main threats towards the habitats include eutrophication, climate change, coastal development, invasive species, fisheries and dredging and there would be mutual benefits from merging the interests of fisheries management and habitat protection. The Meeting noted that the first draft of a report paper will be finalized by the end of the year and that a review is expected by early 2017.
- The Meeting suggested that the role of essential fish habitats will be taken into account in the development of the Recommendation on the conservation of Baltic Sea habitats/biotopes/biotope complexes categorized as threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM Red List.
- The Meeting took note of the information on including fish and fisheries to maritime spatial planning (MSP), including recent projects such as BALTIC SCOPE (**Presentation 3**) presented by Mr. Terje Selnes, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SWAM), and SYMPHONY (**Presentation 4**), presented by Mr. Linus Hammar, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SWAM).

Seals-fisheries interactions

- The Meeting noted the discussion held at SEAL 9-2015 on joint management of grey seal in the Baltic Sea based on the recent increase of the grey seal population in southern Baltic waters with negative effects on fisheries and that the view of most Contracting Parties is that HELCOM Recommendation 27/28-2 'Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea' provides sufficient guidance for actions needed at national level and that a joint management plan is not required in the Baltic Sea. The Meeting further noted that the Seal Expert Group will continue exchanging experiences on management of seals and working towards harmonization of seal management plans.
- The Meeting considered the seals-fisheries conflict in Sweden (document 4-5, **Presentation 5**), presented by Ms. Sara Königsson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), and noted that several seal safe fishing gear are being tested on the coastal areas in Sweden.
- The Meeting suggested to include the different seal safe gear to the questionnaire on alternative fishing gears or fishing techniques (see document 4-2).

Cooperation between fisheries/aquaculture and environmental organizations

- The Meeting took note of examples of ongoing dialogues between Regional Seas Organisations and Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) (document 4-4), presented by the Secretariat, as well as information on the process of forming a cooperative mechanism between NEAFC and OSPAR adopted in 2014, presented by OSPAR (document 4-4-Add.1, **Presentation 7**). The Meeting noted that information on the collective arrangement is available on both the websites of [OSPAR](#) and [NEAFC](#).
- The Meeting recalled the suggestion by FISH 3-2015 that the Secretariat would develop a first draft of a communication plan to facilitate information exchange between HELCOM, BALTFISH and aquaculture advisory council and requested the Secretariat to prepare a draft of potential common topics and communication pathways in advance of FISH 5-2016.

Recreational fisheries

- The Meeting took note of the information already submitted earlier by Sweden for FISH 3-2015 (document 5-1) on national data collection and other activities in the field of recreational fisheries.
- The Meeting took note of the information by the Chair that BALTFISH is working on defining how management measures could be designed so that more coordination in managing recreational fisheries at national level could be obtained. Data on recreational cod fisheries have been collected and shall be further elaborated on by BALTFISH. The Meeting invited BALTFISH to present information on recreational fisheries activities to the next meeting of the Fish group.
- The Meeting considered the outline of the HELCOM coastal fish assessment developed by the FISH-PRO II project (document 5-1), as presented by the Chair of FISH-PRO II and noted that the intention is to present the first draft of the assessment to State and Conservation in October 2016 and to publish the report in late 2017.

Migratory fish species

- The Meeting took note of the outcome of FISH-M 2-2016 (document 7-2) as presented by the temporary Chair Ms. Ulrika Gunnartz, Sweden, and considered a draft proposal for the work plan of Fish-M (Annex 2 of the outcome).
- The Meeting expressed interest as regards cooperation on migratory fish species and welcomed the outcome of the meeting to identify priority topics for the work and invited the Contracting Parties to provide possible comments and to endorse the work plan of Fish-M (Annex 2 of the outcome of FISH-M 2-2016) and inform on contact points to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) by **15 June 2016**.

Future work

- The Meeting agreed to organize the next meeting of the Group (FISH 5-2016) on 14-17 November 2016 and welcomed the offer by Denmark to host it.

5. 50th Meeting of the Heads of Delegation (HOD 50-2016), Laulasmaa, Estonia, 15-16 June 2016

Next HELCOM Ministerial Meeting

- The Meeting considered potential topics for the next Ministerial Meeting and was of the opinion that the results of HOLAS II will be a major outcome of HELCOM and should provide valuable discussion points for the Ministers, including evaluating the efficiency of measures.
- The Meeting concluded that the year 2018 for the next Ministerial Meeting should be the latest timing and took note that some Contracting Parties would prefer the second half of 2018 due to some other commitments and as updated HOLAS II would be then ready. The Meeting decided to continue the discussion at HOD 51-2016 on the exact timing and to further elaborate on what could be possible concrete outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting.

Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups

- The Meeting took note of the presentation on the progress of the HELCOM Explorer and the preliminary results of assessing the implementation of joint and national actions agreed in the Baltic Sea Action Plan and HELCOM Ministerial Declarations 2010 and 2013 (document 4-25, **Presentation 3**). The Meeting appreciated this new system.

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- The Meeting requested HELCOM Working Groups to consider and make plans for the implementation of the actions not yet accomplished under their area of responsibility at their next meeting.

Maritime Spatial Planning

- The Meeting considered a suitable period for the extended mandate of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, taking into account the timeframe for implementation of the Regional MSP Roadmap (2013-2020) as well as other requirements the countries need to follow. The Meeting supported the prolongation of the mandate of the MSP WG up to 2021, to be followed by evaluation of the results and decision on further work. The Meeting noted the decision by VASAB to prolong the mandate of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP group by three years and agreed to have the mandate prolonged until 2021 as the first priority.
- The Meeting considered the Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in MSP in the Baltic Sea area (document 4-1) and comments submitted by Denmark (document 4-27).
- The Meeting approved the Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in MSP in the Baltic Sea area as contained in document 4-1 (**Annex 2**). The Meeting took note of the request by Denmark that the issues related to sustainable growth are taken into account when implementing and reviewing the guideline.

Shipping

- The Meeting approved the final Baltic Sea NOx Emission Control Area application and the related INF. document on NOx reducing technology (documents 4-12-Rev.1 and 4-12-Rev.2) and decided that they will be submitted to the 70th session of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (IMO MEPC 70) for consideration.

State and Conservation

- The Meeting took note of the remaining study reservations on GES boundaries for core indicators (document 4-18). The Meeting noted that Denmark and Germany are still not in a position to lift their remaining study reservations on the GES boundaries, however, are making efforts to clarify their position by STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016.
- The Meeting took note that a set of indicators with associated GES boundaries under development in HELCOM is anticipated to be presented for technical review by STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016 and for adoption at HOD 51-2016.
- The Meeting took note of the comment by Germany that endorsement of candidate indicators requires special attention and testing in HOLAS II before adoption.
- The Meeting endorsed the use of indicators on commercial fish species developed by ICES in HOLAS II and clarified that all HELCOM countries are involved in reporting data. The Meeting took note of the request by Russia to check the availability of Russian data on fish at ICES.
- The Meeting took note of the proposed GES boundaries for 'Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and dioxins and furans', 'Polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) and their metabolites' and 'TBT and imposex' (document 4-16) and the proposed revision of GES boundaries for Cd and Pb in offshore assessment units.
- The Meeting agreed to the proposed GES boundaries as contained in **Annex 4** pending the following study reservations:
 - o a general study reservation by Germany;
 - o a study reservation by Poland on the GES boundaries for Cd and Pb in offshore assessment units;
 - o a study reservation by Sweden on the use of the proposed GES boundaries for Cd and Pb in offshore assessment units under Descriptor 8;

- a study reservation by Denmark on proposed GES boundaries that are not environmental quality standards derived from EU directives or nationally agreed environmental quality standards.
- The Meeting recognized the need to reach clarity regarding the use of indicators in HOLAS II and urged the Contracting Parties with study reservations to clarify their position as soon as possible, further noting that the HELCOM Expert network on hazardous substances will convene an online meeting 28 June 2018, 9-12 CET and that this offers a good opportunity to discuss the open issues on these indicators.
- The Meeting supported the continuation of the economic and social analysis in HOLAS II beyond lifetime of TAPAS project so that the developing framework can be further applied within HOLAS II in 2017 and in 2018.

Gear

- The Meeting mandated the Gear Group to oversee the development of the economic and social analyses under the HOLAS II project.
- The Meeting supported to further investigate how a regional consultation on the 2nd Holistic assessment could be arranged and requested the Secretariat to develop a proposal for HOD 51-2016.
- The Meeting noted that the Secretariat is developing a project application, as supported by the Heads of Delegation, in response to the European Commission call for proposals “Implementation of the Second Cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive: achieving coherent, coordinated and consistent updates of the determinations of Good Environmental Status, initial assessments and environmental targets”, in line with initial proposals discussed at GEAR 14-2016 and the objectives of the call.

Pressure

- The Meeting decided to postpone decision on the timeframe for the PLC-8 assessment as 2021 for monitoring and the assessment in 2023.
- The Meeting agreed that the workshop dedicated to MAI/CART assessment methodologies will be organized in February 2017 when the recent assessment results are as ready as possible.
- As mandated by HELCOM 37-2016, the Meeting adopted the Recommendation on waterborne pollution input assessment as HELCOM Recommendation 37-38/1 and the Recommendation on monitoring of airborne pollution input as HELCOM Recommendation 37-38/2 (document 4-11, **Annex 5 and 6** respectively).
- The Meeting approved in principle the draft Status report on pharmaceuticals (document 4-17) and its publishing in the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings (BSEP).

Agri

- The Meeting approved organizing the next meeting of the Agri Group (AGRI 4-2017) tentatively in April 2017 in Brussels.

Fish

- The Meeting took note of the comments by Sweden and Germany that HELCOM FISH should continue to prioritize by-catch issues.
- The Meeting endorsed organizing FISH 5-2016 on 14-17 November 2016 in Denmark.

Response

- The Meeting adopted the revised Terms of Reference for prolongation of the work of the Expert Working Group on Oiled Wildlife Response until the end of 2017.
- The Meeting approved the prolongation of the work of the SUBMERGED Expert Group until the end of 2018 with the change that for clarity the Group moves from standing Chairs to topic chairmanship,

using the currently identified topic leads (munitions: Germany and Poland, wrecks: Finland) as rotating Chairs.

Next meeting(s)

- The Meeting agreed that HOD 51-2016 will be held 14-15 December 2016 and HOD 52-2017 tentatively 20-21 June 2017.

6. 6th Meeting of the project to for the development of the second holistic assessment (HOLAS II 6-2016)

Matters arising from other meetings of relevance to HOLAS II

- The Meeting took note that a HELCOM application has been submitted in response to the European Commission call for proposals on *“Implementation of the Second Cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive: achieving coherent, coordinated and consistent updates of the determinations of Good Environmental Status, initial assessments and environmental targets”*. The application focuses on topics that will contribute to the finalization of the 2nd Holistic assessment and to fill gaps identified by the HOLAS core team and the Gear Group related to marine litter, economic and social analysis, and assessment of benthic and pelagic habitats. If successful the project could start in January 2017 and will run for one year. The application is titled: *“Implementation and development of key components for the assessment of Status, Pressures and Impacts, and Social and Economic evaluation in the Baltic Sea marine region (SPICE)”*.
- The Meeting recalled that an online meeting of the HOLAS II core team for the contracting parties that wished to discuss the version 4 of the draft Commission Decision on GES was organized in June, and that for the purposes of this meeting a comparison between HELCOM core indicators and the new proposed criteria was prepared by the Secretariat.
- The Meeting discussed on a principle level the need to set a cut-off date up until when further changes to the aggregation rules in the integration tools can be accommodated for. The meeting recalled that the HOLAS II project assessment products have a sign-off process within HELCOM during early 2017, implying that it may not be possible to adapt the products if the guidance on assessments is made available in spring 2017.

Timeline and way forward for the HOLAS II assessments

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the updated timeline for the HOLAS II project (document 3-1, Presentation 1). The Meeting noted that the integrated thematic assessments on biodiversity, eutrophication, hazardous substances and the application of the BSPII approach will be carried out in January-February 2017 and are planned to be evaluated by Contracting Parties through a set of HELCOM workshops tentatively scheduled in March 2017. The first version of the 2nd HELCOM holistic assessment will be considered for endorsement by State and Conservation 6-2017, tentatively held in second half of May 2016, and for approval at HOD 52 to be held 20-21 June 2017.
- The Meeting noted that the delivery of national data for the purpose of HOLAS II is critical for the successful implementation of the assessment tools and that an overview of current status of data availability will be made for STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016 (7-11 November 2016).

Development of integrated assessment tools for biodiversity and hazardous substances

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- The Meeting took note of the development of the hazardous substances assessment tool under the BalticBOOST project, as presented by the Secretariat and BalticBOOST partner NIVA Denmark, and the recommendations from the [HELCOM workshop BalticBOOST HZ WS 2-2016](#) (**documents 2-4 and 4-2**).
 - The Meeting took note of the intersessional comments received from Germany, through the State and Conservation Working Group, on the outcome of the BalticBOOST workshop (**document 4-3**). Proposals from the workshop are in general supported by Germany, highlighting the need for full transparency of the assessment and the need for some further test cases as a decision base.
 - The Meeting took note that CHASE 3.0 is currently being updated through the BalticBOOST project based on the guidance provided through the two HELCOM workshops on developing the hazardous substances assessment. In comparison to CHASE 2.0, some main updates are: 1) the bio-effect compartment will be assessed by weighted averaging of the indicators not using chemical score 2) the confidence assessment will be revised so that it is carried out in analogy with the biodiversity (BEAT) and eutrophication (HEAT) assessment tools 3) the tool is coded in R with the aim to integrate the code in a semi-automated assessment system.
 - The Meeting took note of the view of Germany not to integrate the bio-effect compartment with other the compartments (concentration in biota, sediment, water) in the integrated assessment of hazardous substances. The reasoning behind this position is that sources behind specific substance concentrations can be identified and linked to pressures while biological effects may reflect many different pressures and cannot be linked to specific sources of contamination. The Meeting proposed that this issue should be considered when reviewing the results from additional test cases, i.e. when the effect of including the bio-effect compartments can be evaluated, and invited STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016 to conclude on the issue when considering the tool for endorsement.
 - The Meeting recalled that test cases have been carried out using the CHASE tool based on proposals from at the first HELCOM BalticBOOST workshop on the hazardous substance assessment tool (HELCOM BalticBOOST HZ WS 1-2016) and as further discussed and agreed by HOLAS II 5-2016 and State and Conservation 4-2016. The tests included to evaluate the outcome of the One-Out-All-Out approach (OOAO) vs the integrated CHASE assessment tool, as well as the use of different sets of indicators. Specifically the tests on indicators included use of 1) HELCOM core indicators only, 2) core indicators + three additional substances (HCB, DDE, Cu) and 3) 'all available substances' corresponding to core indicators + HCB, DDE, Cu + other hazardous substances monitored by the Contracting Parties including the WFD chemical status. The 'three additional substances' have been proposed by Contracting Parties through the data call on WFD assessment results on hazardous substances and their use in HOLAS II and discussed and considered by the HELCOM EN on hazardous substances, The inclusion/exclusion of the HELCOM core indicator on radionuclides was also tested.
 - Regarding the use of different sets of indicators, the Meeting took note that for the 'three additional substances' EQS values exists for HCB and DDE, but if using Cu or other additional substances it is necessary to agree on thresholds for these substances.
 - The Meeting took note of the consideration that the reliability of the assessment will increase with an increase in the number of indicators used but expressed hesitation to the use of additional substance for which commonly agreed threshold values are not available and proposed that the focus for the assessment of hazardous substances in HOLAS II should be on the HELCOM core indicators.
 - The Meeting discussed the proposal of the workshop to use the CHASE tool also for the assessment of coastal waters. This proposal is based on the view of the workshop that WFD assessments are not comparable between countries (see HELCOM BalticBOOST HZ WS 2-2016, document 2) while the CHASE tool will support a coherent assessment of coastal waters as well as a coherent assessment between coastal and offshore waters in HOLAS II. The Meeting was of the view that such decision will require additional test cases on the use of the CHASE tool compared with WFD assessment results in coastal waters.
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- The Meeting noted that in the preparation for STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016, which is to endorse the tool, additional test cases based on Danish, German, Lithuanian and Polish data will be carried out by the lead partner NIVA Denmark to support the decision. Finland, Latvia, Poland furthermore agreed to submit the requested WFD assessment results, preferably as shapefiles, to complete the compilation of WFD assessment results in coastal waters.
 - The Meeting noted the recommendation by the workshop to use of a minimum requirement list of substances to ensure an acceptable reliability in the assessment results for a specific assessment unit and noted that the BalticBOOST project partner NIVA Denmark will present a proposal to STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016.
 - The Meeting took note of the presentation by Henrik Nygård, representative of BalticBOOST partner SYKE, Finland, on the development of the biodiversity assessment tool (BEAT 3.0) and the recommendations from the workshop [HELCOM BalticBOOST Biodiv WS 2-2016](#) (**documents 2-5 and 4-1, Presentation 3**).
 - The Meeting recalled that a set of tests were made using the BEAT 3.0 tool based on proposals from the first HELCOM BalticBOOST workshop on the biodiversity assessment tool (HELCOM BalticBOOST Biodiv WS 1-2016) and as further discussed and agreed by HOLAS II 5-2016 and State and Conservation 4-2016. The tests included to evaluate the use of the so called criteria vs species-based approach (see e.g. Annex 3, [Outcome of HOLAS II 5 2016](#)), weighted averaging vs OAO at different levels of integration, and the use of different number of indicators in the assessment.
 - The Meeting supported the recommendation from the workshop to use weighted averaging as a default integration approach, at least to the level of ecosystem components, taking note that the position in Germany is not set yet.
 - The Meeting did not support the proposal of the workshop to complement the weighted averaging approach with presentation of the “worst case scenario” based on the OAO approach at all levels, as it was not clear how such assessment results would be used or interpreted. The Meeting noted that the underlying information for the ‘worst case scenario’ is readily available at all assessment levels through the results of the individual indicator evaluations.
 - The Meeting proposed to continue the integration all the way to the level of biodiversity making use of the OAO approach between elements to arrive at the status of biodiversity, as this was conceived as more transparent and technically more robust, taking note that the position of Denmark and Poland on this issue is not yet set.
 - The Meeting underlined that the presentation of the status of biodiversity should also provide information on the status of elements and that this should be considered in the development of visualization of results.
 - The Meeting noted that BEAT 3.0 allows assessments using both the species and the criteria based approach. The Meeting noted that for the HOLAS II biodiversity assessment, the tool can be customized in this and other regards as needed, pending the revision of the Commission Decision on GES criteria and taking into account the development of the article 8 guidance.
 - The Meeting supported the recommendation from the workshop to make use of relevant HELCOM core indicators on eutrophication also in the biodiversity assessment as well as biological WFD indicators to increase the representation of indicators reflecting the condition of habitats.
 - The Meeting discussed the proposal on how to assess confidence in the assessment, and requested the BalticBOOST project to develop the proposal further and present the results to STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016, including to evaluate the consequences of each of the two options for how to deal with cases when a primary criterion is not represented by any indicator (i.e. to automatically set the assessment result to “low” or to set the confidence to 0 for that criterion).
 - The Meeting stressed the importance for Contracting Parties to clarify the national position on the structure of the biodiversity and hazardous substance assessment tools in advance of STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016.
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Economic and social analyses

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the proposal for a framework for the socioeconomic analyses in HOLAS II (**document 5-1, Presentation 5**).
- The Meeting took note that for the 'use of marine waters' approach economic data is gathered for different sectors, e.g. on production value, profits, number of employees, value added. The selection of human activities and sectors for the analysis in TAPAS is fisheries, aquaculture, tourism and leisure activities, energy production, and transport. Testing of the framework in the TAPAS project is based and harmonized data from Eurostat, trans-national studies and NACE codes applied to Estonia and Finland. In the case that statistics have limited relevance, guidelines will be proposed on how they could be modified to be more relevant. Such guidance was welcomed by the European Commission to consider how Eurostat statistics could be developed to meet the requirements of use of marine waters analysis.
- The Meeting discussed the data needed to expand the case studies on the use of marine waters to other countries than Estonia and Finland. The Meeting took note that the data sources used in TAPAS (e.g. Eurostat) include information for most countries and it could therefore be relatively simple to expand the analysis to the other countries for the selected activities if the data is made available by these countries within the lifetime of TAPAS, and that this work could also continue further if funding for ESA work beyond TAPAS becomes available, e.g. through the SPICE application. In the case that data are not easily available, the continued analyses would need to be driven by the work of national experts in the ESA expert network during 2017.
- The meeting took note that the proposed cost of degradation analyses in HOLAS II is primarily based on the assessment of the benefits lost if GES not reached. Estimates for the region are based on data from existing economic valuation studies of the environment. The information compiled through the TAPAS project and used in the regional ESA will be made available for countries to use in national reporting if desired. Currently, information on cost of degradation is best available for eutrophication.
- The Meeting noted that if resources are available in 2017 it will be possible to continue with regional cost of degradation analyses for additional descriptors.
- The Meeting agreed to aim for integrating the ESA results in the chapters of status and pressures on the marine environment of the summary report. If this way of presentation is not seen as appropriate when a fuller view of available results is evident, considering the need to give the results good visibility, a second option would be to give this information as a separate chapter. In the case no further external funding is available for continued ESA analysis in 2017, the TAPAS project report will be available as a source of reference.

Assessment of pressures including the development of the Baltic Sea impact index

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the update on spatial ecosystem components data to be used in the Baltic Sea Impact Index undertaken through the TAPAS project (**document 6-1, Presentation 7**).
- The Meeting took note of the outstanding issues and recommendations from the second TAPAS workshop on the BSPII ([TAPAS Pressure Index WS 2-2016](#)) as regards the ecosystem component maps to be used in the BSII and the proposals from the TAPAS project based on analyses that have taken place after the workshop.
- The Meeting took note of that the ecosystem components maps are based on different methods (e.g. based on current data or potential distribution) and the view of the TAPAS workshop to preferably use potential distribution maps in the BSII, e.g. including former spawning areas for cod. The Meeting recalled that the Baltic Sea impact index should as far as possible reflect the time period 2011-2016

and was of the view that the index should not reflect historic aspects, whereas these should be included in other sections of the HOLAS II report. The meeting furthermore recommended that predicted distribution maps should only be used in the case where no other data is available.

- The Meeting noted the proposal from the TAPAS workshop to reconsider the use of Natura 2000 habitats as ecosystem components in the BSII since the different methods have been used to map Natura 2000 sites by Contracting Parties and the mapping is not exhaustive. The Meeting considered the analyses carried out by the TAPAS project to evaluate the decision in this regard. The Meeting supported the continued use of the Natura 2000 habitats maps in the BSII as the exclusion of the Natura 2000 habitats from the BSII would result in the omission of ecologically important areas not covered by other ecosystem components, e.g. offshore sandbanks and reefs, submarine structures made by leaking gas and many shallow coastal bays.
- The Meeting considered the recommendation from the TAPAS WS to develop ecosystem components layers for pelagic habitats based on e.g. salinity and temperature regimes. The Meeting did not support this proposal, however recognized that to define pelagic habitats analogous to broad scale habitats could be useful for the assessment of the status of pelagic habitats.
- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the proposed process to review and verify spatial datasets (**document 6-3, Presentation 9**). The data review is to be done through HELCOM Data and Map Service where the data and resulting maps are made available for access for HELCOM representatives only. Acceptance is requested for the datasets collected through data calls and datasets retrieved from open sources will be done through a dedicated HELCOM workspace. Comments on the dataset and maps should be provided directly to the Secretariat.
- The Meeting agreed that the request on the approval process should be primarily addressed to the HOLAS II core team in copy to the Pressure and State and Conservation Working Groups.
- The Meeting took note of the presentation by Samuli Korpinen, representative of TAPAS partner SYKE, on the development of the Baltic Sea Pressure and Impact Index (**document 6-4, Presentation 10**) and the recommendations from the second HELCOM TAPAS workshop on the BSPII (TAPAS Pressure Index WS 2-2016).
- The Meeting took note that the work on developing the BSII under the TAPAS project will end by the end of 2016 and that the project, based on guidance by the TAPAS workshops and the HOLAS II core team, will propose a methodology to be used in HOLAS II for endorsement at STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016. Case studies will be made on the datasets that will be available during the life of the project.
- The Meeting took note that there is a planned update of the BSII assessment in spring 2017 for use in HOLAS II since all data layers will not be ready by the time of finalization of the BSII work in the TAPAS project.
- The Meeting recalled that HOLAS II 5-2016 proposed to test the use of the CHASE assessment as a proxy of pressures from hazardous substances. The reasoning behind the proposal was the difficulty to aggregate datasets on input of different hazardous substances as the substances have different impacts on the environment, and in addition the quality of waterborne input data is anticipated to be poor.
- The Meeting concluded that using CHASE assessment results calculated per assessment unit as input data in the BSII assessment is the currently best available option. The Meeting noted that as many of the measurements are taken from biota (e.g. herring) they represent a wider area than the sampling station and thus results per assessment units can be considered representative.
- The Meeting took note of the proposal from the TAPAS project to use concentration of nutrients as proxy for input of nutrients and the possibility to use maps from EMODNET Chemistry on the concentration of nitrogen and phosphorus in the Baltic Sea.
- The Meeting supported the proposal that for nutrients the relevant layer to include in BSII would be nutrient concentration layers (nitrogen and phosphorous) as a proxy for input. The Meeting noted

that the core indicators are assessed per assessment units, and that for the purposes of the index calculation an integrated map based on station data would be preferable. The Meeting requested the TAPAS project to explore the use of the same data as for the HELCOM core indicators on nutrients in communication with EUTRO-OPER EXTENDED.

- The Meeting agreed that information on input of nutrients by sub-basins provided by PLC-6 project in early 2017 will not be used in the BSII, however the information will be presented elsewhere in the HOLAS II report.
- The Meeting took note of the low response rate to the survey and discussed how the response rate could be improved. The Meeting proposed that suitable HELCOM groups/networks/projects that are meeting should be approached and asked to complete relevant sections of the survey. It was furthermore noted that Denmark has financed experts to respond to the survey, and that in Finland a national workshop will take place dedicated to filling in the survey. The Meeting agreed that HOLAS II core team members should encourage respondents to fill in the survey in wide circles nationally, and invited the Secretariat to invite in particular the core indicator Lead Country representatives to respond to the survey, and to consider if the BONUS Secretariat is willing to distribute the survey in their network. The Meeting advised the TAPAS project to extend the deadline for responding to the survey until 31 October to ensure that a sufficient number of responses are received, noting that the results will be communicated to STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016.
- The Meeting took note of the presentation Finland on the proposal for how to assess hydrographical conditions (Descriptor 7) (**Presentation 11**).
- The Meeting took note of the proposal of the drafting group to focus on the potential of effects leading to permanent loss of hydrological conditions (**Presentation 12**).
- The Meeting agreed on the proposed approach as a way of providing information on areas where potential problems may occur, and noted that it may not be possible to assign sensitivity scores for the habitats to the different types of constructions or cumulative effects within HOLAS II and that the assessment could be considered as a first step towards assessing descriptor 7. It should be avoided that the D7 preliminary assessment unnecessarily problematizes any environmental pressures.
- The Meeting invited the TAPAS project and national experts to identify the list of BSPII datasets that are relevant, carry out the proposed preliminary assessment and prepare a method description describing the sensitivity values applied for the habitats. The HOLAS II core group agreed to be the contact point for the TAPAS project for carrying out the approach.

Update on HELCOM activities feeding into HOLAS II

- The Meeting took note of the presentation of the eutrophication thematic assessment as presented by the Chair of the HELCOM Intersessional Network on Eutrophication, Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen, Finland (**Presentation 13**).
- The Meeting took note that the assessment will be carried out using the assessment system developed in the EUTRO-OPER project where the data is extracted from COMBINE, calculated using scripts and algorithms and the assessment is checked by national experts in several steps of the assessment process.
- The Meeting took note that contracting parties have been requested to update their WFD indicators for the HOLAS II period 2011-2016 where possible, and that if an update is not possible the time period closest to the assessment period will be used which in practice means the time period for the latest WFD reporting. It is anticipated that there will be some differences in the coastal water.
- The Meeting took note that the HEAT aggregation is currently structure around the draft Commission Decision on GES version 4 that was available in June, and noted that it would be possible to adjust

the aggregation in accordance with the final version of the decision if it is adopted in November. The Meeting discussed the possible need to use one-out-all-out between the indicators and noted that also this change in the aggregation is also technically possible.

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the upcoming HELCOM Maritime Assessment and recent activities in the field in HELCOM (**Presentation 14**).
- The Meeting took note of the large amount of maritime data available at HELCOM that will be used as the background for the Maritime Assessment, including data from MSP projects, AIS data on ship movements, AIS shipping statistics, AIS fisheries maps and AIS accident risk assessment and also other activities covering fisheries, aquaculture, dumped hazardous materials, cables and offshore energy.
- The Meeting took note of the timeline of publishing the maritime assessment by March 2017, noting that some delays have been identified for example in reporting data on dumped hazardous materials.

Outline and content of the HOLAS II report

- The Meeting discussed the data products and key graphic outputs from the project and followed-up on the development of a visual identity and web design for the HOLAS II outputs.
- The Meeting took note of the draft outline for the HOLAS II report as presented by the Secretariat (**Presentation 16**) and included in **Annex 2**.
- The Meeting was of the view that it will be important to present clear messages from the project and to develop good infographics in the reporting. The Meeting recommended that a professional on scientific communication is connected to the writing process and recognized that including a person who has a fresh eye on the material could be a preferable way forward to identify key messages and produce a summary with conclusions based on the large amount of available assessment results. The Meeting thanked Finland, Germany and Sweden for expressing willingness to explore possibilities to supporting this work.
- The Meeting requested the Secretariat to develop a timetable and an overview of the drafting duties and signing-off process for all the different components of the holistic assessment (both written and online), this could be based on the outline with information on which subsidiary body will sign off on the product up until 2018.
- The Meeting agreed that the HOLAS II core team will be involved in the intersessional further planning of the preparation of the HOLAS II material, including the setting up of a writing team for the summary report which will consist of members of HOLAS Core Group, Secretariat and a professional in scientific communication, and planning the structure of the thematic assessments.

Any other business

- The Meeting agreed to convene the next meeting of HOLAS II 7-2017 on 4-6 April 2017, and thanked Denmark for offering to host the meeting in Copenhagen.
- The Meeting agreed that an online meeting of HOLAS II core team would be held in the afternoon 19 January to follow up on the outcome of STATE & CONSERVATION 5-2016, HOD 51-2016 and the MSFD Committee in November.