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Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION
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Agenda Item	3J – Matters arising from other meetings of relevance for the Working Group
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Background

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

- [FISH 5-2016](#), Copenhagen, Denmark, 16-17 November 2016
- [HELCOM 38-2017](#), Helsinki, Finland, 28 February – 1 March 2017
- [HOLAS II 7-2017](#), Copenhagen, Denmark, 4-6 April 2017
- [PRESSURE 6-2017](#), St. Petersburg, Russia, 25-27 April 2017

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

- 3rd Meeting of the Task Force on migratory fish species ([FISH-M 3-2016](#)), Copenhagen, Denmark 15-16 November 2016
- 13th Meeting of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group ([HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 13-2016](#)), Riga, Latvia, 24-25 November 2016
- Annual meeting of the ZEN ZIIM project ([ZEN-ZIIM 2016](#)) Stockholm, Sweden, 24-25 November 2016
- HELCOM BalticBOOST Workshop on the development of joint principles to define environmental targets for pressures affecting the seabed habitats ([BalticBOOST Theme 3 WS 2-2016](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 28-29 November 2016
- Fifth meeting of the intersessional network on eutrophication ([IN-Eutrophication 5-2017](#)), Online, 16 December 2016
- 5th Meeting of HELCOM Expert Network on Hazardous Substances ([En-HAz 5-2016](#)), Online, 19 December 2016
- Online meeting of HOLAS II Core Team (Project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea) ([HOLAS II 6E-2017](#)), Online, 19 December 2016
- Sixth meeting of the intersessional network on eutrophication ([IN-Eutrophication 6-2017](#)), Online, 3 February 2017
- 4th Meeting of the continuation of the project on Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of ecosystem-based management [FISH-PRO II 4-2017](#), Tallinn, Estonia, 13-15 February 2017
- 6th Meeting of the Expert Network on Hazardous Substances ([EN-HZ 6-2017](#)) Stockholm, Sweden, 14-16 February 2017
- Workshop on the HOLAS II eutrophication assessment ([HELCOM SPICE Eutro WS 1-2017](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 14 March 2017
- Seventh meeting of the intersessional network on eutrophication ([IN-Eutrophication 7-2017](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 15-16 March 2017
- Workshop on the HOLAS II biodiversity assessment ([HELCOM SPICE Biodiv WS 1-2017](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 15 March 2017
- Workshop on the HOLAS II hazardous substances assessment ([HELCOM SPICE HZ WS 1-2017](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 16 March 2017

- Workshop on the pressure and impact assessment ([HELCOM SPICE BSII WS 1-2017](#)), Helsinki, Finland, 21 March 2017
- Workshop on the HOLAS II Economic and social analyses ([HOLAS II ESA WS](#)), Stockholm, Sweden, 31 March 2017
- Online meeting for planning RED LIST WS 1-2017 ([Red List WS planning 1-2017](#)), Online, 3 April 2017
- 7th Meeting of the Project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea ([HOLAS II 7-2017](#)), Copenhagen, Denmark
- 7th Meeting of the Expert Group on Monitoring of Radioactive Substances in the Baltic Sea ([HELCOM MORS EG 7-2017](#)), Tallinn, Estonia, 2-4 May 2017

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to take note of the information.

Outcome of fifth meeting of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries ([FISH 5-2016](#)), Copenhagen, Denmark, 16-17 November 2016

[Work plan of FISH, 2017-2019](#) (adopted by HOD 51-2016)

[Work plan of Task force group on migratory fish \(FISH-M\), 2017-2019](#) (adopted by HOD 51-2016)

1.1 The Meeting decided to postpone the election of Chair and Vice-Chairs of the HELCOM Group on Ecosystem-based Sustainable Fisheries until the next Meeting of the group.

Agenda Item 3 Matters arising from other HELCOM work of relevance for the Group

Indicators and assessments

3.3 The Meeting considered the draft third thematic assessment for coastal fish in the Baltic Sea (document 3-1) as presented by Jens Olsson, the Project Manager of HELCOM expert network for coastal fish (FISH-PRO II) which is elaborating the coastal fish assessment.

3.4 The Meeting welcomed the draft publication and commented that the management measures considered, but not included, in Chapter 4 of the coastal fish assessment should be mentioned in the text with the reasoning why they were not included.

3.5 The Meeting took note of the clarification by the Project Manager of FISH-PRO II that there is not enough scientific evidence to support the use of maximum landing size of pike or pikeperch as a management measure.

3.10 The Meeting took note of the information on the core indicators on coastal fish (document 3-5). The Meeting noted that Germany retained their indicator specific study reservation at State & Conservation 5-2016, for the core indicators 'Abundance of coastal fish key functional groups' and 'Abundance of key coastal fish species' and that the lead country Sweden and Germany will discuss the issue bilaterally in early December to explore if some issues could still be clarified before HOD 51-2016.

3.11 The Meeting took note of the Danish comments concerning the coastal fish indicators by Joseianne Støttrup, DTU Aqua (Presentation 1).

3.12 The Meeting took note of the Danish comments concerning their continued reservations on the core indicators on coastal fish, migratory fish, offshore fish, cumulative impacts and incidental by-catch.

3.13 The Meeting took note that concerning the core indicator 'Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear' (document 3-7) the underlying data is currently insufficient and the data collection within DC MAP is one way how to ensure better data availability in the future.

3.16 The Meeting agreed that "Incidental bycatch" is the correct term to be used in further HELCOM work.

Agenda Item 5 Interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems

Interactions between fisheries and marine ecosystems

5.5 The Meeting recalled that currently no formal regular exchange of information exists between HELCOM groups and the fisheries management work taking place within BALTFISH or the EU-Russia arrangement. Occasional information exchange has taken place via individual coastal countries who have orally reported on some BALTFISH/EU-RU treaty activities at HELCOM FISH meetings.

5.6 The Meeting took note that formal arrangement for regular and direct information exchange would enable exploring synergies between activities taking place within the different bodies and remove uncertainties regarding overlap of activities, for the benefit of national work.

5.7 The Meeting considered the draft plan for closer cooperation between marine environment and fisheries management in the Baltic Sea (document 5-3), agreed that the document 5-3 should be submitted to HODs, which should take the appropriate steps to initiate a process for regular information exchange between HELCOM FISH, BALTFISH and the EU-RU fisheries commission based on the three steps outlined in document 5-3 namely:

- Chairs of HELCOM FISH and BALTFISH, as well as representatives of the EU-Russia fisheries treaty could be invited to initiate communication.
- The first step would be to agree on a regular (annual basis) exchange of 1) reports/main decisions of completed meetings of direct relevance as well as 2) a schedule of planned meetings with main anticipated agenda points/issues.
- As appropriate, the effectiveness of this information exchange could be jointly evaluated.

5.8 The Meeting agreed that besides general information exchange it would be useful to specify further key issues for concrete cooperation to ensure added value and agreed that the next meeting of HELCOM FISH should consider the issue further based on intersessional developments.

5.10 The Meeting considered the latest information provided by Poland on the development of the questionnaire on alternative fishing gears/fishing techniques, amended after HELCOM FISH 4-2016 (document 5-4).

5.14 The Meeting agreed that Poland, Denmark, Sweden and Germany will form a correspondence group with the aim to further develop the document on alternative fishing gears as indicated and submit an updated document to the next meeting.

5.18 The Meeting welcomed the presentation by Mr. Marco Milardi, Project Coordinator of the BalticBOOST project, on the activities related to physical damage on the seafloor habitats (Presentation 3) and the presentation by Mr. Francois Bastardie, DTU Aqua, on the work carried out under BalticBOOST on the development of a specific tool to estimate fisheries impacts on the seafloor (Presentation 4).

5.21 The Meeting did not provide comments on the further development of BalticBOOST work, welcomed the clarification on the relationship between BalticBOOST to HOLAS II activities and asked to be informed on the process of integrating project outcomes related to fisheries.

5.22 The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Chair on behalf of Lotte Kindt-Larsen, DTU Aqua, on the work carried out in Denmark by DTU Aqua on the testing of fishing gear prototypes to protect the catch from seal predation (Presentation 5).

5.23 The Meeting took also note of the comment by BS AC (Danish fishermen) that, while the traps show promising results, they might not be economically feasible for traditional small scale fisheries use yet. It was noted that the use of these gears involves also a change in fishing behaviour to make them a viable alternative.

5.24 The Meeting invited the incidental catch subgroup under the HELCOM Seal expert group to present work undertaken intersessionally on seals-fisheries interactions at the next meeting.

5.25 The Meeting took note that, based on consultations with HELCOM FISH and HOD, a letter with HELCOM recommendations for the EU Data Collection Framework (DCF) revision was sent to the EU Commission on 25 May 2016, opening a communication channel between HELCOM and the EU process.

5.26 The Meeting took note of the current state of EU Data Collection Multiannual Plan (DC-MAP) in the Baltic Sea as presented by Joergen Dalskov, DTU Aqua, the Danish DC-MAP contact point (Presentation 6). He recommended that the HELCOM list of protected fish species to be updated and quality ensured as the Baltic Sea is the outskirts of the distribution area for most of the species listed and therefore cannot be regarded as species to be protected.

5.27 The Meeting took note that the DCF data collection activities are based on national work plans, that a Regional Coordination Group (RCG) has been established which has the task to consider and compile the needed data on fisheries activities and their environmental impacts from Baltic Sea coastal countries who are also members of the EU.

5.28 The Meeting noted that there are certain thresholds for collection of data (c.f. Presentation 6) and that recreational fisheries is covered by the DCF implementation within the Baltic RCG.

5.29 The Meeting took note that within the RCG, DC-MAP and RCG “end users” are so far considered to include organisations with which EU has a contract for management advice, e.g. ICES in the Baltic Sea (“fisheries management” is defined as also including impacts to the marine environment).

5.30 The Meeting took note of a presentation by Germany on incidental bycatch data needs for HELCOM indicators, which could be addressed by DCF data collection (Presentation 7).

5.36 The Meeting welcomed that Poland should lead intersessional drafting to specify in more detail the data needed by HELCOM processes for the next meeting of HELCOM FISH and invited the interested Contracting Parties and observers to participate in this work.

5.37 The Meeting invited the Baltic Sea coastal countries to present their national programmes to identify data gaps in more detail at the next meeting.

OUTCOME OF THE 38TH MEETING OF BALTIC MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION COMMISSION ([HELCOM 38-2017](#)), Helsinki Finland, 28 February – 1 March 2017

Agenda Item 1 High-level segment with a focus on ocean-related Sustainable Development Goals combined with regional issues important for the Baltic Sea area

High-level segment

- The draft report “Measuring progress for the same targets in the Baltic Sea” (document 2-2) provided background information for the debate during the high-level segment.
- In their debate, the high-level representatives highlighted particularly the following:
 - o HELCOM targets are well aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
 - o HELCOM can significantly contribute to the implementation of marine related SDGs in the Baltic Sea, also in a cross-cutting manner, and should take a coordinating role for these SDGs and make its active role visible;
 - o Implementation of HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) has progressed both on regional and national level, including to reach nutrient reduction targets, but needs to be further strengthened;

- Renewal of the BSAP with a time perspective until 2030 is the next step to be jointly undertaken by the Contracting Parties, in line with the SDGs;
- Examples of topics that need further attention by HELCOM are: eutrophication, marine litter, agriculture including improvement of soil management practices, biogas production, aquaculture, fisheries, shipping, climate change, circular economy including nutrient recycling, and maritime spatial planning.

[For further details on the discussion please refer to the full Outcome of the meeting].

Follow-up discussion

1.1 The regular meeting continued discussing the SDGs. The Meeting appreciated and approved the draft report “Measuring progress for the same targets in the Baltic Sea” (document 2-2) and decided to publish it after amending it based on the comments provided in the meeting and any additional comments to be provided to the Secretariat by **12 March 2017**.

- The Meeting thanked Ms, Laura Piriz from Sweden for representing HELCOM in the Preparatory Committee meeting of the SDG 14 Conference in New York on 15-16 February, as well as in the preceding meeting of the regional seas organisations convened by the UN Environment Programme. The Meeting recalled the possibility to register voluntary commitments and partnerships at both the SDG 14 conference in New York as well as the “Our Ocean” event in Malta on 5-6 October 2017.
- The Meeting supported in principle that existing regional HELCOM voluntary commitments will be registered for the Conference and that this activity should be coordinated among the Contracting Parties to avoid a possible overlap between commitments.
- The Meeting recalled that there would also be an opportunity to showcase HELCOM progress via national statements and agreed, following a proposal by the Russian Federation, on the organisation of a possible side event with HELCOM involvement at the SDG 14 conference.
- The Meeting agreed to establish an intersessional correspondence group on identifying and drafting material for the regional HELCOM partnerships and HELCOM voluntary commitments to be registered at the SDG 14 conference and “Our Ocean” conference in Malta for consideration by the Heads of Delegation. The Meeting tasked the intersessional group to also consider regional input to the call of action for the final New York document. The Meeting welcomed the interest of Finland, Sweden, Denmark, EU and Germany to participate in the correspondence group with support of the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 3 Next HELCOM Ministerial Meeting

- The Meeting took note of the information by the European Union on possible dates for the next HELCOM Ministerial Meeting in 2018 and supported that the meeting would be organized on 6 March 2018 back-to-back with the EU Environment Council in Brussels. The Meeting invited EU to confirm the possibility to organize the Ministerial Meeting on this concrete date.
- The Meeting decided to organize a regular HELCOM meeting in 2018 back-to-back to the Ministerial Meeting.

Agenda Item 4 Matters arising from the subsidiary bodies

Recommendations

- The Meeting considered the draft HELCOM Recommendation on ‘Conservation and Protection of Marine and Coastal Biotopes, Habitats and Biotope Complexes Categorized as Threatened According

to the HELCOM Red Lists', recalling the proposed change of wording by Denmark as presented at HOD 51-2016 (document 4-16).

- The Meeting took note that the bilateral communication between the Lead country Germany and Denmark that has taken place since HOD 51-2016 could not reach a joint proposal on the three open paragraphs.
- The Meeting considered the German proposal to amend the draft HELCOM Recommendation on threatened biotopes, habitats, and habitat complexes with alternative wording to the open paragraphs (document 4-17). The Meeting noted that Denmark is not in a position to agree on the proposed wording in document 4-17.
- The Meeting stressed the importance of reaching an agreement on the Recommendation in order to reach the HELCOM objectives and Ministerial Meeting commitments related to biodiversity and agreed to continue an intersessional dialogue with the aim to develop a joint draft proposal on the wording of the outstanding paragraphs in the preparation for State and Conservation 6-2017. All countries that wish to participate in the dialogue are welcome to inform the lead country Germany.

Core indicators

- The Meeting adopted the assessment unit specific threshold values for the core indicators Oxygen debt, Cyanobacterial blooms index, Total nutrients, State of the soft-bottom macrofauna community and Zooplankton mean size and total stock as well as adopted the revised threshold value for the 'State of the soft-bottom macrofauna community' in the Quark (documents 4-12, 4-14) as contained in **Annex 5**.
- The Meeting took note of the proposal by Germany to test the phytoplankton indicator on diatom/dinoflagellate ratio in HOLAS II. The Meeting recalled the study reservation by Denmark on the indicator due to scientific disagreement, however, noted that Denmark can agree on the indicator to be tested in sub-basins that are not shared by Denmark. The Meeting noted that at present a threshold value has been proposed for one sub-basin not shared by Denmark i.e. the Eastern Gotland Basin. The Meeting invited countries sharing the Eastern Gotland Basin (Estonia, Latvia, Sweden, Lithuania, Russia and Poland) to test the indicator in the HOLAS II project.
- The Meeting noted that all Contracting Parties except Denmark propose to use the HELCOM HEAT method to assess eutrophication in coastal waters and that Denmark wishes to use the results of the WFD assessment of ecological quality.
- The Meeting took note of the proposal by Sweden for inclusion of size distribution of fish into HOLAS II (document 4-13) and agreed to use information of size distribution of the fish community in the Baltic Sea based on peer reviewed scientific publications into the 'State of the Baltic Sea report' supported by Denmark. While agreeing on the proposal, the Meeting regretted that there is still no agreement on how to develop a quantitative indicator on the size distribution of fish and encouraged the further development of the indicator to continue in the future.
- The Meeting noted the proposal from Finland to come to an agreement on the LFI indicator on a sub-basin scale and that Finland is prepared to work with Sweden to test the indicator in the northern Baltic Sea.

Underwater noise

- The Meeting took note of the presentation on recent progress and remaining issues to meet the HELCOM 2013 Ministerial Declaration regarding underwater noise (**Presentation**).
- The Meeting agreed that comments to the report on Noise sensitivity of animals in the Baltic Sea (considered at HOD 51-2016) and documents 4-7 and 4-8 can be submitted to the Secretariat by 22 March (marta.ruiz@helcom.fi). The Meeting furthermore invited the HELCOM SEAL EG to review the report on Noise sensitivity by the same deadline.
- The Meeting agreed that the open issues addressed by the Contracting Parties should be considered by HELCOM EN Noise. Based on considerations by EN Noise, document 4-7 will be

further developed by HOD 52-2017 with the view of reaching an agreement on the document and thereafter share the document with other RSCs and TG Noise.

Work plans/Terms of Reference for groups

- The Meeting considered establishing a Correspondence Group on Pharmaceuticals and approved the proposed draft Terms of Reference (document 4-5-Rev.1).
- The Meeting noted that the ToR includes a task to further develop the pharmaceutical indicators, instead of within the HELCOM expert network on hazardous substances, and contribute to the HOLAS II assessment and decided to revisit the ToR together with the ToR of the expert network on hazardous substances in 2018.
- The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to take a lead in the work of the Correspondence group on Pharmaceuticals and inform the Secretariat of their possible offers by the Pressure 6-2017 meeting.

HELCOM projects

- The Meeting took note of the information by the Secretariat about the status of the consideration on a Baltic Sea workshop on EBSA (Ecologically and Biologically Sensitive Areas) under CBD Convention and of the information by Russia on an EBSA workshop organized in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea in April 2017 in Baku. The Meeting took note of the view by Russian that it would be important to organizing the EBSA workshop in the Baltic Sea. The Executive Secretary in consultation with Finland will come back to the Heads of Delegation intersessionally to conclude on organizing the Baltic Sea EBSA workshop in 2018.

Agenda Item 5 Any other business

- The Meeting took note of the information on the Baltic Sea Days, to be held in St. Petersburg on 22-23 March 2017 (document 7-1), including a draft programme of the Forum. The Meeting appreciated organization of the Forum and invited Contracting Parties and Observers to delegate representative to the Forum and contribute to its agenda.
- The Meeting took note of the information by Germany on the 8th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, to take place on 13-14 June 2017 in Berlin hosted by German Federal Foreign Office, with the motto “connectivity”. More details are available on the website: <http://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/8th-annual-forum>.

Outcome of the Seventh Meeting of the Project for the development of the second holistic assessment (HOLAS II 7-2017), 4-6 April 2017, Copenhagen, Denmark

Agenda item 3 Timeline and state of development of HOLAS II reports, materials and web products

- The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat on the overview and outline of the first version of the ‘State of the Baltic Sea’ report (document 3-1, **Presentation 1**). The Meeting recalled that the summary report is focused on presenting the key messages and results of the assessment of environmental status while information on methods will be provided as supplementary material, and that core indicator reports and fact sheets for human activities, pressures and ecosystem component layers will be provided as supporting material.

- The Meeting took note that written comments from the core team on the meeting documents under agenda items 4 to 8 can be submitted to the Secretariat by 13 April 2017 (lana.bergstrom@helcom.fi). The comments will be considered when finalizing the summary report for submission to State & Conservation 6-2017 (15-19 May) that will aim at the technical endorsement of the first version of the 'State of the Baltic Sea' report. GEAR 16-2017 (23-24 May) will consider recommending to HOD 52-2017 (20-21 June) to publish the report. As the timetable is tight the Contracting Parties are requested to prepare their national position on the report for the State & Conservation 6-2017 meeting. The Meeting further noted that the core indicator reports are currently being updated to be based on data from 2011-2015 and will be considered at State & Conservation 6-2017.
- The Meeting discussed different phrasings to be used in the 'State of the Baltic Sea' report for indicators such as the expression achieving/not achieving threshold value. For the integrated assessment the terminology of the BSAP could be used, i.e. affected/unaffected by eutrophication, disturbed/undisturbed by hazardous substances, unfavorable/favorable biodiversity. Good/not good status could be used as seen fit in the context.

Agenda item 4 Results for human activities

- The Meeting took note of the draft chapter on 'Humans and the environment' in the 'State of the Baltic Sea' report (document 4-1).
- The Meeting noted that the choice of maps of human activities currently presented in the draft chapter 3 has been made to reflect the activities for which the economic analyses are available.
- The Meeting proposed to:
 - o highlight in the main text that all data collected on human activities and pressures within HOLAS II are available and have been taken into account in the assessment,
 - o consider to highlight major activities, e.g. based on monetary terms or spatial coverage,
 - o clarify that chapter 3 is focused on the use of marine waters, but also clarify which uses of marine waters are dependent on a healthy sea,
 - o consider showing already in this chapter an example on how the activities are overlapping with selected ecosystem layers,
 - o consider including a case study that outlines the whole impact chain from activity to impact on the environment and further link to the economic analysis to provide a full example.
- The Meeting took note of the economic analysis of cost of degradation of the environment that will be included in chapters 3, 4 and 5. The analysis represents a change in the economic value or human well-being as response to changes in the environment. The workshop recommended to include the cost of degradation analysis related to the following topics:
 - o recreation in chapter 3.
 - o eutrophication in chapter 4.
 - o underwater meadows and fish stocks in chapter 5.

Agenda item 5 Core indicator based assessment of pressures on the Baltic Sea

- The Meeting took note of the draft section on 'Eutrophication' (document 5-7). The Meeting noted that the results on the eutrophication assessment are not final yet due to ongoing improvements by IN-Eutrophication. The IN-Eutrophication has, among other things, re-scaled the indicators by defining minimum and maximum values for the indicators, and also considered the weighing of indicators in the integrated assessment. The pending updates are, however, not expected to change the overall status of eutrophication in the respective sub-basin.

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- The Meeting proposed the following:
 - o include a paragraph on internal loading of nutrients and how this affects the measures taken to reduce the input of nutrients,
 - o highlight improvements of the eutrophication assessment compared to the previous assessment through the agreement on new indicators.
 - The Meeting took note of the draft section on 'Hazardous substances' (document 5-6).
 - The Meeting took note that based on the recommendation from the HELCOM SPICE hazardous substance workshop ([HELCOM SPICE HZ WS 1-2017](#)) the integrated assessment on contamination status has been recalculated to include data also from the so called 'initial status assessment'. The 'initial status assessment' data does not meet the criteria of the script used to calculate the core indicators, however, it does meet the specifications for the core indicators on which matrices should be sampled etc. As the 'initial status assessment' data does not meet the script-criteria the data are not included in the core indicator result displayed in the core indicator key message maps, however intended to be included in the more detailed results of the reports.
 - The Meeting supported to continue the development of the integrated hazardous substance assessment based on the inclusion of data from the 'initial status assessment', noting that Denmark was not in a position to give a final view on the approach.
 - The Meeting proposed to:
 - o explain better in the main text why the 12 substances have been chosen for the core indicators,
 - o in the text on the respective core indicators, add information on sources and trends, also indicate if no trends are detectable,
 - o in figures presenting results per indicator, link back to the actual core indicator results by identifying the 'initial status assessment' data.
 - The Meeting took note of the draft section on 'Marine litter' (document 5-3) and the new proposed graphs presented to the Meeting and made recommendations on editorial and visual improvements as included in **Annex 2**.
 - The Meeting took note of the draft chapter on 'Seabed loss and disturbance' (document 5-8).
 - The Meeting recalled the endorsement by State & Conservation 5-2016 to use, in the HOLAS II project, the approach of the Baltic Sea Impact Index to assess impact of pressures on benthic species and habitats.
 - The Meeting took note that the definition of physical loss and disturbance is the same as used for the BSII (see e.g. [HELCOM SPICE BSII WS 1-2017](#), document 2) and that further details on the methodological approach for assessing loss and disturbance of the seabed will be provided as supplementary material to the summary report.
 - The Meeting supported to use the type of results presented in the document in the summary report, taking note that Denmark is not in a position to support the content of the chapter at this time.
 - The Meeting proposed to:
 - o include information on the confidence in the assessment, noting that this will reflect confidence in the spatial information at the level of each pressure and ecosystem layer, and for the assessment of impact also the confidence in the sensitivity scores based on expert surveys,
 - o clarify that the results are based on currently available spatial data, that there may be gaps, and highlight if there are areas where results are difficult to conclude on due to lack of data,
 - o clarify that expert judgement is used in the assessment of impacts (i.e. the expert survey),
 - o use another term than 'unimpacted' since no area of the Baltic Sea can be assumed to be unimpacted,
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- provide in the supplementary report also information on % of habitat impacted per country.
- The Meeting took note of the draft chapter on 'Extraction of species by fishing' (document 5-4).
- The Meeting proposed to:
 - clarify that a stock is assessed as achieving good status when it meets both criteria, and include the overall results in a figure or Table 2,
 - impacts and recovery; reflect on which species are achieving and not achieving good status.
- The Meeting took note of the draft chapter on 'Hunting of seals and water birds' (document 5-5).
- The Meeting agreed that information on hunting of water birds from additional countries should be submitted to the Secretariat as soon as possible, and by 13 April 2017 at the latest (lena.bergstrom@helcom.fi).
- The Meeting proposed to:
 - reflect in the text that several countries in the southern Baltic Sea have protection on birds such as ducks,
 - focus the text on hunting of marine species, and include information on cormorant,
 - link hunting to the status of hunted species in the chapter of biodiversity.
- The Meeting took note of the draft chapter on 'Underwater noise' (document 5-1).
- The Meeting took note that the text and figures will be updated to be aligned with other HELCOM documents and reports related to underwater noise which are currently being revised (e.g. documents 4-7 and 4-8 of HELCOM 38 -2017, report on 'Noise sensitivity of animals in the Baltic Sea').
- The Meeting noted that in the draft revision of MSFD Annex III the term 'sound' is used instead of 'noise'.
- The Meeting proposed to:
 - consider reflecting on historical noise levels based on information on the development over time of shipping,
 - continue using the term 'underwater noise' as chapter heading and also in the text when referring to activities that are anticipated to have negative impacts but use the term 'sound' when referring to the topic in general.
- The Meeting took note of the draft section on 'Non-indigenous species' (document 5-3).
- The Meeting noted that the AquaNIS database is the main source of data for the indicator however that missing data have been complemented through the data approval process for core indicators. The Meeting took note that the indicator data set is still being updated based on new information from Denmark and Germany and the results are thus not final.
- The Meeting proposed to:
 - make clear that the indicator is based on new introductions to the Baltic Sea,
 - include additional information on the newly introduced species, e.g. if they are known to cause harmful impacts in other regions,
 - if possible, compare with the results from the initial HELCOM holistic assessment,
 - mention also aquaculture as a source of introduction, e.g. Pacific oyster in Danish water, which could also be given as an example of introduction of a species with wide impact,
 - consider to include a reflection on NIS as a source of benefits, e.g. income, if a suitable example can be provided.

Agenda item 6 Core indicator-based assessments of biodiversity and food webs

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- The Meeting took note of the results of the assessment of benthic habitats (document 6-5).
 - The Meeting took note that distribution of anoxic areas is proposed to be shown in a map in the section on benthic habitats and that the current map is based on data originating from IOW to one single map layer, and is inverted from the benthic ecosystem component layer developed for use in the BSII.
 - The Meeting agreed to improve the map on anoxic/hypoxic areas for use in the benthic habitat chapter, showing also e.g. variation in oxygen concentration in the assessment period. Germany will contribute to the development of the map in communication with the Secretariat, and with support from Estonia and Sweden.
 - The Meeting welcomed that Estonia can provide data on temporal development of the depth distribution of bladderwrack from one additional area.
 - The Meeting proposed to:
 - o in the main section on status assessment, clarify that the assessment does not provide a full assessment of benthic habitats that currently mainly addresses soft-bottom habitats, highlight the aim to cover also other habitats in the future,
 - o consider including results from the Habitats Directive,
 - o if possible, include long time series for state of soft-bottom macrofauna community from additional stations in the Baltic Sea,
 - o highlight that the assessment is not complete, e.g. that the soft-bottom indicator is not represented in the entire Baltic Sea, and consider adding a penalty to the confidence assessment to make this clear in the integrated assessment map.
 - The Meeting took note of the results of the assessment of pelagic habitats (document 6-4).
 - The Meeting took note that due to the lack of agreed threshold values for the zooplankton in the southern Baltic Sea the integrated assessment is in many assessment units represented only by the status of indicators reflecting primary producers (i.e. 'cyanobacterial blooms' and 'chlorophyll-a').
 - The Meeting proposed to:
 - o highlight that the assessment is not complete, e.g. that the zooplankton indicator is not represented in the entire Baltic Sea, that an indicator reflecting phytoplankton composition is missing, and consider adding a penalty to the confidence assessment to make this clear in the integrated assessment map,
 - o mention the importance of oxygen concentration also in this chapter,
 - o mention temperature as a driving factor behind changes in pelagic communities.
 - The Meeting took note of the results of the assessment of birds (document 6-2).
 - The Meeting took note that based on the outcome of the HELCOM SPICE Biodiversity Workshop ([HELCOM SPICE Biodiv WS 1-2017](#)) the assessment of birds has been proposed to be revised and be based on core indicators instead of species groups as previously proposed by the HOLAS II online meeting (HOLAS II 6E-2017).
 - The Meeting agreed to base the assessment of birds on the core indicators while displaying the results for species groups separately. This aggregates wintering and breeding birds separately and refers to the clear and transparent indicator results, but gives also information on the different species groups. The Meeting noted that the text will be further elaborated to clarify the reasons for differences between core indicator results and the HELCOM Red List.
 - The Meeting proposed:
 - o not to include the map showing integrated status of birds,
 - o to explain in more detail the development over time of different species,
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- to add information on HELCOM MPAs and, if feasible, the status in SPAs or outside SPAs,
- The Meeting took note of the results of the assessment of fish (document 6-1). The Meeting took note that since the HELCOM SPICE Workshop on Biodiversity the assessment of fish has been recalculated and is in offshore waters only based on the spawning stock biomass of commercial fish stocks.
- The Meeting considered the different message conveyed on the status of fish stocks between chapter on 'Biodiversity and food webs' and the section on 'Extraction of species by fishing' in the chapter on pressures, which is due to the exclusion F_{MSY} in the biodiversity assessment and agreed that this discrepancy needs to be considered. The Meeting proposed to give this issue further attention at State & Conservation 6-2017.
- The Meeting proposed to:
 - highlight as a key message that information is lacking for many stocks,
 - mention also other migrating species, e.g. lamprey and whitefish,
 - consider including information on changes in the distribution of spawning and nursing grounds.
- The Meeting took note of the results of the assessment of mammals (document 6-3).
- The Meeting proposed considering to move the section on drowned mammals in fishing gear to the chapter on pressures.
- The Meeting noted that the results on some occasions differ between the Habitat Directive and the results based on HELCOM indicators and that the reasons could be further clarified in the text.

Agenda item 7 Spatial analyses of human pressures and cumulative impacts

- The Meeting took note of the draft chapter on 'Cumulative impacts' (document 7-1).
- The Meeting took note of the presentation by SYKE, Finland, as representative of the SPICE project, on the updated results of the BSPI and BSII (**Presentation 4**). The Meeting noted that the input of hazardous substances was not yet represented in the analysis and that the approval of some ecosystem component layers is still pending. The Meeting agreed that the updated results will be prepared in time for the submission of the summary report to State & Conservation 6-2017.
- The Meeting took note that the input of nutrients will be represented by the concentration of nutrients based on data from the COMBINE database as recommended by the HOLAS II core team (Outcome of HOLAS II 6-2016, paras 6.14-6.16). The Meeting further noted that input of hazardous substances is proposed to be represented by results from the CHASE assessment based on station data (initial status assessment, cf para 5.8). The Meeting noted that these pressure layers will be made available to the Contracting Parties within short for checking and approval before submission of the updated results to State & Conservation 6-2017.
- The Meeting took note that Denmark is not in a position to support the chapter on the 'Cumulative impacts' at this time point.
- The Meeting recommended the following initial amendments to the chapter text:
 - explain clearly the limitation of the results, i.e. the lack of data in some areas as well as mention that areas with high impact may reflect high availability data,
 - consider options for a map indicating, e.g. how many layers, relevant for the area, are used in the analysis,
 - explain that oxygen deficiency has not been included as a pressure layer in the BSII and the implications of this.
- The Meeting agreed that pictures of the underlying data layers on human activities and pressures and the methodology, including a description on how the extent of pressures has been determined in the

development of the pressure layers, should be prepared as soon as possible and in time for submission to State & Conservation 6-2017.

Agenda item 8 Guidance to the writing of the remaining components of the report

- The Meeting took note of the draft chapter on 'Introduction and methods' in the State of the Baltic Sea Report (document 8-1).
- The Meeting proposed to:
 - o in beginning of the main text, include trends over time in abiotic features of the Baltic Sea, such as temperature, oxygen, and acidification (if feasible),
 - o reflect the contribution of the report to MSFD, briefly in separate section or graphics,
 - o in the text on the ecosystem approach and environmental management, consider reflecting briefly the DPSIR framework.
- The Meeting took note of the draft chapter on 'Measures' (document 8-2) and provided editorial and visual recommendations as in Annex 2.
- The Meeting took note of the proposal on a section on 'Summary of biodiversity results from a food web perspective' (**Presentation 5**).
- The Meeting recommended to focus the planned section 5.7 on 'Food webs' only and primarily base the section on a descriptive approach. The Meeting supported to use the graph showing the number of species in different ecosystem components/trophic guilds and furthermore, proposed to develop, if feasible, a figure that visualizes changes over time in the food web.
- The Meeting took note of the proposals on summary graphs for the 'Summary chapter' (**Presentation 5**).
- The Meeting supported the use of the 'indicator catalogue' in the summary chapter. The Meeting requested that indicators that are being tested should be denoted and it should be clarified if the lack of results is because the indicator is not relevant for the sub-basin in question or whether the indicator has not been implemented yet.
- The Meeting discussed the proposed figure showing the status according to the 'pizza-satellite' constellation. The Meeting encouraged the continued development of the figure with the view of deciding on its use in the 'State of the Baltic Sea' report at State & Conservation 6-2017.
- The Meeting proposed to further develop graphs showing long-term changes for the chapter on 'Conclusions and future outlook', e.g. on selected physical and chemical parameters, and selected pressures and species.
- The Meeting further proposed that the 'Conclusions and future outlook' should reflect:
 - o the change in anoxic/hypoxic areas in the Baltic Sea, eutrophication, the vicious phosphorus cycle,
 - o status from perspective of sub-basins, e.g. putting together in tables information from the chapters in a structured way, including information on drivers behind change in the sub-basins,
 - o expected trends in human activities and pressures, if data is available,
 - o implications of climate change on the future state of the Baltic Sea,
 - o improvements/changes since the adoption of the BSAP.
- The Meeting recognized the many possible analyses that can be made based on the results on status and pressures that are now available and proposed that the 'Conclusions and future outlook' could be further developed towards the update of the report in 2018.

Agenda item 9 Any other business

- The Meeting agreed to convene the next meeting (HOLAS II 8-2017) on 28-29 November 2017 to follow up on the progress with updating the 'State of the Baltic Sea' report. The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to offer to host the meeting.
- The Meeting agreed to save a date for an online meeting of HOLAS II core team on 28 June 2017 to follow up on the outcome of HOD 52-2017, if requested.