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Outcome of the Second Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation  
(STATE & CONSERVATION 2-2015)

Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the decision by HELCOM HOD 47-2014 (Outcome of the meeting, paragraph 3.82), the Second Meeting of the Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (STATE & CONSERVATION 2-2015) was held in Helsinki, Finland, at the premises of HELCOM Secretariat on 11-15 May 2015.

0.2 The Meeting was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties except EU and observers from Nordic Hunters’ Alliance, ICES and OCEANA. The List of Participants is attached as Annex 1.

0.3 The Meeting was chaired by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group: Mr. Urmas Lips, Estonia, Chair of Monitoring and assessment related topics and Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland, Chair of Nature conservation issues. The joint session was chaired jointly by the two Co-Chairs. Ms. Ulla Li Zweifel, Professional Secretary, and Ms. Petra Kääriä, Assisting Professional Secretary acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

0.4 Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, HELCOM Executive Secretary welcomed the participants to the Secretariat and emphasised the HELCOM core indicators as a crucial topic for the meeting.

Monitoring and assessment session (MA)

Agenda Item 1MA Adoption of Agenda: Monitoring and assessment

Documents: 1-1, 1-2

1MA.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda Items 1MA-4MA as contained in documents 1-1 and 1-2.

Agenda Item 2MA Revision of HELCOM monitoring

Documents: 2MA-1, 2MA-1-Rev.1, 2MA-2, 2MA-3, 2MA-4, 2MA-5, 2MA-6

Review and update of HELCOM monitoring guidelines

2MA.1 The Meeting took note of the overview of existing guidelines and the proposed process for reviewing and developing HELCOM monitoring guidelines (document 2MA-1). The Meeting noted that information to the reporting request on the use the COMBINE monitoring guidelines and proposals on other relevant guidelines that could be adapted to the HELCOM region has been received from Finland, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden, as available in 2MA-1-Rev.1-Att.1. The Meeting emphasized the importance to receive this information from all Contracting Parties for the purpose of the review process and agreed that information by remaining countries will be submitted to the Secretariat (ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) by 22 June 2015.

2MA.2 The Meeting considered and agreed to the proposed review process in table 1 of document 2MA-1-Rev.1 noting that existing HELCOM expert groups and networks will be requested to take part in the work while a Lead Country approach was proposed for remaining monitoring programmes in need of review.

2MA.3 The Meeting appreciated the information by

- Sweden that they will consider leading the work on monitoring guidelines related to the sub-programmes for marine birds health and health status of mammals, on monitoring programmes
hydrography, hydrochemistry and biological effects of contaminants (TBT/Imposex), and that they are willing to assist in the review of chlorophyll a under the sub-programme phytoplankton (pigments) as well as the sub-programme contaminants in biota. Sweden will inform State and Conservation on their possibility to undertake the reviews in September 2015.

- Finland that they will consider leading the development of guidelines on the use of satellite data under the programme topic hydrology and sub-programme phytoplankton (pigments), and the sub-programme soft bottom fauna.
- Estonia that they are able to contribute to the review on the monitoring programme hydrology.
- Germany that they are willing to assist the work on monitoring of non-indigenous species and possibly consider leading the work on the Programme topic concentration of contaminants.
- Poland that they are able to contribute to sub-programmes contaminants in sediment and biota.

2MA.4 The Meeting proposed that as regards the monitoring of non-indigenous species, national experts involved in the development of indicators will be asked to specify the requirements for achieving a coordinated approach to the use of biological monitoring programmes in assessment of new arrivals of non-indigenous species.

2MA.5 The Meeting recalled that the development of common indicators and harmonized monitoring protocols had been assigned to an intersessional marine litter network established at MONAS 20-2014. The Meeting supported the continuation of the network beyond CORESET II and requested Contracting Parties to consider taking a Lead role for the network and to confirm or nominate new contacts to the expert network for marine litter and inform the Secretariat (ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) accordingly by 8 June 2015.

2MA.6 The Meeting noted the information that the Pressure WG has recognised a future need in monitoring litter input via rivers and amending PLC monitoring guidelines in this respect.

2MA.7 The Meeting agreed that Contracting Parties will confirm their possibility to lead or assist the development of monitoring guidelines, including topics where a Lead Country is still missing, by 8 June 2015 and to inform the Secretariat (ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) accordingly. The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to consider assisting the Lead Countries in the review of the monitoring guidelines.

2MA.8 The Meeting agreed that the role of Lead Countries is to review the existing guidelines, taking into account the information on current use of monitoring guidelines provided by Contracting Parties through the reporting request (see para 2MA.1), and present a proposal on how the guidelines could be updated at the next meeting of State and Conservation.

2MA.9 The Meeting considered Table 2 of document 2MA-1-Rev.1 and welcomed that Estonia will review and propose a general text and associated references to substitute Part B Annex B1-B5 of the current COMBINE manual. The Meeting agreed that Annexes B6, B7 and B16 will not be included as separate chapters in the Monitoring Manual but that the content of the annexes will instead be considered in the guidelines of the respective monitoring sub-programmes.

2MA.10 The Meeting considered Table 3 of document 2MA-1-Rev.1 and agreed that the monitoring topics that are not included in HELCOM Monitoring Manual will not be included in the review of the COMBINE manual but could be considered in the future in case they are adopted as part of HELCOM monitoring programmes.

2MA.11 The Meeting reiterated that when the monitoring guidelines have been updated they will be transferred to the Monitoring Manual that will replace the COMBINE manual. The Meeting agreed that the old COMBINE manual will still be available on the HELCOM Website as a pdf-document that can be used for reference purposes.

2MA.12 The Meeting revised the document 2MA-1-Rev.1 according to the discussions held by the Meeting, as contained in document 2MA-1-Rev.2.
The Meeting noted the template to update HELCOM monitoring stations (document 2MA-2) and the reporting request to update information on contaminants in the Monitoring Manual (document 2MA-3), as presented by the Secretariat. Revisions to monitoring stations in general have been received from Finland and Poland. The Meeting invited other Contracting Parties to provide information by 6 July.

The Meeting took note that information on monitoring stations for contaminants and the sample matrix for biota has been received from Finland, Lithuania and Poland. The Meeting urged also other Contracting Parties to submit the requested information on monitoring of contaminants by 6 July 2015 using the template provided by the Secretariat.

The Meeting underlined the need for a coordinated update procedure of monitoring stations between HELCOM and ICES according to information submitted by Contracting Parties. Technicalities on how to display this information in the monitoring manual map services will be cleared between ICES and HELCOM with emphasis on displaying active monitoring stations in the Monitoring Manual.

The Meeting took note of the suggestion by Finland and Sweden to modify the division of Åland Sea and Western Gotland Basin (document 2MA-4), as presented by Finland and agreed on the adjustment on the sub-basin boundary and to revise Attachment 4 of the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy accordingly. The Meeting requested Finland and Sweden to provide shapefiles on the new sub-basin boundaries so that the Secretariat can proceed with modification of assessment unit shapefiles accordingly.

Development of a coordinated monitoring programme

The Meeting took note of the results of the project to improve coordination of monitoring activities in the use of research vessels, as presented by Mr. Urmas Lips, as WP 5 leader of the BALSAM project.

Revision of Recommendation 12/1 “Procedures for granting permits for monitoring and research activities in the territorial waters and exclusive economic zones, fishing zones or continental shelves”

The Meeting took note of the proposed revision to HELCOM Recommendation 12-1 (document 2MA-5), as presented by Mr. Urmas Lips, WP 5 leader of the BALSAM project.

The Meeting noted that the draft Recommendation 12/1 has e.g. updated reference to HELCOM strategic documents, proposes to grant one year permits for planned monitoring and research activities in the framework of the HELCOM coordinated monitoring programme, and furthermore proposes to shorten the period for granting of permits.

The Meeting welcomed the draft Recommendation, recalled the legal requirement of granting permits within six months, agreed to revise paragraph d) of the draft Recommendation 12/1 according to the proposal in Annex 3 to clarify the scope of the Recommendation, and decided to present the Recommendation for agreement at HOD 48-2015. The Meeting noted a study reservation by Sweden.

The Meeting further took note of the draft HELCOM Recommendation on using autonomous devices for monitoring (document 2MA-6), as presented by the WP 5 leader of the BALSAM project.

The Meeting recognized that there are no regulations for the use of autonomous devices in the Baltic Sea. The Meeting concluded that national consultations with relevant authorities, e.g. transport and defence, are needed before the further development of the Recommendation. The Meeting agreed to revisit the draft Recommendation on autonomous devices at the next meeting of the Working Group and requested Contracting Parties to consult their national authorities on the draft Recommendation and inform the Secretariat (ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) 30 days in advance of STATE & CONSERVATION 3-2015.

The Meeting took note of the section on Research vessels available on HELCOM website including a list of all research vessels in the Baltic Sea. A live map of the current position of the research vessels and information on planned cruises are also available via the site.
The Meeting agreed that national institutes that conduct monitoring will be requested to use the on-line system to report planned monitoring in order to support coordination of monitoring in offshore areas and that this commitment should be included in the introductory part of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual.

**Agenda Item 3MA  Environmental monitoring and data**

**Development of data arrangements for HELCOM monitoring data and assessments**

3MA.1 The Meeting took note of the summary of existing data flow arrangement in support of the HELCOM core indicators (document 3MA-1, Presentation 1), as presented by the Secretariat. To improve data flow arrangements for status indicators in HELCOM the Meeting agreed to the following, with responsibilities in brackets:

- systematize and improve, where needed, existing reporting routines (Secretariat and relevant EGs/projects)
- define the parameters and format for new needed reporting to support HELCOM indicators (indicator experts+Secretariat+ICES)
- develop databases/dathost arrangements for parameters required for core indicators where they are missing (seal, birds, coastal fish, etc.), when possible by mid-2016 (Secretariat with support of relevant projects and in collaboration with relevant EGs)
- document the “manual” QA of data carried out by EGs and projects (relevant EGs and projects)
- explore use of EUTRO-OPER system for the production of data products and QA of data products for other indicators/thematic assessments (Secretariat)
- use existing EGs and expert projects in the production and quality check of data products e.g. SEAL EG, FISH-PRO II, JWG Birds, PEG, MORS, ZEN.

3MA.2 The Meeting stressed the importance of setting up a structured and efficient data flow arrangement in HELCOM, however recognized that a pragmatic approach and tentative short-terms solutions may be required to include best available data in the upcoming 2nd HELCOM holistic assessment.

3MA.3 The Meeting took note of an overview of reported COMBINE data focused on contaminants and biota monitoring (Presentation 2), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that the reporting by some Contracting Parties to the COMBINE database has been sparse and contains gaps.

3MA.4 The Meeting emphasized the importance of making data available for the regular update of core indicators and the upcoming holistic assessment and recalled the commitment to annually submit data on a set of agreed chemical and biological parameters to the ICES COMBINE database, including data also from coastal areas.

3MA.5 The Meeting took note that:

- several countries have experienced issues with the ICES reporting format that for some parameters is considered too complicated or not fitting to national data formats,
- in Estonia data on contaminants is reported to EIONET instead of the COMBINE database,
- Denmark, Estonia, Latvia, and Sweden are not monitoring contaminants in water which explains the lack of reporting to COMBINE, and that Poland is reporting contaminants data to EIONET
- in Latvia regular monitoring of phytobenthos is almost non-existent,
- in Lithuania phytobenthos monitoring frequency is every three years but data has not been reported to ICES,
- Russia: data is submitted every year to ICES but not in the agreed format.

3MA.6 The Meeting requested ICES to update the compilation of data reported and to include information on the specific monitoring stations that have been reported in the updated version.

3MA.7 Contracting Parties confirmed the intention to submit backlogged data to the COMBINE database as soon as possible, and by mid-2016 at the latest. The Meeting agreed that Contracting Parties will investigate the specific problems with reporting and COMBINE reporting formats and inform the Secretariat as soon as possible, and by the next Meeting of State and Conservation at the latest.

3MA.8 The Meeting invited ICES and Russia to find a solution as soon as possible on how Russian data can be included in the COMBINE database.

3MA.9 The Meeting agreed that in the future ICES will inform HELCOM on the reporting to COMBINE coupled to the agreed reporting deadlines and that Contracting Parties will regularly inform State and Conservation meetings on possible problems with the reporting format and procedure.

3MA.10 The Meeting took note of the proposed BALSAM work plan (document 3MA-2, Presentation 3), as presented by ICES.

3MA.11 The Meeting considered actions 3 and 4 of the work plan and discussed and recommended the following:

- action point 3.2 (development of data management guidelines), should await until the national issue with reporting and tentative problems with COMBINE reporting formats are clarified.

- action point 3.3a (harmonization of labelling of monitoring stations), that in the future data should be specifically flagged for use in HELCOM assessments. For existing entries, data reported as COMBINE and data that can be geographically linked to COMBINE monitoring stations will be used for HELCOM assessments. Use of additional data can be decided intermittently by Contracting Parties e.g. use of project data. The Meeting invited ICES to produce by the next meeting of the Working Group information how countries currently have labelled the data e.g. as national or COMBINE.

- action point 3.4a (accepting data in ODV format) which will be tested during 2015 and 3.4 b (accepting data from SeaDataNet and EMODNET) can potentially solve short-term data issues for some countries while action point 3.4 c (to harvest data in XML format from existing databases) can provide a good solution data access in the future.

- action point 3.6 (data reported to EIONET included in HELCOM database). The Meeting emphasized that Contracting Parties should report data directly to ICES instead of reporting via EIONET since metadata requirements for indicators may be missing in EIONET. Use of EIONET data may however solve data needs in the short-term i.e. for the holistic assessment. The Meeting further noted that data submitted to COMBINE is automatically transferred to EIONET and that this ensures reporting to EEA of data on chemicals.

- action point 4b (processing of VMS data) and 4c (data product for indicators based on fish surveys), the Meeting supported the request to ICES regarding the processing of VMS data and production of data products for indicators based on trawl survey studies. Regarding action point 4a (ICES WGBAST to produce data for indicators on migratory fish), the Meeting noted that the data used for the assessment are based on data brought by national experts to the WGBAST meeting and that some countries would like to ensure that all relevant national data is used e.g. WFD data on migratory fish.

- action point 3.3b (automatic labelling of data to HELCOM assessment units) can be simply solved by ICES and action point 3.5a and b and 3.7 a and b were concluded as part of the discussion on data flow arrangements.

3MA.12 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties were to submit any additional comments they may have to the work plan to the Secretariat (joni.kaitaranta@helcom.fi) by 8 June 2015.
Agenda Item 4MA  Progress of relevant HELCOM projects and assessments

Documents: 4MA-1, 4MA-2, 4MA-3, 4MA-4, 4MA-5, 4MA-6, 4MA-7, 4MA-8, 4MA-9

Operationalization of HELCOM eutrophication assessments (EUTRO-OPER)

4MA.1 The Meeting took note of the information on the progress of the project Making the HELCOM eutrophication assessment operational (EUTRO-OPER) (document 4MA-5, Presentation 4), as presented by the Project Manager, Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen.

4MA.2 The Meeting took note of the proposal to express distance to GES and the current proposal to show the results as a gradient based presentation on the assessment of GES/sub-GES according to the MSFD. The Meeting suggested to also consider the use of trends to indicate direction of change, for example by combining the GES/sub-GES maps with arrows.

4MA.3 The Meeting noted that some countries may wish to change the HELCOM assessment unit level 4 from WFD water types to WFD water bodies.

Project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II)

4MA.4 The Meeting took note of the information on the progress of the project for the development of the Second Holistic Assessment of Ecosystem Health in the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II) (document 4MA-3, Presentation 5), as presented by the Project Manager, Ms. Lena Bergström.

4MA.5 The Meeting took note that the assessment will consider the proposed grouping of MSFD descriptors according to state-based and pressure-based descriptor that has been discussed as a Cross-cutting issue in the ongoing review and revision of the Commission decision on Good Environmental Status (2010/477/EU) and MSFD Annex III.

Testing new concepts for integrated environmental monitoring of the Baltic Sea (BALSAM)

4MA.6 The Meeting welcomed the information on the outcome of the Baltic Sea Pilot project BALSAM which is soon coming to an end (document 4MA-4, Presentation 6), as presented by the Project Coordinator, Ms. Johanna Karhu.

4MA.7 The Meeting took note that the final report will be submitted to the European Commission by the end of May. The Meeting noted that the final report will be published as a project report and that deliverables from the project are presented for consideration of the State and Conservation Group, including documents 2MA-5, 2MA-6, 3MA-2, 6J-2, 2N-2 to this meeting.

Other projects

4MA.8 The Meeting took note of the activity report of the project for quality assurance and integration of zooplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea (ZEN QAI) including the development of zooplankton indicators (document 4MA-1) and the project proposal for “Zooplankton Indicator Integration to Monitoring in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM ZEN ZIIM, (Presentation 7) as presented by the project leader Ms. Elena Gorokhova and noted that it is focused on further development of coordinated and quality assured monitoring of zooplankton in the Baltic Sea and of the zooplankton MSTS core indicator.

4MA.9 The Meeting welcomed the project proposal and proposed to prioritize the operationalization of the MSTS indicator in all areas of the Baltic Sea and to specify the parameters needed to support the MSTS indicator and check so that the reporting format of zooplankton parameters to ICES matches the data needs for the indicator. With these amendments (4MA-2-Rev.1) the Meeting supported submitting the project proposal for endorsement at HELCOM HOD 48-2015.

4MA.10 The Meeting took note of the progress report of the Phytoplankton expert group (PEG), as presented by the project leader of PEG Iveta Jurgensome (document 4MA-9, Presentation 8). The main focus
of PEG is to improve the quality of phytoplankton monitoring in the Baltic Sea and to harmonize sampling, analytical methods and analytical skills.

4MA.11 The Meeting noted the information that monitoring guidelines currently included as Annex C-6 of the COMBINE manual for phytoplankton are up to date and that they will be reviewed annually as a regular task of the project.

4MA.12 The Meeting considered the project proposal for the continuation of the activities of PEG for 2017-2019 (document 4MA-9, Presentation 8), as presented by the project leader of PEG.

4MA.13 The Meeting took note that development of phytoplankton indicators is proposed to be taken forward as a separate activity in HELCOM while the PEG project is ready to make regular updates of the core indicator reports once the indicators are operational. Preliminary estimates of resources required to test the 3 HELCOM candidate phytoplankton indicators are at 3 man-months each.

4MA.14 The Meeting agreed to come back to the final project proposal for the continuation of PEG in the next meeting of the State and Conservation Group.

4MA.15 The Meeting took note of the progress report of the project for the Baltic-wide assessment of coastal fish communities in support of an ecosystem-based management (FISH-PRO II) (document 4MA-6), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that a recruitment area workshop funded by Nordic Council of Ministers will be held on 2-4 June 2015 with the idea to collect available information on coastal fish recruitment areas and produce a report based on the information.

Activity to assess the state of contaminants with pharmaceuticals

4MA.16 The Meeting considered the proposed assessment on pharmaceuticals in the Baltic Sea (document 4MA-7) in cooperation between HELCOM and Coordinator of EUSBSR PA Hazards from Sweden as presented by the Co-Chair. The Meeting noted that the work is planned to be carried out in coordination with the Pressure Group that will focus on sources and pathways of pharmaceuticals while the State and Conservation Group is expected to contribute with information and data on the concentration and effects of pharmaceuticals in the environment.

4MA.17 The Meeting welcomed the proposed activity and agreed to provide information on national data availability and sources by 30 June 2015 according to the guidelines in document 4MA-7 and to report national data on concentrations and effects of pharmaceuticals by 15 September 2015, using a template to be developed by the Secretariat.

4MA.18 The Meeting took note that Swedish data need to be harvested from national databases and the offer from Sweden to support potential translation issues with Swedish data.

4MA.19 The Meeting took note of the document on sources and pathways of pharmaceuticals to the Baltic Sea as submitted by Sweden (4MA-8).
Joint Session (J)

Agenda Item 1J  Adoption of Agenda: Joint themes

Documents: 1-1, 1-2

1J.1 The Meeting adopted items 1J-7J in the agenda as contained in documents 1-1 and 1-2.

Agenda Item 2J  Election of vice-chairs

Documents: none

2J.1 The Meeting elected Mr. Samuli Korpinen, Finland, as a Vice-Chair for the Monitoring and Assessment theme and Mr. Dieter Boedeker, Germany, as a vice-chair for the Nature conservation and Biodiversity theme.

Agenda Item 3J  Matters arising from other meetings of relevance for the Working Group

Documents: 3J-1, 3J-2, 3J-3, 3J-4

3J.1 The Meeting took note of the extracts from other meetings of relevance for the Working Group (document 3J-1) as well as of the outcome of GEAR 10-2015 (document 3J-3) and the outcome of FISH 2-2015 (document 3J-4), as presented by the Secretariat.

3J.2 The Meeting considered the updated Roadmap of HELCOM activities which is intended to support the planning of future work of HELCOM Working Groups (document 3J-2), as presented by the Secretariat.

Agenda Item 4J  Core indicators and Baltic Sea Environment Fact Sheets

Documents: 4J-1-Rev.3, 4J-2, 4J-3-Rev.1, 4J-4

4J.1 Meeting took note of the information that GEAR 11-2015 (19-20 May) will discuss the future development of indicators that have not yet been finalized and make a recommendation on how the work in HELCOM can be continued to HOD 48-2015.

4J.2 The Meeting considered the technical endorsement of HELCOM indicators developed by CORESET II (document 4J-1-Rev.3, Presentation 9), as presented by Ms. Lena Avellan, Project Manager of CORESET II.

4J.3 The Meeting welcomed the work carried out in the CORESET II project and acknowledged its importance for providing common ground for future HELCOM assessments.

4J.4 The Meeting noted that in some countries consultation on certain indicators is still ongoing and that Denmark was not in a position to provide feedback and have a general study reservation on document 4J-1-Rev.3.

4J.5 The Meeting took note of the statement by Germany that all comments and votes given on the indicators do not reflect a consolidated German view but a view on the expert level which still needs to be discussed and confirmed officially. Germany will try to lift their study reservation by HOD 48-2015. The Meeting further noted the statement by Germany that for many indicators a testing phase of about 2 years will be necessary.

4J.6 The Meeting discussed the concept of GES boundaries in general and recommended that they should be revisited when needed to take into account e.g. new knowledge, MSFD reporting requirements and changes in climate driven factors. The Meeting proposed that HELCOM should formulate a process for a systematic review of GES boundaries.
4J.7 The Meeting discussed the proposed GES concept of hazardous substances in general and acknowledged the legal requirement of EU Member States to use limit values derived from the EQS directive, although some of these values have been defined from the point of view of protection of human health and not for ecosystem components, and in some cases current environmental monitoring is not fully suited to provide data to evaluate these targets. To at least partly overcome these impediments, the Meeting proposed to combine the evaluation of status with assessment of hazardous substances with analyses of trends in biota and supported the approach to include secondary GES-boundaries as needed for alternative matrices.

4J.8 The Meeting took note that editorial comments to the core indicator reports should be submitted to the Secretariat (lena.avellan@helcom.fi and ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) by 22 May 2015.

4J.9 The Secretariat invited all Contracting Parties to clarify their pending technical study reservations on the indicators by GEAR 11-2015 which will be held on 19-20 May 2015, noting that not all Contracting Parties are in the position to meet this request.

4J.10 The Meeting noted the request from Poland to include already sent polish data in the indicator evaluation and GES boundary setting.

4J.11 The Meeting recommended to include more information to the key messages applying particularly to the indicators which aggregate many species or assess the state for one large assessment unit.

4J.12 Based on the technical review of the indicators, the Meeting agreed on the GES-boundaries and publication of the following core-indicator reports, with the following comments and exceptions in addition to the general study reservations by Denmark and Germany (paragraphs 4J-4 and 4J-5):

1. Abundance of coastal fish key functional groups

   The Meeting noted
   - that in Lithuania cyprinids are very few in the coastal zone so the use of this parameter in the indicators needs to be further clarified
   - the view from Sweden that the combination of baseline and trends approach for GES in the same sub-basin should be addressed in the future
   - a study reservation from Germany on the applicability of the GES-boundary as monitoring data to verify the boundary is not available

   The Meeting furthermore proposed to reconsider the visualization of the status map of cyprinids showing if sub-GES is due to the abundance being too high or too low, so as not to confuse with other status maps.

2. Abundance of key coastal fish species

   The Meeting noted that Germany has the same study reservation comment as for the indicator on coastal fish key functional groups and the same comment from Sweden as for the indicator on Abundance of coastal fish key functional groups.

3. Abundance of salmon spawners and smolt

   The Meeting noted that in Germany and Poland there is no natural reproductive capacity or spawning areas in rivers, and monitoring of the indicator is therefore not ecologically relevant.

   The Meeting requested to include a clarification in the indicator report on which rivers that the indicator is applicable as well as the role of adult salmon in the off-shore food-web.

4. Abundance of sea trout spawners and parr

   The Meeting noted that in Poland there is only natural reproductive capacity in one river, in other rivers the populations are mixed due to stocking, and therefore not considered as ecologically relevant to monitoring.
The Meeting requested that the indicator reports should clarify the link to monitoring done under the Water Framework Directive.

5. Abundance of waterbirds in the breeding season
The Meeting noted that Sweden has not been able to discuss the indicator nationally and will provide information on her position on 18 May.

6. Abundance of waterbirds in the wintering season
The Meeting noted that Sweden has not been able to discuss the indicator nationally and will provide information on her position on 18 May.

The Meeting noted the proposal from Poland to describe the GAM model in more detail in the indicator report, especially on how temperature (climate change) has been taken into account, in the meantime the TRIM analysis approach might be more user-friendly and suitable.

7. Distribution of Baltic seals
The Meeting noted the concern raised by Finland and Sweden regarding the suitability of including ringed seal in the evaluation of distribution since this is currently linked to sea ice coverage and recommended that evaluation of ringed seal could be further considered in the future, and noted that Finland recommended that the evaluation if GES boundary should be based in direct human pressures which affect the distribution under the current ice conditions.

The Meeting noted a Germany study reservation on the indicator and that it will be clarified as soon as possible.

The Meeting recommended to evaluate each species separately, and that possible aggregation of assessment of species should be discussed in the upcoming biodiversity assessment as part of the holistic assessment.

8. Nutritional status of marine mammals
The Meeting noted that Germany and Sweden cannot accept the GES boundaries and publication of the indicator reports as presented to the Meeting, noting a German study reservation on the indicator.

The Meeting agreed that Germany and Sweden should provide detailed comments by 19 May to the Secretariat (lena.avellan@helcom.fi, ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi) that will be forwarded to the indicator experts with the aim to seek for possible resolution to the concerns raised before the HOD 48 meeting and to report the status of the issue to HOD.

The Meeting recalled the existing recommendation from the SEAL EG not to hunt mammals for the purpose of assessing their status, but that use of data on hunted seals is acceptable.

9. Population trends and abundance of seals
The Meeting noted the proposal to display trends together with the status evaluation in the key message section.

The Meeting recommended to evaluate each species separately, and that possible aggregation of assessment of species should be discussed in the upcoming assessment of biodiversity as part of the holistic assessment.

The Meeting noted that the proposed GES concept could be understood in different ways and requested the authors of the indicator report to clarify that the target reference level is the agreed long-term target in HELCOM.

Germany has already provided respective proposals to the Project Manager Ms. Lena Avellan.
10. Reproductive status of marine mammals
Same comments and study reservation from Germany as for the indicator on Nutritional status of marine mammals.

11. Zooplankton mean size and total stock
The Meeting stressed that GES-boundaries are needed for all Baltic Sea sub-basins and should be a priority for the ZEN ZIIM project.

The Meeting noted the need for training in using the statistical methods in the assessment protocol and that this could be done through future ZEN work.

12. Trends in arrival of new non-indigenous species
The Meeting noted that in Germany the national indicator has a GES-boundary of 1 NIS per assessment period for the German Baltic Sea area.

13. Hexabromocyclododecene (HBCDD)
Agreed with no further comments.

14. Metals
The Meeting agreed that the Cd EQS water should be included in the GES-boundary for completion although no CP reported monitoring of Cd in water as concentrations are generally too low for detection, however Finland and Poland are monitoring Cd in water.

The Meeting agreed that the QS sediment are to be used as GES-boundaries for Cd and Pb. Biota is an alternative matrix for Cd and Pb and the GES-boundary is to be agreed by the CPs reporting the information on which national target is used (matrix and reference) to the Secretariat by 22 May (lena.avellan@helcom.fi), noting that Poland has already reported the targets.

15. Polybrominated biphenyl ethers (PBDE)
The Meeting agreed to use the EQS human health as the GES-boundary, noting that the value is debated and not validated by EFSA. The Meeting recommended CPs to actively be involved in the WFD prioritization process with the aim to influence future work on this specific EQS value.

16. Perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS)
The Meeting agreed to use the EQS human health value as the GES-boundary.

17. Polycyclic organic compounds (PAH) and their metabolites
The Meeting agreed to use the thresholds from EQS directive.

The Meeting noted that Sweden could not accept the use of EAC and ERL-values for other PAH substances and that there is a need for these proposed threshold values to be evaluated before agreed as GES boundaries. The Meeting was of the opinion that there might be a need to review the list of PAH substances and metabolites to consider if all are still of relevance to evaluate. The Meeting agreed that other PAH than bezo(a)pyrene are only included as supporting parameters in the indicator at present.

The Meeting noted the comment by Germany that for reasons of comparability, the same units as in the EQS Directive should be used.

18. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and dioxins and furans
The Meeting agreed to use the EQS human health value as the GES-boundary for dioxins.
The Meeting agreed to use the TEQ value for foodsafety as a tentative GES-boundary for the non-dioxin-like PCBs, as no EQS values are currently available and noted that Sweden was of the view that the EACs are not appropriate.

19. Radioactive substances
The Meeting agreed to the proposed GES boundary and publication of the core indicator report, noting that Germany still needs to consult on the GES-boundary nationally.

20. White-tailed eagle productivity
The Meeting noted the request from Latvia to check the assessment unit (Level 3) shapefile for Latvian coastal areas since it should be separate two coastal areas for Latvia - Eastern Gotland Basin Latvian Coastal waters and Gulf of Riga Latvian coastal waters - and that in the coastal area of Gulf of Riga the white-tailed eagle is not nesting and should therefore not be included the status evaluation.

The Meeting noted the request from Poland to include already sent polish data in the indicator evaluation and GES boundary setting.

21. Reproductive disorders: Malformed eelpout and amphipod embryos
The Meeting could not agree on the GES boundaries, or the publication of the indicator report for this pre-core indicator at this time. The Meeting noted the view that the report requires editorial work and that especially further elaboration on how the GES-boundary for amphipods other than Monoporeia affinis are needed.

The Meeting proposed to keep the indicator as pre-core and noted that several countries are prepared to consider amphipod monitoring relevant for the indicator in the future.

4J.10 The Meeting agreed that the following indicators can be shifted from candidate to pre-core indicators, taking into account the following comments/exceptions:

1. Diatoms/Dinoflagellates index
Agreed with no further comments.

2. Phytoplankton species assemblage clusters based on environmental factors
The Meeting did not agree to the shift the category of indicator, but most countries supported further work to test and develop the indicator, and provided the following comments:

- Denmark and Sweden: Similar indicators developed for the WFD using other statistical methods such as regression trees have been found functional, and other statistical options than clustering could still be explored.
- Finland: Clustering based on functional traits could be a more robust approach compared to clustering based on species and would be a similar approach as the indicator developed in OSPAR.
- Germany furthermore proposed that in case of resource limitation in the development of phytoplankton indicators the further development of “Seasonal succession of functional phytoplankton groups” should be prioritized over the species assemblage indicator.
- Poland will test the indicator together with 1 and 3 and will inform about the outcome of testing and GES boundary setting.

3. Seasonal succession of functional phytoplankton groups
The Meeting noted that Germany will clarify as soon as possible if a shift from candidate to pre-core can be supported by national experts.
4. **Maximum length fish in the pelagic community**

The Meeting **noted** that Germany supports continued development of the indicator while placing a study reservation on the shift to pre-core to be clarified as soon as possible.

5. **EROD activity**

The Meeting **did not agree** on a shift to pre-core.

The Meeting **noted** that Germany repeated its former proposal that all bio-effect indicators would be supplementary indicators.

The Meeting **noted** the proposal from Poland that the indicator should allow for inclusion of national monitoring data on flounder from the last two years.

6. **Beach litter**

The shift to pre-core indicator was agreed with no further comments.

7. **Microlitter in the watercolumn**

The Meeting **did not agree** on a shift to pre-core **noting** that several alternative monitoring methods are still being tested in the CPs.

The Meeting **acknowledged** the need to develop a microlitter indicator and **agreed** that the development of monitoring programmes should be coordinated. The Meeting considered a shift to pre-core to be timely once monitoring methods are more developed regionally and also awaiting the outcome of the review and possible revision of the 2010/477/EU.

8. **Continuous low frequency anthropogenic sound**

The Meeting **noted** that regular monitoring data is not yet available for the indicator, and **noted** that information on current levels of noise has been offered by the ongoing BIAS project.

4J-11 The Meeting **supported** the further development of the core indicators currently lacking GES-boundaries and provided guidance and comments as follows:

1. **Number of drowned mammals and waterbirds in fishing gear**

The Meeting **agreed** on the publishing of the core indicator report.

The Meeting **noted** the proposal from Sweden to harmonize the concept for target setting with the comparable OSPAR indicator.

2. **Population structure of long-lived macrozoobenthic species**

The Meeting **supported** the further development of the indicator.

The Meeting **noted** that the development of the indicator had met difficulties and that operationalization will still take some time and that the concept should possibly be developed towards an umbrella indicator approach with different species evaluated in different areas.

3. **State of the soft-bottom macrofauna community**

The Meeting **considered** the further development of the indicator of high priority.

The Meeting **commented** that for assessment purposes in HOLAS II it might be most appropriate to use nationally available indexes and sensitivity values, and further **noted** that Sweden and Finland use the same approach for the Gulf of Bothnia, and that some type of intercalibration will likely be required for the Baltic Proper where the calculated values is considered for use by some CPs.

4. **Proportion of large fish in the community**

The Meeting **agreed** to further develop the indicator.
The Meeting noted that Task Managers had not reached agreement on the GES-boundary.

5. **TBT and imposex**

The Meeting agreed to further develop the indicator but considered the report not to be ready for publishing.

The Meeting noted that additional information on how the TBT GES-boundary for sediment has been derived is needed in the report, and that for biota the boundary should be specified.

The Meeting reiterated that the close coupling of imposex to TBT concentration allows for an umbrella-approach where it is sufficient to only monitor one or the other.

4J-12 The Meeting took note of the work in progress with the following pre-core indicators and provided guidance as follows:

1. **Cumulative impact on benthic biotopes**

The Meeting agreed that further development of the indicator is of high priority. The Meeting proposed that the HOLAS II core team should consider the indicator and look into availability of data to define the pressures to be considered in the indicator, since the indicator is closely related to the assessment of pressures in the second holistic assessment.

2. **Distribution, pattern and extent of benthic biotopes**

The Meeting agreed that further development of the indicator is of high priority. The Meeting was of the opinion that mapping of the Baltic Sea is a key issue in relation to further work and that best available information should be made use of.

3. **Lower depth limit distribution of the macrophyte community**

The Meeting agreed to continue the development of the indicator, noting that in coastal areas it is legally required to use the same indicators in WFD. The Meeting furthermore noted that it will take time to develop a common indicator on macrophytes for the Baltic Sea and that in the upcoming holistic assessment the national indicators developed for the WFD will be used.

The Meeting noted that the indicator is not applicable along Polish national waters as transects allowing for depth limit evaluation are not available.

4. **Acetylcholinesterase inhibition**

The Meeting did not consider the development of the indicator as a priority at this time.

The Meeting noted the proposal from Germany to consider the indicator as supplementary.

5. **Diclofenac concentration**

The Meeting recollected the ongoing effort to compile a HELCOM assessment of pharmaceuticals, and agreed that further work on this indicator can be considered when results are available. The Meeting proposed that the HOLAS II core team should consider how to include available information on diclofenac in the 2nd holistic assessment. Poland has provided data from national monitoring carried out in 2014.

6. **Estrogenic-like chemicals and effects**

Same comment as for Diclofenac.

The Meeting further noted that nonylphenols and octylphenols are included on the WFD priority substance list and that the GES-boundary should reflect the EQS water for these substances.

Poland provided data from national monitoring carried out in 2014.

The Meeting noted the comment by Germany that the umbrella concept as used in this indicator includes the ooaoo approach which is not in line with the previous understanding of what an umbrella indicator is. This needs to be discussed further.
7. **Lysosomal membrane stability (LMS)**

The Meeting **agreed** to continue the development of the indicator.

The Meeting **noted** the proposal from Germany to consider the indicator as supplementary.

8. **Oil-spills affecting the marine environment**

The Meeting **took note** of the indicator.

4J.13 The Meeting **took note** of the work in progress regarding the following candidate core indicators and provided the following guidance:

1. **Biomass ratio of opportunistic and perennial macroalgae**

The Meeting **agreed** to keep the indicator as a candidate.

2. **Distribution in time and space of loud low- and mid-frequency impulsive sound**

The Meeting **agreed** that the indicator should be developed further and that the work should be closely linked to the development of a regional registry of impulsive noise and **underlined** that importance of coordinated development of such a registry in HELCOM.

The Meeting **noted** the information from the Secretariat that PRESSURE 2-2015 has developed a work plan to develop a roadmap for the development of such a registry and that a Lead Country approach was desired on the development of the registry and the impulsive noise indicator as well as for ambient levels of noise.

3. **Harbour porpoise distribution and abundance**

The Meeting **recommended** that the further development of the indicator should consider harmonization with assessments done under the EU Habitats Directive.

4. **Litter on the seafloor**

The Meeting **noted** that there are different options for gathering monitoring data relevant to the indicator, and **agreed** to use available data until the outcome of the review and possible revision of the 2010/477/EU before recommending if monitoring efforts should be focused on the water column or the seafloor.

4J.14 The Meeting **took note** of the list of potential future candidate core indicators identified by CORESET II experts that could be of relevance to consider in future activities in HELCOM on developing indicators. The Meeting **noted** that Germany and Finland supported to include the indicator ‘State of hard bottom communities’ as a candidate indicator.

4J.15 The Meeting **considered** the core indicators developed under EUTRO-OPER (Presentation 10) and **agreed** as follows:

1. **Total nitrogen and phosphorus concentrations**

The Meeting **welcomed** the development of indicators on total concentration of nitrogen and phosphorus and **agreed** that they should be shifted in category to pre-core indicator and **proposed** that they will be considered for shift to core indicators when GES-boundaries are presented.

The Meeting **recommended** that the indicator should be based on means of annual concentration of total N and P for open sea waters while in coastal water both summer and annual means could be considered.

2. **Cyanobacterial surface accumulations**

The Meeting **agreed** to a shift in category to pre-core indicator **noting** the view of Sweden that further consideration is needed e.g. to clarify the role of nutrients as drivers of cyanobacterial surface accumulations, and the reservation from Germany regarding the current uncertainly if the indicator will be applicable in western parts of the Baltic Sea.
The Meeting noted that Finland will be able to supply processed EO-data for the indicator for the entire HELCOM area and that the data flow arrangement developed through EUTRO-OPER will allow data to be included into the eutrophication assessment data flow, which is under preparation by EUTRO-OPER.

The Meeting found it important to develop the indicator to the direction of including more than only bloom events, e.g. adding cyanobacteria biomass information as a new parameter to the indicator. The Meeting welcomed the proposal of EUTRO-OPER and the PEG group to investigate the possibilities.

3. Phytoplankton spring bloom intensity based on chl-a

The Meeting agreed to a shift in category to pre-core indicator noting the reservation from Germany regarding the current uncertainty if the indicator will be applicable in western parts of the Baltic Sea.

The Meeting noted that this indicator has a role in expressing eutrophication, through being able to detect the spring bloom, which in many sub-basins dominates the annual succession of phytoplankton in terms of biomass. The Meeting noted the question raised by Germany whether this indicator is really essential for eutrophication assessment or should rather be continued as Baltic Sea Environmental Fact Sheet.

The Meeting noted that Finland will be able to supply processed data for the indicator for the entire HELCOM area and that the data flow arrangement developed through EUTRO-OPER will allow data to be included into the eutrophication assessment data flow, which is under preparation by EUTRO-OPER.

4J.16 The Meeting took note of the summary of the HELCOM core indicator GES boundaries (document 4J-4), as presented by the Secretariat, and the request from the Gear Group to discuss the compatibility between GES-boundaries across relevant core indicators and report if any issues of concern are identified.

4J.17 The Meeting acknowledged the importance to cross-check compatibility of GES-boundaries for indicators but did not find it possible to answer to the request by Gear with such short notice. The Meeting noted and supported that the Secretariat has initiated discussion with the ICES WGIAB group regarding their role in a potential analysis/modelling of proposed GES-boundaries for HELCOM indicators. The Meeting proposed that such cooperation with ICES should be taken forward in coordination with the HOLAS II project and that a HELCOM workshop could be considered to specially address the issue.

4J.18 The Meeting considered the status of updating the Baltic Sea Environment Fact sheets (document 4J-3-Rev.1) and agreed to replace proposed BSEFS with core indicator reports when the indicator reports are agreed on and ready.

4J.19 The Meeting noted that according to the latest considerations by Pressure WG, long-term data series on nutrient inputs should still to be released as BSEFS to make this important data available as soon as possible each year, while the core indicator on progress towards reaching Maximum Allowable Inputs of nutrients, being a more elaborate assessment product and involving statistical analysis, will be released separately. Also BSEFS on inputs of hazardous substances is to be continued and will be discussed at Pressure 4-2015.

4J.20 The Meeting took note of the information provided by Finland that the BSEFS “Phytoplankton biomass and species succession in the Gulf of Finland, Northern Baltic Proper and Arkona Basin in 2003” will be updated with a new name, the BSEFS “Phytoplankton spring bloom biomass in the Gulf of Finland, Northern Baltic Proper and Arkona Basin in 2003” and “Cyanobacteria bloom index” will not be continued and will be replaced by a core indicator reports and that the BSEFS “Temporal and spatial variation of dissolved nutrients in the Baltic Sea” will not be updated.

Agenda Item 5J Follow-up of HELCOM agreements and activities

Documents: SJ-1, SJ-2, SJ-3

5J.1 The Meeting welcomed the new follow-up system for HELCOM agreements (document SJ-1, Presentation 11), as presented by the Secretariat and noted that the next follow-up of HELCOM agreements
is planned to be carried out in autumn 2015. The Meeting further noted that once the system is agreed on, a reporting template with relevant guidance will be developed by the Secretariat.

5J.2 The Meeting noted that while the assessment of accomplishment of actions will be considered at the regional level, national implementation of actions can also be included in the presentation of results. The Meeting furthermore noted that all actions have been categorized according to themes under the Baltic Sea Action Plan or under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

5J.3 The Meeting scrutinized Annex 1 of the proposal as contained in document 5J-1, and proposed that:
- reference to a relevant paragraph from the BSAP as well as relevant HELCOM Recommendations should be included for all actions,
- action Finalisation and implementation of national management plans for seals could be suggested to be taken up by the SEAL EG,
- the action Evaluation of the effectiveness of existing technical measures to minimise by-catch of harbour porpoises could be taken forward in cooperation with ASCOBANS/Jastarnia group,
- for the action Take measures so that by 2020, regionally, a) the loss of all red listed marine habitats and biotopes in the Baltic Sea will be halted to consider assessment of individual species/habitats,
- for the action Take decisive action to work towards a favourable conservation status of the harbour porpoise based on implementation of the CMS ASCOBANS Jastarnia Plan for the harbour porpoise in the Baltic Sea, in particular by addressing the pressing problem of by-catch status and bycatch for harbour porpoise should be assessed separately.

5J.4 The Meeting noted in relation to the action Protect the ringed seal in the Gulf of Finland, ..., and URGE transboundary co-operation between Estonia, Finland and Russia to support achieving a viable population of ringed seals in the Gulf of Finland that scientific cooperation between Finland, Estonia and Russia is ongoing on the matter and will be reported at the annual SEAL EG meeting.

5J.5 The Meeting considered Annex 2 of document 5J-1 and suggested that for the three first actions listed, related to mapping of landscape or biotopes, it is possible to define specific targets that could be followed up in terms of level or accomplishment.

5J.6 The Meeting scrutinized the proposed follow-up system of Recommendation 35-1, as contained in the Annex 3 of document 5J-1, and supported the proposed follow-up format.

5J.7 The Meeting amended the proposed follow-up system as included in document 5J-1-Rev.1, and agreed to support the document for approval at HOD 48-2015.

5J.8 The Meeting took note of the request for input on measures for regional coordination by Gear Group (document 5J-2, Presentation 12), as presented by the Secretariat, scrutinized the proposed topics for regional coordination by the Gear Group and provided draft proposals as included in Annex 4.

5J.9 The Meeting agreed to apply a Lead Country approach to finalize the request from the Gear Group to prepare by September 2015 an input to the planned HELCOM workshop to further elaborate on the proposed topics for regional coordination. The Meeting agreed that Contracting Parties would inform on their willingness to lead the further development of the input to the workshop to the Secretariat by 22 May 2015. If Lead Countries cannot be identified, the Meeting agreed to convene and intersessional on-line meeting in August/September to finalize the request.

5J.10 The Meeting took note of the information on the survey of knowledge and research needs for achieving good environmental status (document 5J-4), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that both national and regional needs can be included, however proposed that this should be stated when responding to the survey.

5J.11 The Meeting in principle agreed on the procedure depicted in the document, however due to the late submission of the document, the Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to provide comments by 3
June 2015 to the Secretariat ([ulali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ulali.zweifel@helcom.fi)) after which the Secretariat will circulate the document to the State and Conservation contacts. The Meeting further agreed that the document will be submitted to the next meeting of State and Conservation 1½ months before the meeting.

SJ.12 Germany pointed out that the submission deadline according to the rules of procedure must be met in particular documents related to the MSFD.

SJ.13 The Meeting considered the Valid Recommendations under State and Conservation (document SJ-3), as presented by the Secretariat.

SJ.14 The Meeting welcomed the willingness of Sweden to take the lead on the Recommendation 34E-1 Safeguarding important bird habitats and migration routes in the Baltic Sea from negative effects of wind and wave energy production at sea.

SJ.15 The Meeting noted that the Recommendation 32/33-1 on Conservation of Baltic Salmon (Salmo salar) and Sea Trout (Salmo trutta) populations by the restoration of their river habitats and management of river fisheries as well as the Recommendation 19/2 Protection and Improvement of the Wild Salmon (Salmo salar L.) populations in the Baltic Sea Area are reported through the Fish Group and noted that State and Conservation wishes to follow the reporting of these two recommendations.

SJ.16 The Meeting noted that the Recommendation 29/2 Marine litter within the Baltic Sea region mainly concerns monitoring and that development of monitoring guidelines for marine litter is part of the ongoing review and revision of HELCOM monitoring and proposed that the contents of Rec 29/2 could be reflected in the planned revision of Recommendation 19/3. The Secretariat offered to review Recommendation 29/2 to ensure that other content than monitoring guidelines are reflected in the newly adopted Recommendation 36/1 Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

SJ.17 The Meeting recalled that the effectiveness of the Recommendation 27/28-2 Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea Area should be assessed every 5 years, next time in 2016. The Meeting recommended that this issue should be addressed at the next meeting of the SEAL EG in autumn 2015 and that the group should be requested to provide input for such assessment. The Meeting also requested SEAL EG to evaluate if the EG currently follows-up the Recommendation as a whole or if complementary reporting is required.

SJ.18 The Meeting noted that Estonia, as Lead Country, will review the Recommendation 24/10 Implementation of Integrated Marine and Coastal Management of Human activities in the Baltic Sea Area by the next meeting of the State and Conservation Group and propose next steps.

SJ.19 The Meeting noted the Germany, as Lead Country, will take first steps in the revision of Recommendation 21/4 Protection of heavily endangered or immediately threatened Marine and Coastal Biotopes in the Baltic Sea Area.

SJ.20 The Meeting invited Latvia to review the Recommendation 21/3 on Sustainable and Environmentally friendly tourism in the Coastal Zones of the Baltic Sea Area and report to the next meeting of the State and Conservation Group if a revision should be considered noting that the reporting of this Recommendation has been limited in the past.
The Meeting proposed a reporting interval of every six years instead of every third year for the Recommendation 15/1 Protection of the Coastal Strip, led by Finland. The Meeting further proposed that this should be reflected in the Recommendation. The Meeting furthermore noted that there is a strong link between Recommendations 15/1 and 16/3, these two Recommendations can be seen as contradictory and there is a need to reconsider wording for specific parts of Recommendation 15/1. The Meeting invited Finland to review the Recommendation and report to the next meeting of the State and Conservation Group if there is a need for revision.

The Meeting noted that a draft revision of the Recommendation 12/1 Cooperation and coordination of research vessel based monitoring in offshore areas and procedures for granting permits for monitoring and research activities (new name) will be presented for adoption at HOD 48-2015. The Meeting welcomed that Estonia and Lithuania were prepared to jointly take the Lead on the Recommendation.

The Meeting noted that Recommendation 10/2 Assessments of the Effects of Pollution on the Coastal Areas of the Baltic Sea is outdated and that when Recommendation 19/3 is updated any remaining relevant components of the Recommendation should be reflected in the latter Recommendation.

The Meeting noted that Recommendation 10/1 Abnormal Situations in the Marine Environment should be reviewed and welcomed that Estonia will look into the possibility to take the Lead on the review of the Recommendation.

The Meeting proposed that Recommendation 19/1 Marine Sediment Extraction in the Baltic Sea Area should be considered under the Pressure Group and emphasized that the State and Conservation Group should still be kept updated on the reporting.

The Meeting proposed that the Recommendation 17/3 Information and Consultation with Regard to Construction of New Installations Affecting the Baltic Sea should be considered under the Pressure Group and emphasized that the State and Conservation Group should still be kept updated on the reporting.

The Meeting agreed that when reviewing the Recommendations the Lead Countries should consider if the proposed format for follow-up of Recommendation 35/1, as presented in the Annex 3 of document 5J-1, is suitable for reporting and follow-up of the Recommendation in question.

**Agenda Item 6J  Mapping and monitoring of landscapes and biotopes**

Documents: 6J-1, 6J-2, 6J-3

The Meeting took note of the presentation by Finland (Presentation 13) on the reporting request for metadata on mapping of benthic habitats, biotopes/biotopes complexes and species (document 6J-1) as well as current state of Finnish benthic mapping activities.

The Meeting took note of the presentation by the Secretariat (Presentation 14) on maps currently available from HELCOM map service and elsewhere (EMODnet seabed habitats, EMODnet Biology) on benthic species and biotopes in the Baltic Sea.

The Meeting recognized the urgent need to develop georeferenced distribution maps of benthic habitats, biotopes and species, to be decided, by mid-2016 for the purpose of use in the upcoming 2nd HELCOM holistic assessment as well as for future for assessments of MPAs, Red List assessments, MSP purposes and more.

The Meeting agreed that Contracting Parties that have not yet done so will report the requested metadata, using the template contained in document 6J-1-Att.1 by 12 June 2015, or if not feasible to inform the Secretariat when it will be possible to provide the requested metadata.

The Meeting noted that the full list of species and biotopes in national waters is extensive and concluded that there is no need to provide a separate excel metadata sheet per species while collection using different methods should be separated e.g. video transects, dive transects or grab samples. In addition
Contracting Parties are requested to provide a separate list of species in national waters as well as to propose a set of key species and biotopes for the production of maps to support HELCOM activities. Based on the information provided by Contracting Parties, Finland and the Secretariat will propose a list of species and biotopes for the further development of Baltic Sea wide maps and provide guidance for the submission of data.

6J.6 The Meeting agreed that the upcoming submission of data should not be grid-based and that both pointwise data and modelled results will be compiled, noting that not all countries will be available to submit both types of data.

6J.7 The Meeting agreed to use the HELCOM HUB classification as a basis for the mapping activities.

6J.8 The Meeting agreed that data should be submitted to the Secretariat (joni.kaitaranta@helcom.fi) by 30 September 2015. The Meeting noted that in some countries it will be difficult to meet this deadline but that the work should proceed based on data received in order to initiate the process of developing the required maps.

6J.9 The Meeting took note of the presentation on proposed monitoring methods for soft sediment benthic habitats as developed by the BALSAM project and presented by Georg Martin (Presentation 15, document 6J-2) and noted that different methods had been evaluated resulting in the proposal to use “drop-video” as method for surveying the size and extent of habitats in combination with a simplified version of grab sampling.

6J.10 The Meeting supported the use of these methods noting that Germany will provide written comments by end of May 2015, because in Germany other methods have been successfully established or are being tested, respectively. The Meeting proposed that the HELCOM intersessional network on benthic habitat monitoring should develop monitoring guidelines for the use of these methods, taking into account the development of HELCOM core indicators.

6J.11 The Meeting agreed that by the next meeting of the State and Conservation Group, the intersessional network on benthic habitat monitoring will provide a definition of the terms “landscape” and “detailed landscape mapping”.

6J.12 The Meeting took note of the report on the work of the intersessional network on benthic habitat monitoring (document 6J-3), as presented by the network Leader Mr. Georg Martin. The Meeting noted that a session on benthic habitat monitoring was held at the final conference of the MARMONI project, January 28, 2015 with invitations to the HELCOM network.

6J.13 The Meeting welcomed the nomination of Mr. Alexandar Darr as German participant in the network and invited Denmark and Russia to also nominate participants.

6J.14 The Meeting took note that the network will seek opportunities for physical meetings during 2015 e.g. by arranging meetings back-to-back to other events.

6J.15 The Meeting noted the proposal from the network Leader to keep the network open also for experts that are not nominated through HELCOM. The Meeting supported such approach while requesting that the State and Conservation Group should be informed on the participants in the network.

**Agenda Item 7J Any other business**

Documents: 7J-1, 7J-2, 7J-3

7J.1 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Denmark on the late document 4N-3 on ‘Proposal for discussion and further cooperation concerning the management of grey seal (Halichoerus grypus) in the Baltic Sea’ noting that it will be further discussed under the Nature Conservation theme, Agenda Item 4N.
7J.2 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Finland ‘Proposal on integration of Marine Ecosystem Services in assessments’ (document 7J-2) and agreed to come back to the proposal at the next meeting of the State and Conservation Working Group.

7J.3 The Meeting noted the request from the Marine Strategy Coordination Group for EU Member States to review the applicability of the guidance document 32 and 33 under the MSFD and that these comments can be provided jointly through the Secretariat to the expert review group of MSFD descriptor 8 and 9 or directly to MSCG through the national consultation process on these documents. Comments to be provide jointly through the Secretariat should be submitted by 25 June 2015 (to lena.avellan@helcom.fi).

7J.4 The Meeting took note of the updated information leaflet by CCB on harbour porpoise (document 7J-3).

7J.5 The Meeting edited the list of contacts and observers of State and Conservation (7J-1) as included in Annex 2.

Agenda Item 8J and 5M Outcome of Monitoring and assessment and Joint themes

Documents: draft Outcome

8J-5M.1 The Meeting adopted the Outcome of the monitoring and assessment and joint themes of the Meeting and noted that it will be available (together with the outcomes of the nature conservation theme of the Meeting) at the State and Conservation 2-2015 Meeting Site, together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting.
Nature conservation and biodiversity session

**Agenda Item 1N  Adoption of Agenda: Nature Conservation**

Documents: 1-1, 1-2

1N.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda Items 1N-5N, as contained in documents 1-1 and 1-2.

**Agenda Item 2N  Development of HELCOM work on birds**

Documents: 2N-1, 2N-2

2N.1 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Mr. Ainars Aunins, Lead of BALSAM WP 3, on the proposed monitoring guidelines for birds (document 2N-2, **Presentation 16**), noting that the guidelines focus on methods that provide data required for the HELCOM core indicator on ‘Abundance of waterbirds in the wintering season’.

2N.2 The Meeting took note that the main purpose of the guidelines is to standardise key elements that are important from the point of view of data exchange and comparability, but that they are not intended to replace national monitoring programmes.

2N.3 The Meeting noted that monitoring of coastal birds is proposed to be based on the existing International Waterbird Census (IWC) protocol.

2N.4 The Meeting noted that for offshore monitoring both plane and ship based monitoring is currently used in the Baltic Sea and it is not seen necessary to choose between the two methods. The Meeting furthermore noted the importance to synchronize offshore surveys and that the next coordinated survey in the Baltic Sea region will likely take place in 2015/2016.

2N.5 The Meeting took note that the BALSAM project has developed meta databases on existing bird surveys and spatial covariates for spatial distribution monitoring and that the database on bird surveys is available through the [HELCOM web-site](#).

2N.6 The Meeting welcomed the monitoring guidelines and agreed to use them as HELCOM guidelines for coordinated monitoring of birds, noting that Germany and Sweden will provide some comments to the guidelines to be submitted via the Secretariat ([ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi)).

2N.7 The Meeting took note of the comment by Germany that the use of the term “target species” is not correct and that it is only a preliminary list from the CORESET II project.

2N.8 The Meeting noted that for breeding birds the need for coordination is not as urgent as for wintering birds since each country have guidelines suitable for national conditions of breeding birds. The Meeting however proposed to consider development of guidelines also for breeding birds in the future.

2N.9 The Meeting furthermore noted that no indicator on moulting birds has been developed, mainly because data on moulting birds is largely lacking. Denmark is the only country conducting regular monitoring of moulting birds.

2N.10 The Meeting took note of the presentation on previous HELCOM work and available map layers on birds as presented by the Secretariat (**Presentation 17**).

2N.11 The Meeting took note of the proposed Terms of Reference for the Joint ICES/OSPAR Working Group on Birds (document 2N-1) with the view that HELCOM will join the group and that the ToRs should also reflect a HELCOM component. The Meeting agreed to amend the ToRs to highlight that the group should deliver data products to the 2nd holistic assessment as well as to consider the development on an indicator on moulting birds (**Annex 5**).
2N.12 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to nominate national participants to the group by 12 June 2015 and inform the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) and noted that HELCOM has been requested to provide a co-chair to JWG Birds.

2N.13 The Meeting invited Sweden, Lead Country of Recommendation 34E/1, to organize a request to Contracting Parties for the submission of data for the purpose of mapping migration routes and staging areas and to cater for an update of HELCOM data layers on birds, and noted that Sweden will confirm her lead on this work by 12 June 2015.

Agenda Item 3N HELCOM network of Baltic Sea Protected Areas

Documents: 3N-1, 3N-2, 3N-2-WP1

3N.1 The Meeting took note of the information and time plan of the new HELCOM database on Baltic Sea Protected Areas, as presented by Assisting Professional Secretary Ms. Petra Kääriä and the tour of the HELCOM database, as presented by Project Coordinator Ms. Janica Borg.

3N.2 The Meeting welcomed the new database acknowledging the contribution from Sweden to its development, the work done by the MPA Task Group and especially the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that in Poland the update to the database has already started and that after initial learning of how to use the database the updating works well. The Meeting made the following proposals:

- to have the MPA map layer transparent by default
- to make a user log in the database visible for Contracting Parties
- that it would be ideal to be able to have visible or import Natura2000 and OSPAR species data to the database, having in mind that it would be applicable only to those HELCOM MPAs that have an identical area with a Natura2000 or OSPAR site.
- that it would be ideal to have cross-reference to red list ed species presence data so that it would not be possible to add a species to a site if this species does not occur there according to the red list data.

3N.3 The Meeting took note of the following time table for the finalization of the database:

- 1 June: Update of general and management information and species
- 1 July: Update of all available information
- 10 September: Publishing of the database for open access

3N.4 The Meeting took note that Estonia should be able to meet the time-table for submission of data, Poland and Germany will be able to provide data requested for both submissions by the end of July and July/August respectively, Sweden preliminary not until the end of the year but to clarify the situation by 12 June, and that Finland will also inform on the submission of data by the 12 June.

3N.5 The Meeting agreed to the proposed new nomination procedure for designation of new MPAs as proposed in document (3N-2).

3N.6 The Meeting took note of the list of pressures and human activities presented in Working Paper 3N-2-WP1 distributed to the meeting. The Meeting agreed to comment on the proposal to use the list in the HELCOM MPA database by 27 May 2015 and inform the Secretariat (janica.borg@helcom.fi) accordingly.

3N.7 The Meeting welcomed the proposal from Finland on the analysis of ecological coherence of HELCOM MPAs (document 3N-1) and agreed that it should be used as a basis for the planned analysis. The Meeting proposed not only to assess coherence of the MPA network but also its completeness e.g. through a follow-up of the agreement of HELCOM Recommendation 35-1, including proposals for new MPAs by applying appropriate site selection tools when necessary.

3N.8 The Meeting took note of time-table for the ecological coherence analysis (document 3N-3), and adjusted it to indicate the start of the analysis by 1 September due to the expected delay in delivery of data.
The Meeting acknowledged that the analyses of ecological coherence will begin based on the data available at that time.

3N.9 The Meeting noted the comment by OCEANA that when using the age of an MPA in the assessment one should consider the difference between the date of establishment and the date of the first management plan implementation.

3N.10 The Meeting noted that the analysis will mainly be carried out through the Secretariat and agreed that the MPA Task Group will continue with the task to review and give feedback to the analyses during the course of the work. The Meeting encouraged all Contracting Parties to nominate participants to the Task Group by 30 June 2015 and inform the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi) accordingly.

**Agenda Item 4N Recommendations on conservation plans for habitats and biotopes which are at risk of extinction**

Documents: 4N-1, 4N-2

4N.1 The Meeting recalled that Denmark has raised a study reservation on the HELCOM ‘Recommendation on Conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List’, regretted that Denmark was not able to clarify her study reservation by 31 March as agreed at HELCOM 36 and urged Denmark to clarify her position at HOD 48-2015 at the very latest. The Meeting concluded that the reservation has halted the planned work for the State and Conservation Working Group and the further development of the Recommendation on Conservation of biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes by 2015 as agreed at the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2013.

4N.2 The Meeting agreed to convene an on-line meeting on Recommendations related to HELCOM Red List on 12 June 2015 tentatively 9.00-11.00 CET and invited Denmark to participate in the Meeting.

4N.3 The Meeting took note of the outcome of the reporting request on conservation plans (document 4N-1) and of the information on the national threat status and conservation recommendations of HELCOM threatened species (document 4N-2), as presented by the Secretariat.

4N.4 The Meeting took note of the information by Germany that work is ongoing on a national conservation plan on harbour porpoises, with the aim of adoption in 2015 and by Poland that national regulations related to recreational fishing of salmon and sea trout have been prepared. The Meeting took note of the information by Poland that additionally eel management plan for the Pregola river basin has been prepared together with Russia.

4N.5 The Meeting noted that a LIFE+ application for a sturgeon rehabilitation project has not been accepted and noted however that activities are still ongoing in Germany and Poland regarding the reintroduction of sturgeon and that the next meeting of the Working Group will be updated on the activities.

4N.6 The Meeting agreed that those Contracting Parties that have not yet submitted information on the existing national conservation plans for species/biotopes will submit the information as soon as possible to the Secretariat (petra.kaaria@helcom.fi), for the Working Group to use this information as a basis for identifying species and biotopes suitable for joint conservation plans or the development of common guidelines for conservation plans, and agreed to come back to the issue at the next meeting of the Working Group. The Meeting noted that in Poland the current focus is on finishing management plans for Natura 2000 sites as well as for grey seal and harbour porpoise and therefore the capacity for developing new plans is limited.

4N.7 The Meeting took note of the ‘National program of measure for marine threatened species and habitats as presented’ by Sweden (Presentation 18) and noted that the programme covers species that are not addressed by existing management plans. The programmes have concrete and measurable objectives and are implemented by regional authorities. Currently five national programmes of measures are directly related to the Baltic Sea, e.g. for diadromous species in the Bothnian bay (lamprey), shell gravel bottoms in the Baltic (focus on grayling and common whitefish) and a knowledge building programme on mussels and seabirds on shallow offshore banks in the Baltic.
4N.8 The Meeting thanked Sweden for the inspirational presentation and work and found the approach relevant to explore also for other countries. The Meeting noted that in Finland similar work is planned but has not started.

4N.9 The Meeting took note of document 4N-2 and the planned actions to support the development of conservation plans as agreed at STATE 1-2014. The Meeting noted that:

- in Poland, for the purpose of prioritized action framework for Natura 2000 network, a survey has been carried out on measures already taken and their costs, however these measures cover mainly terrestrial areas.
- in Germany when EIAs for plans and projects are carried out it is obligatory to consider potential impacts to red listed species and biotopes, also outside marine protected areas.

4N.10 The Meeting took note of the proposal from Denmark regarding cooperation concerning the management of grey seal (*Halichoerus grypus*) in the Baltic Sea (document 4N-3, paragraph 7J-1). The Meeting noted that it was a late document and that national consultations are still required. The Meeting however noted that the existing HELCOM Recommendation 27/28-2 ‘Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea Area’ in principle covers the issues addressed in the document. The Meeting noted the information that Polish national management plan for grey seal is now to be finalized.

4N.11 Denmark invited the Contracting Parties to present their view on the issue by HOD 48-2015.

4N.12 The Meeting took note of the information from the Secretariat on the planned HELCOM workshop, 2-3 June 2015, with the objective to discuss how the results from the HELCOM Red List assessment can be used in the European project ‘Establishment of European Red List of habitats’. The Meeting noted the results from the first Baltic project workshop that was held in October 2015 with participation of national experts from HELCOM Contracting Parties and that during the upcoming HELCOM workshop the project coordinator (Nature Bureau) will present their further developed proposal for finalizing the Baltic component of the project.

4N.13 The Meeting found it important to fully understand the latest proposal from the project as the previous proposal for further scaling up of the results from the last year’s Baltic workshop would lead to losing the necessary level of detail to inform on the status of habitats in the Baltic Sea.

4N.14 The Meeting recommended the project to seek IUCN view on the final results of the project.

4N.15 The Meeting invited Contracting Parties to attend the HELCOM workshop and noted that due to a late announcement of the dates it might not be possible for Swedish experts to participate. The Secretariat will send an invitation and programme on the workshop shortly.

4N.16 The Meeting discussed the red listing on a European scale in general and stressed that the HUB classification and the results of HELCOM assessments should be used as the basis for European red list for the Baltic Sea area. The Meeting furthermore felt that is important to know how the results of the European assessment are intended to be used. For the Baltic Sea countries, considerable resources were invested in the HELCOM Red List which is considered by the countries as the most relevant classification for the Baltic, including for management purposes, and in some countries mapping of habitats according to the HUB classification has already been successfully initiated.

4N.17 The Meeting invited the European Commission to inform in the workshop on the planned use of the European assessment.

4N.18 The Meeting took note that the HELCOM Fish Group will discuss the by-catch issue in detail at the next meeting of the Group, 26-27 November 2015, and that the State and Conservation group members are welcome to take part in the preparations for and participate in the meeting.

4N.19 The Meeting welcomed the offer from Poland to take the Lead on the by-catch topic in the planning for the workshop on regional coordination of measures (paragraph 5J.9) and noted that this work will also contribute the next meeting of the Fish Group.
4N.20 The Meeting agreed to focus the Nature Conservation theme of the next meeting of the State and Conservation on:

- Follow-up issues from the current meeting including issue related to MPAs, mapping of benthic habitats and birds, and development of conservation plans
- The proposal from Finland for the Working Group to address how to consider marine ecosystem services
- As agreed at STATE 1-2014, to Identify regional priorities for ecosystem restoration in the Baltic Sea as well as to address regional targets for the EU Biodiversity strategy for Contracting Parties being EU Member States

4N.21 The Meeting thanked the Secretariat for organizing the Meeting and welcomed the tentative offer from Finland to host the next Meeting of the Working Group, to be confirmed at HOD 40-2015.

4N.22 The Meeting took note of the information by Germany on the conference ‘Progress in Marine Conservation in Europe 2015’ to be held 14-18 September 2015, OZEANEUM Stralsund.

**Agenda Item 5N Outcome: Nature conservation**

Documents: draft Outcome

5N.1 The Meeting adopted the Outcome of nature conservation theme of the Meeting and noted that it will be available (together with the outcomes of the monitoring and assessment and joint themes of the Meeting) at the State and Conservation 2-2015 Meeting Site together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting.
Annex 1 List of participants

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</table>
Annex 3 Proposed revision of HELCOM Recommendation 12/1

 HELCOM RECOMMENDATION XX/YY

Adopted X March XXXX,

having regard to Article 20 (1), Paragraph b)
of the Helsinki Convention

CO-OPERATION AND COORDINATION OF RESEARCH VESSEL BASED MONITORING IN OFF-SHORE AREAS
AND PROCEDURES FOR GRANTING PERMITS FOR MONITORING AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

THE COMMISSION,

RECALLING Articles 4 and 24 of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic
Sea Area, 1992 (Helsinki Convention), concerning the application of the Convention and scientific and

RECALLING ALSO Article 27 and Annex IV Regulation 9 of the Helsinki Convention, concerning the right of
innocent passage through the territorial sea and use of automatic identification systems (AIS),

RECALLING FURTHER HELCOM Ministerial Declaration, 2013 paragraph X and chapter on marine knowledge,
monitoring and assessment, concerning the intensified efforts to improve data and information quality and

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy, 2013, Attachment 1, stating the
need for co-operation and coordination of monitoring efforts especially for the open sea areas as well as for
joint surveys, cruises and campaigns that enable full cooperation in practice, harmonization of practices,

TAKING ALSO INTO ACCOUNT the HELCOM Monitoring Manual, urging Contracting Parties to use limited
resources as efficiently as possible by carrying out monitoring activities in the HELCOM sub-basins in a
coordinated way,

NOTING that HELCOM has developed an on-line platform to share information on planned and completed
cruises, real time vessel positions (based on AIS) and technical details of research vessels used for
environmental monitoring,

CONSIDERING that multinational experiments covering inter-connected marine areas, which might be under
jurisdiction of different coastal states, are vital for the scientific understanding of the Baltic Sea ecosystem
functioning and pathways of contaminants,

REALIZING the necessity of instant and joint investigations at extreme events of environmental concern and
sudden events, which could considerably influence the Baltic Sea environment as a whole, for example, the
Major Baltic Inflow in 2014,
CONVINCED that a prerequisite for a successful implementation of coordinated monitoring is the application of smooth national administrative procedures for granting timely cruise permits for exclusive economic zones, fishing zones, continental shelves or territorial waters,

APPRECIATING that certain Contracting Parties have implemented the practice of granting yearly permits for monitoring and scientific research activities in the Baltic Sea area,

REGRETTING that in some cases the present national administrative practices create major problems for the implementation of coordinated monitoring and related scientific research,

RECOMMENDS to the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

a) to support the joint use of existing research vessels for off-shore monitoring activities and co-operation in planning and construction of new regional research vessels for the Baltic Sea environmental monitoring and scientific research,

b) to use the HELCOM on-line platform to share information on planned and completed cruises, real time vessel positions (based on AIS) and technical details of research vessels used for environmental monitoring that could support timely granting of permits for monitoring and research activities,

c) to grant one year permits for planned monitoring and research activities in the framework of the HELCOM coordinated monitoring programme in the exclusive economic zones, fishing zones, continental shelves or territorial waters, during which period the coastal state is only to be notified in advance for each individual cruise,

d) to facilitate and without unnecessary delay [aiming at one month – six weeks] (within one month) grant the permits to carry out joint scientific studies of common interest in connection that is connected to the HELCOM coordinated monitoring programme.
Annex 4 Topics for regional coordination measures – input for planned HELCOM workshop drafted at State and Conservation 2-2015

Spatial protection measures

1. **Coordination of possible management measures of pressures and impacts on MPAs**, in particular for adjacent MPAs

This aspect of spatial protection is new to HELCOM.

**Approach:** for all pressures and impacts develop scheme/compilation with possible management options. Define suitable management level; national, regional, European

Step 1: what steps have CPs already taken e.g. concerning fisheries/shipping; what measures have been taken? Check MPA database should be checked for information

Step 2: compilation of existing management guidance; identify where HELCOM can provide input. Check existing HELCOM guidelines for MPAs (and consider revision)

2. **How to consider MPAs and MPA management in Marine Spatial Planning**

This aspect of spatial protection is new to HELCOM.

**Approach:** Cooperation with HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group on a regional approach for including MPAs and respective protection requirements in Marine Spatial Planning.

Consider application of existing HELCOM guidelines on the application of ecosystem approach in transnationally coherent MSP

Step 1: ?

3. **Develop joint tools/approach for assessing effectiveness of spatial protection measures for individual sites as well as network level**

This topic is on the work plan of the Working Group, but there is no HELCOM plan for how to achieve the task

Step 1: check how far OSPAR has come in the development of tools for assessing effectiveness of MPAs

Conservation, restoration and reintroduction of species:

This topic is on the work plan of Working Group as concerns threatened species; but not regarding e.g. declining species that are not yet listed at threatened

The meeting highlighted that development a common understanding and content of conservation plans should be considered in addition to joint conservation plans when relevant

Step 1: adoption recommendation of the draft HELCOM Recommendation of Conservation of HELCOM Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the HELCOM Red List.
Selective extraction and incidental by-catch of species
The topic was found relevant but no concrete proposal was formulated. As a relevant example, the meeting noted that ASCOBANS had discussed input to the revision of 812/2004 (by-catch regulation). The meeting noted that:

- More information is needed on by-catch of birds and harbour porpoises – and that this is expected to come through the revision of the DCF
- Testing of alternative fishing gear is still a relevant topic e.g. through joint projects. Germany informed that testing is ongoing regarding long-line fishing cod.
- Sweden is developing guidelines for fishing in MPAs, including e.g. education for fishermen
- The meeting proposed to consider under marine litter how to address entanglement in ghost nets (coordinated action e.g. fishing for litter)

Input of synthetic and non-synthetic contaminants
Assessment of pharmaceutical is on the work plan for the Working Group with concrete Plans for coordinated assessment of pharmaceuticals together with the Pressure Group and in cooperation with PA Hazards, EUSBSR

The meeting proposed to address effluents from sewage treatment plants more broadly to identify other problematic substances than pharmaceuticals

Step 1: gather national data on other emerging pollutants e.g. micropollutants e.g. biocides, additives, other heavy metals

Step 2: Evaluate more advanced treatment techniques by compiling existing information on e.g. feasibility and costs. Results from the COHIBA project should be checked.
Annex 5 Draft resolution Joint OSPAR/HELCOM/ICES/Working group on Seabirds (JWGBIRD)

The Joint OSPAR/HELCOM/ICES/Working Group on Seabirds (JWGBIRD), co-chaired by Ian Mitchell (UK) (with other co-chairs to be nominated by ICES and HELCOM) will meet in XXX (venue to be confirmed), on XXX [Dates in Sept-Nov 2015 to be confirmed], to work on ToRs and generate deliverables as listed below:

a) Assessment of the OSPAR MSFD common indicators for OSPAR Regions I, II, III and IV as a contribution to the OSPAR IA2017: B1 – marine bird abundance and B3 – marine bird breeding success. The reporting will follow a format and time frame pre-defined by OSPAR and will ensure access to the underlying data used to produce the assessment.

b) An assessment of indicators B1 and B3 in OSPAR Region I, where sufficient data are made available by Contracting Parties.

c) Regularly update of the HELCOM core indicator reports related to seabirds are to be carried out as and a draft contribution contribute with data products to the second HELCOM holistic assessment. The reporting format and time frame is to follow the pre-defined guidance given by HELCOM and as specified in the core indicator process. Further development of the indicator concepts is to be carried out as needed, a specific need for further development of the breeding success parameter and an indicator on moulting birds has been identified.

d) Regularly review and when needed revise the HELCOM guidelines on coordinated monitoring guidelines drafted by the HELCOM BALSAM project, with the aim to include the guidelines in the HELCOM Monitoring Manual of birds.

Products of JWGBird activities will be made available and accessible, in the appropriate format, to ICES, OSPAR and HELCOM.

JWGBIRD will report on ToR a) and b) to OSPAR1 by 20th November 2015.

JWGBIRD will report on other activities to ICES ACOM and SCICOM and to HELCOM by dates to be confirmed.

Supporting information

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>The ToRs are listed in order of priority, with the points a) and c) being of equal priority. OSPAR Contracting Parties are expecting the group to deliver ToR a) and b) related to the operation of two MSFD indicators and. HELCOM Contracting Parties are expecting the group to deliver ToR c) related to the core indicators and d) related to the monitoring guidelines.</th>
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| Scientific justification | a) ICES has played a key role in supporting the development of regional indicators of bird population status in the Greater North Sea since the inception of EcoQOs in 2001. In 2013, OSPAR adopted a first set of common indicators to support the implementation of the EU MSFD including two common indicators for marine birds. The joint OSPAR/ICES working group was formed in order e.g. to take forward the further development and testing of these indicators. This task under the ToR will be to review the assessments and report including recommendations on the future operation of these indicators by Contracting Parties.  
   b) HELCOM joins the group to further enhance coherence of environmental status assessments between the two RSCs. Coherence in the assessments is seen as being of particular relevance for the highly mobile seabirds migrating across the two regions. |

1 A provisional report of the outcomes of JWG Bird as regards ToR a) should be made to OSPAR ICG-COBAM (3) 2015.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Resource requirements</th>
<th>The research programmes which provide the main input to this group are already underway, and resources are already committed. The additional resource required to undertake additional activities in the framework of this group is negligible. HELCOM and OSPAR Contracting Parties are to commit national experts to participate in the annual meeting of the group as well as in intersessional work as needed.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>About 20 participants are expected in the newly merged group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secretariat facilities</td>
<td>Two rooms in ICES HQ at the time of the meeting and the usual helpful Secretariat support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>No financial implications for ICES.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linkages to ACOM</td>
<td>This is an ACOM group. Its outputs may inform the work of other groups working on and groups under integrated ecosystem assessments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>committees</td>
<td>There is a close working relationship with all the groups of SSGEPI.</td>
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<tr>
<td>groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linkages to other</td>
<td>OSPAR (in particular ICG-COBAM and BDC) and HELCOM (particularly HELCOM State and Conservation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>organizations</td>
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