



# Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature  
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION  
3-2015

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## Outcome of the Third Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (STATE & CONSERVATION 3-2015)

### Introduction

0.1 In accordance with the decision by HELCOM HOD 48-2015 (Outcome of the meeting, paragraph 3.68), the Third Meeting of the Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature Conservation (STATE & CONSERVATION 3-2015) was held in Helsinki, Finland, at the premises of the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE) on 9-13 November 2015.

0.2 The Monitoring and Assessment session was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties except Lithuania, the EU and Russia and observers from Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), ICES and Nordic Hunters' Alliance, the Joint session was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties except Lithuania, the EU and Russia and observers from Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), ICES, Nordic Hunters' Alliance and OCEANA, and the Nature Conservation session was attended by delegations from all Contracting Parties except Latvia, Lithuania and the EU and observers from Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), Nordic Hunters' Alliance 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: Ms. Penina Blankett, Finland, Chair of nature conservation issues and Mr. Urmas Lips, Estonia, Chair of monitoring and assessment related topics. The Joint session was chaired jointly by the two Co-Chairs. Ms. Ulla Li Zweifel, HELCOM Professional Secretary, and Ms. Petra Kääriä, HELCOM Assisting Professional Secretary, acted as secretaries of the Meeting.

0.4 Mr. Heikki Pitkänen, Development manager from the Marine center of SYKE, welcomed the Meeting to the Finnish Environment Institute. Mr. Pitkänen presented ongoing activities in SYKE, including the Gulf of Finland Year, a collaboration between Estonia, Finland and Russia, and the renovation of the research vessel 'Aranda' which will be finalized in 2019.

### 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-5MA as contained in documents 1-1 and 1-2.

1MA.2 The Meeting noted the concern raised by Germany on the submission of late documents to the Meeting and recalled that commentary and decision documents (labelled as CMNT and DEC) with expected agreements by the Meeting shall be submitted three weeks in advance and information documents (INF) one week in advance of the meeting.

1MA.3 The Meeting agreed to introduce also late documents to the Meeting and to indicate, case by case, whether the Meeting would like to return with comments at a later date or to postpone the discussion until the next meeting.

1MA.4 The Meeting supported the proposal by Denmark and Germany that if particular CMNT and DEC documents are submitted later than three weeks in advance of the meetings of State and Conservation these should be labelled as late documents.

**Agenda Item 2MA Revision of HELCOM monitoring**

Documents: 2MA-1, 2MA-2, 2MA-3, 2MA-4, 2MA-5, 2MA-6, 2MA-7, 2MA-8, 2MA-9, 2MA-10

*Update of HELCOM Monitoring Manual*

2MA.1 The Meeting took note of the reported information on monitoring of contaminants (document 2MA-9), as presented by Ms. Ulla Li Zweifel, Professional Secretary.

2MA.2 The Meeting agreed to update the maps displaying information on hazardous substances monitoring and to include information on species and matrix for sampling of hazardous substances in biota in the HELCOM Monitoring Manual. The Meeting agreed that the Contracting Parties will submit updates and missing national information on monitoring of contaminants according to the agreed template to the Secretariat ([ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi)) by **30 November 2015**.

2MA.3 The Meeting recalled that updates to the Monitoring Manual are made annually during spring and that the Secretariat will submit a request for updated information on national monitoring to the Monitoring Manual in advance of State and Conservation 4-2016.

2MA.4 The Meeting took note of the discrepancy between countries regarding the species and matrices sampled for hazardous substances in biota and the likely need to develop conversion factors for evaluations of core indicators. The Meeting further noted the discrepancy in reporting on monitoring of contaminants to the Monitoring Manual compared to data reported to the COMBINE database. The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties that have not or only partly reported monitoring of contaminants to COMBINE to clarify available national data for hazardous substances to HOLAS II 4-2015 taking place 24-25 November 2015 ([lana.avellan@helcom.fi](mailto:lana.avellan@helcom.fi)).

*Update of HELCOM Assessment units*

2MA.5 The Meeting took note of the modification of HELCOM Assessment units in the Åland Sea, Western Gotland Basin, the Kattegat, the Sound and Great Belt (document 2MA-8), as presented by Sweden.

2MA.6 The Meeting recalled that the modifications to the sub-basins are valid to all HELCOM work that is referred to in the Monitoring and Assessment Strategy. The Meeting agreed in principle on the modifications, pending a clarification by the Secretariat that these changes do not affect the MAI/CART assessment, and agreed that any further comments to the proposed modifications are to be submitted to the Secretariat ([petra.kaaria@helcom.fi](mailto:petra.kaaria@helcom.fi)) by **30 November 2015**.

2MA.7 The Meeting noted that in Sweden the issue of separating the Åland Sea into two areas, Archipelago and Åland Seas, had been discussed. The Meeting noted the clarification by Finland that the Åland Sea had previously been separated into two areas but from the point of view of Finland the Archipelago Sea only has coastal areas and no offshore areas.

*Review and update of HELCOM monitoring guidelines*

2MA.8 The Meeting took note of the Lead and co-Lead countries for the review of HELCOM monitoring guidelines (document 2MA-1) as well as received information on current use of monitoring guidelines (document 2MA-3), as presented by the Secretariat.

2MA.9 The Meeting took note of the proposal for the revision of HELCOM monitoring guidelines for the sub-programmes hydrography, hydrochemistry, biological effects of contaminants (TBT/imposex), and the development of new guidelines for marine birds health and health status of mammals (document 2MA-7), as presented by Sweden.

2MA.10 The Meeting welcomed the offer by Poland to support Sweden in the revision of the existing guidelines for hydrography and hydrochemistry.

2MA.11 The Meeting agreed to prolong, if needed, the timing for the development of the new components of the monitoring guidelines for hydrography and hydrochemistry, i.e. the use of satellite data

and autonomous devices, until mid-2017. The Meeting recalled the willingness of Estonia and Finland to support the development of these new components of the guidelines.

2MA.12 The Meeting noted the suggestion by Sweden proposing a workshop to progress the revision of the guidelines for hydrography and hydrochemistry and invited the co-Lead countries to appoint national contacts to Sweden ([norbert.haubner@havochvatten.se](mailto:norbert.haubner@havochvatten.se)) by **30 November 2015**.

2MA.13 The Meeting proposed that the Seal Expert Group will be consulted in the development of guidelines for the reproductive status of marine mammals.

2MA.14 The Meeting noted that Poland will submit comments to Sweden as regards the white-tailed eagle monitoring guideline and that Finland and Poland can contribute to the revision of TBT monitoring guidelines. The Meeting took note of the proposal by Germany to establish a database on bird health for white-tailed eagle rather than to work with existing excel-files. The Meeting agreed that the monitoring guidelines for TBT should consider monitoring of TBT in biota, sediment as well as imposex.

2MA.15 The Meeting took note of the presentation by Finland on the monitoring of soft-bottom invertebrate fauna in the Contracting Parties, noting e.g. that countries are using different sampling devices and sieve size. The Meeting agreed that Finland will circulate a survey to the Contracting Parties to clarify the current use of methods for offshore monitoring of benthic fauna. The Meeting invited Finland to discuss the outcome of the comparison to the HELCOM intersessional network on benthic habitats experts with a view to proposing a common approach for offshore monitoring to the next meeting of State and Conservation.

2MA.16 The Meeting took note of the information presented by Finland on ship-based measurements of Chl-a and, furthermore, on the monitoring of water column physical characteristics, specifically regarding use of satellite data and satellite-based monitoring. The Meeting agreed that Finland will circulate a survey to the Contracting Parties to clarify the current use of methods for the respective topic.

2MA.17 The Meeting welcomed the proposed text to substitute Annexes B1-B5 of the COMBINE Manual (document 2MA-6), as presented by Estonia. The Meeting noted that Poland and Sweden were of the view that the request for laboratories to have an accredited quality system was formulated too strictly. The Meeting decided to delete the year 2005 in the reference and, instead, to include a note "for undated references European Standards, the latest reference of the document (including any amendments) applies". The Meeting agreed that the Contracting Parties will submit comments and amendments to the document by **7 December 2015** to the Co-Chair Mr. Urmas Lips and the Secretariat ([urmas.lips@msi.ttu.ee](mailto:urmas.lips@msi.ttu.ee), [ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi)).

2MA.18 The Meeting welcomed the report from the BIAS project on standards for noise measurements in the Baltic Sea (document 2MA-4). The Meeting invited the BIAS project to present the report and a proposal for a monitoring programme for underwater noise in the Baltic Sea to State and Conservation 4-2016.

2MA.19 The Meeting noted the information that the HELCOM Expert Network on Underwater Noise will have an online meeting on the establishment of a joint regional registry of impulsive noise on Monday 16 November 2015 at 10:00-13:00 (EET).

2MA.20 The Meeting took note of the information from Germany on the revision of monitoring guidelines and comments to coreset indicator reports on hazardous substances (**Presentation 1**). The Meeting welcomed the confirmation by Germany to lead the revision of the HELCOM monitoring guidelines for hazardous substances. The Meeting proposed to forward the comments related to core indicators to the Lead/co-Lead countries for the development of these indicators and the expert network on hazardous substances, and comments to other components of the COMBINE Manual to the respective Lead country for the revision of monitoring guidelines. The Meeting welcomed the confirmation by Poland to co-lead the review of the monitoring guidelines for hazardous substances.

2MA.21 The Meeting took note of the agreed HELCOM/OSPAR joint harmonized port survey protocol for non-indigenous species (document 2MA-5), as presented by the Secretariat, and the proposal to include the protocol as part of the HELCOM Monitoring Manual and HELCOM coordinated monitoring programmes.

2MA.22 The Meeting noted the presentation by Germany on a national protocol for the monitoring of non-indigenous species (NIS) (**Presentation 2**). This Rapid Assessment Protocol (HELCOM MONAS 13-2010, document 6.4) has been established as the preferred NIS vector monitoring in Germany over the HELCOM/OSPAR port survey protocol. An elaborated comparison of the protocols has shown that they both provide sufficient information to support the core indicator on trends in NIS. However, the Rapid Assessment is evaluated as being more cost-effective, while being restricted to benthic organisms. The port survey protocol also covers plankton and epifauna.

2MA.23 The Meeting invited the Lead country Lithuania and co-Lead country Germany to present a proposal on monitoring to fulfil data needs for the NIS trend indicator to State and Conservation 4-2016. The Meeting requested a close cooperation with TG BALLAST (Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Task Group on Ballast Water Management Convention Exemptions) stressing that to ensure the use of monitoring data from the adopted port survey protocol, NIS monitoring protocols used in the Baltic Sea should use the same methodology for overlapping components (e.g. benthic).

2MA.24 The Meeting agreed that for the time being the Monitoring Manual will provide a link to the existing HELCOM/OSPAR port survey protocol.

2MA.25 The Meeting agreed that for the further review and revision of HELCOM monitoring guidelines the Lead countries will contact the co-Lead countries to organize the continued work and that proposals for all monitoring guidelines, revised or new, should be presented to State and Conservation 4-2016.

2MA.26 The Meeting noted that some monitoring sub-programmes are still lacking a Lead country, invited the Seal Expert Group to consider monitoring guidelines for harbour porpoise abundance and encouraged the Contracting Parties to take on the lead for the sub-programme on hard-bottom species.

2MA.27 The Meeting took note of the suggestion for a template for HELCOM monitoring guidelines (document 2MA-2), as presented by Ms. Petra Kääriä, Assisting Professional Secretary, welcomed the proposed template, clarified that quality control of guidelines should be specific for a monitoring guideline in question, and agreed on using the template for harmonization of HELCOM monitoring guidelines.

2MA.28 The Meeting recalled the proposal to develop a HELCOM Recommendation on using autonomous devices for monitoring (document 2MA-10) and that the proposal for such a Recommendation stems from [needs identified in the HELCOM BALSAM project](#), e.g. that several countries reported that there are no national regulations for getting permits to use foreign autonomous devices in their waters.

2MA.29 The Meeting noted the comment by Finland that a report from the FP7 project [Groom](#) could be a potential source for evaluating the legal basis for the draft Recommendation.

2MA.30 The Meeting noted the comment by Sweden that in the Swedish law no definition for autonomous devices exists and that it would not be possible to apply for the use of foreign autonomous devices in territorial waters and the draft Recommendation would need to be restricted to EEZ.

2MA.31 The Meeting concluded that the Recommendation could likely not be agreed in the near future and that for the time being it is recommended that the institutes using autonomous drifting/gliding devices cooperate with the partners from the respective country in order to make use of the rules that are applied nationally.

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

Documents: 3MA-1, 3MA-2, 3MA-3

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

3MA.1 The Meeting took note of the proposal on mechanism for notification of transfer of the Contracting Parties' data to EIONET (document 3MA-1), as presented by ICES. The Meeting welcomed the proposal in principle, but due to its late submission, the Meeting was not prepared to accept the proposal as requested and agreed to provide comments to the Secretariat by **30 November 2015** ([petra.kaaria@helcom.fi](mailto:petra.kaaria@helcom.fi)).

3MA.2 The Meeting considered the comparison of COMBINE data fields to EIONET data fields (document 3MA-2), as presented by ICES.

3MA.3 The Meeting noted the comment by Finland highlighting the need to ensure good quality data for the indicators on hazardous substances for use in the second holistic assessment (HOLAS II).

3MA.4 The Meeting recalled that State and Conservation 2-2015 emphasized that the Contracting Parties should report monitoring data directly to ICES instead of reporting via EIONET, since metadata requirements for HELCOM core indicators may be missing in EIONET. The use of EIONET data may, however, solve data needs in the short term, e.g. for the ongoing second HELCOM holistic assessment. The Meeting took note of the information from ICES that in the short term it would not be possible to incorporate EIONET data directly in the COMBINE database as the EIONET data would fail the quality checking criteria.

3MA.5 To further investigate the possibility to use EIONET data in the second holistic assessment, the Meeting invited the hazardous substances expert network to review the mandatory data fields and the quality screening criteria under COMBINE with the view of considering if all fields/criteria are needed for the core indicators and second holistic assessment, as well as to investigate whether some critical data/information fields are missing. Based on this review the issue of use of EIONET data will be revisited.

3MA.6 The Meeting took note of the need to review the other currently valid data submission templates (e.g. for biology and hydrochemistry) with regard to missing information for the proposed assessment of the core and pre-core indicators. The Meeting invited ICES to provide the templates and the Secretariat to distribute them to State and Conservation contacts as well as to relevant expert groups, projects and networks.

3MA.7 The Meeting took note of the overview of data labelling according to the COMBINE database reporting (document 3MA-3), as presented by ICES. The Meeting recalled the proposal from State and Conservation 2-2015 that also project data should be possible to flag for inclusion in the HELCOM assessment, however, noted that project data is scarcely reported by the Contracting Parties to the COMBINE database.

**Agenda Item 4MA Progress of relevant HELCOM projects and assessments**

Documents: 4MA-1

*Operationalization of HELCOM eutrophication assessments (EUTRO-OPER)*

4MA.1 The Meeting took note of the progress of the EUTRO-OPER project to be finalized by the end of the year 2015 (document 4MA-1, **Presentation 3**), as presented by Ms. Vivi Fleming-Lehtinen, Project Manager of EUTRO-OPER. The Meeting welcomed the work carried out by the Project and the Project Manager.

4MA.2 The Meeting took note of the data flow arrangement that has been developed by the Project and the use of HELCOM workspace to visualize the data extracts and their origin as well as the results of indicator evaluations, and eutrophication assessment. The Meeting noted that the system is designed so that designated experts can check and quality assure the different steps of the assessment.

4MA.3 The Meeting discussed the visualization of indicator and eutrophication assessments and noted that the Project has developed the possibility to show distance to GES which is based on further dividing the results into five eutrophication levels, set at even intervals.

4MA.4 The Meeting discussed the harmonization of coastal assessments under the Water Framework Directive and offshore assessments in HELCOM using the HEAT 3.0 tool. Based on a comparison of WFD assessments and the outcome of HEAT 3.0 assessments in coastal waters, the EUTRO-OPER project proposed that nationally agreed WFD indicators are used in coastal waters and HELCOM core indicators in offshore areas, in both cases with the application of the HEAT 3.0 tool.

4MA.5 The Meeting noted that the Project will carry out a test assessment of eutrophication using the new data flow arrangements, based on data from the period 2007-2011 and that the Project is, furthermore, developing a 'Eutrophication manual' that is currently being commented on by EUTRO-OPER participants and that will be circulated to State and Conservation contacts who are invited to review the manual between 1-11 December 2015.

4MA.6 The Meeting took note that it will not be possible to finalize the four pre-core indicators developed in the Project within the timeframe of the EUTRO-OPER project. The Meeting further noted that the development of a Baltic-wide oxygen indicator was initiated under the Project but that it had not yet reached a state where it could be suggested as a pre-core indicator.

#### *Assessing the state of contaminants with pharmaceuticals*

4MA.7 The Meeting took note of the information on the joint EUSBSR PA Hazards/HELCOM assessment of pharmaceuticals in the Baltic Sea, as presented by the Secretariat, and noted that data has been received from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Poland and Sweden. The Meeting noted that the report will be finalized by the end of November 2015 and agreed that it will be circulated among State and Conservation contacts for a commenting period of one month.

4MA.8 The Meeting noted that PA Hazards in partnership with HELCOM will convene [a stakeholder conference](#) on pharmaceuticals in the marine environment on 15 December 2015 in Copenhagen and that the results of the assessment will be presented to the conference.

4MA.9 The Meeting recalled that the development of an indicator on pharmaceuticals had been put on hold as its further development is awaiting the results of the mentioned report and agreed to discuss the continued HELCOM work on pharmaceuticals and how to include pharmaceuticals in the second holistic assessment at State and Conservation 4-2016. The Meeting noted the view by Finland that the results of the report should be used to revisit for which substances indicators should be developed.

## Joint Session (J)

### **Agenda Item 1J Adoption of Agenda: Joint themes**

Documents: 1-1 and 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 Matters arising from other meetings of relevance for the Working Group**

Documents: 2J-1, 2J-2

2J.1 The Meeting took note of the extracts from other meetings of relevance for State and Conservation (document 2J-2), as presented by the Secretariat.

2J.2 The Meeting noted the Terms of Reference for HELCOM Expert Network on Marine Litter, as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting suggested to add to the ToR that also the State and Conservation Working Group will revisit the work of the Expert Network beyond 2018.

2J.3 The Meeting took note of the following information by the Contracting Parties:

- Estonia: A scientific forum for the Gulf of Finland year will be organized on 17-19 November 2015 in Tallinn, an assessment of the status of the Gulf of Finland in 2014 will likely be available during spring 2016, a large dataset was collected in the process and the material will be available for the use of HOLAS II.
- Finland: The 1st phase of the VELMU programme is coming to its end and the VELMU Map Portal will be published on Jan 28th 2016. The VELMU dataset will be available for download later in 2016. The Finnish MSFD Programme of Measures is in preparation and will be sent for the approval of the Finnish Government in early December 2015 together with the WFD Programme of Measures.
- Denmark: WFD river basin management plans have been in consultation process and the plans will be made public shortly, the MSFD initial assessment is finalized and Programmes of Measure are expected to be sent to public consultation.
- Germany informed that the public consultation of the German WFD river basin management plans has recently been finished. The same applies to the MSFD programme of measures which is now in the process of finalization. As regards the Joint Document of the Programmes of Measures, Germany indicated that according to the National Water Act the work of the Regional Seas Conventions needs to be taken into consideration in the national MSFD implementation process. The national decision to what extent the Joint Documentation can be used in the national MSFD process is still pending.
- Poland: Revision of river basin management plans for the second cycle has been finished and pending approval by the Council of Ministers. Environmental targets for marine waters according to MSFD art. 10 have been approved on 6 November by the Council of Ministers and the Cabinet and since now the official work on PoMs can start. Implementation of national monitoring programme for marine waters according to MSFD art. 11 is ongoing this year with new programmes of marine litter monitoring (beach, sea bed, water column) and underwater noise monitoring (ambient and impulsive).
- Sweden has finished the public consultation of MSFD Programmes of Measures during summer and is now revising it. It will hopefully be adopted by December 2015. A national indicator workshop was held in October 2015, where national experts gathered to discuss the Swedish indicator system, including the indicators from HELCOM and OSPAR. The assessment of the Kattegat and the Sound has been discussed between Denmark and Sweden with the aim to jointly assess the Sound. Plans

for a national benthic mapping programme are nearly finalized and will be ready by winter 2015/2016. The mapping is intended to be started in 2016.

### **Agenda Item 3J Follow-up of HELCOM agreements and activities**

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

#### *Recommendations*

3J.4 The Meeting considered the draft Recommendation on co-operation and coordination of research vessel based monitoring (document 3J-4), as presented by Mr. Urmas Lips, Co-Chair of the Working Group, and the proposed revision to paragraph 4 of the 'Recommends' part as contained in document 3J-4. The Meeting agreed in principle on the proposed revision, pending clearance from Germany and Sweden to be submitted to the Secretariat by **17 November 2015** ([ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi)).

3J.5 The Meeting took note of the review of HELCOM Recommendations under State and Conservation (document 3J-1), and considered the following reports by the Contracting Parties:

- Denmark will report on the implementation of Recommendation 16/3 in State and Conservation 4-2016.
- Estonia is willing to take the lead for Recommendation 10/1 and will provide a suggestion for the next meeting. As regards Recommendation 24/10, Estonia will come back to it at State and Conservation 4-2016.
- Finland is of the view that for Recommendation 15/1 'Protection of the coastal strip' a comprehensive revision is needed and that it is, furthermore, necessary to scrutinize the links between Recommendations 15/1, 24/10 and 16/3. The Meeting agreed that a drafting group including participants from Finland, Estonia, Germany and Denmark will jointly review these Recommendations. Finland will initiate co-operation between the countries.
- Germany: As regards Recommendation 21/4, Germany proposed to wait until the adoption of a new Recommendation on conservation of threatened Baltic Sea biotopes according to the HELCOM Red List and pointed out that the current Recommendation 21/4 covers also terrestrial and coastal biotopes for which no update has taken place so far.

3J.6 The Meeting took note of the ASCOBANS Annual National Reports on the protection of small cetaceans and in particular harbour porpoise and HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 (document 3J-6), as presented by Poland. The Meeting noted that the reporting under ASCOBANS fulfills the reporting requirement of Recommendation 17/2. The Meeting recognized that to facilitate the assessment of accomplishment of HELCOM Recommendation 17/2 it may still be necessary to develop a HELCOM reporting format into which specific components of the reporting to ASCOBANS could be inserted.

3J.7 The Meeting invited SEAL 9-2015 to discuss how to organize reporting for the countries that are not parties of ASCOBANS and welcomed the offer from Poland to develop a draft HELCOM reporting format and submit it to SEAL 9-2015 for their consideration.

3J.8 The Meeting further noted that ASCOBANS is currently revising national reporting formats on harbour porpoise and suggested that ASCOBANS would consider taking HELCOM requirements into account in the revision. The Meeting agreed to finalize the discussion on the reporting for the Recommendation at State and Conservation 4-2016.

3J.9 The Meeting considered the outcome of the review of Recommendation 29/2 'Marine litter within the Baltic Sea region', presented by the Secretariat and noted the draft conclusion that all 'recommends' paragraphs of Recommendation 29/2 are covered by Recommendation 36/1 'Regional action plan on marine litter'. The Meeting agreed that the Secretariat will circulate the review as a meeting document to State and Conservation 4-2016.

*Survey of knowledge and research needs for achieving good environmental status*

3J.10 The Meeting took note of the survey of knowledge and research needs (document 3J-2), as presented by the Secretariat and of the input from Sweden on knowledge and research needs for achieving good environmental status (document 3J-3), presented by Sweden.

3J.11 The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to provide additional input to the survey by **13 December 2015** to the Secretariat ([ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi)) using the file including the response from Sweden as a starting point ([document 3J-3-Att.1](#)) and proposed that a commentary column could be added to the file if desired. The Meeting supported that HELCOM expert groups should also be invited to contribute to the survey. The Meeting agreed to come back to the outcome of the survey at State and Conservation 4-2016.

3J.12 The Meeting noted the input from State and Conservation on 'actions still needed' to the IG PoM Workshop on regional coordination of PoMs (document 3J-5) held on 28-29 October 2015, as presented by Ms. Penina Blankett, Co-Chair of the Working Group. The Meeting recalled that a thematic online meeting to prepare the input from State and Conservation was held on 1 September 2015 and that State and Conservation contacts had the possibility to comment the consolidated document by 23 September and that the input was submitted to IG PoM and Gear on 1 October 2015 as a contribution to the Workshop.

3J.13 The Meeting took note that seven of the eight actions proposed by State and Conservation were proposed as 'actions still needed' as an outcome of the IG PoM Workshop and that six of these proposals were considered to provide further details to actions already reflected in the existing work plans of HELCOM Working Groups, while one proposal was identified as a completely new initiative (assessment of micropollutants).

3J.14 The Meeting noted that the proposals by State and Conservation were fine-tuned at the IG PoM Workshop and inserted into a common template.

3J.15 The Secretariat informed that according to the established procedure the Contracting Parties who may still wish to provide further comments to the actions still needed (document 3J-5) are invited to do so by **17 November 2015** to the Secretariat ([marta.ruiz@helcom.fi](mailto:marta.ruiz@helcom.fi)). The Meeting noted that Germany will have difficulties providing comments by this date as the official national position might not be fixed by then.

3J.16 The Meeting noted that 'physical loss and damage to the sea floor' was not among the topics suggested by State and Conservation and that a corrected version of the document ([3J-5-Rev.1](#)) is available in the HELCOM Meeting Portal.

**Agenda Item 4J HELCOM indicators and assessments**

Documents: 4J-1, 4J-2, 4J-3, 4J-4, 4J-5, 4J-7, 4J-8

*Continued development of HELCOM indicators*

4J.1 The Meeting supported the working arrangement for continued development of HELCOM indicators (document 4J-7, **Presentation 4**), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that the further development of the HELCOM core indicators will be taken forward by a Lead/co-Lead country approach and under the review of relevant expert groups, projects and networks. The next step of the development work is to finalize indicators for use in the second holistic assessment (HOLAS II). It is anticipated that indicators to be included in HOLAS II need to be adopted by the HELCOM HOD meeting to be held in December 2016.

4J.2 The Meeting noted that the Secretariat will contact the Lead countries to discuss the remaining work needed to operationalize the respective indicators and inform the expert groups/projects/networks on their expected role to support the development of data arrangement and the update of indicators and assessments.

4J.3 The Meeting welcomed the offer by Poland to take the lead for the indicators on metals, beach litter and cesium, and possibly also on the phytoplankton indicator on diatom/flagellates ratio and the indicator on continuous low frequency anthropogenic sound.

4J.4 The Meeting discussed on how the overall development of the core indicators should be taken up and clarified that overarching issues could be addressed by the State and Conservation Group, HOLAS II core team, as well as through the arrangement of workshops, if needed.

4J.5 The Meeting welcomed that Sweden can tentatively take the lead for the indicator TBT and imposex and noted that Sweden is not able to take the lead for Reproductive disorders: Malformed eelpout and amphipod embryos, but can co-lead the work. The Meeting further noted the view by Sweden that the marine mammal health indicators should be split to seals and harbor porpoise and that Sweden will present non-lethal methods for providing data for the marine mammal health indicators to SEAL 9-2015. The Meeting noted the view by Sweden on the need to advance the work on the harbour porpoise indicator.

4J.6 The Meeting noted the information that the German study reservation on the indicators is still valid. However, regarding the indicator 'Nutritional status of marine mammals' and 'Reproductive status of marine mammals' Germany is willing to discuss the issue at the next meeting of HELCOM Seal EG (SEAL 9-2015).

4J.7 The Meeting agreed in principle on the draft Terms of Reference of HELCOM expert network on hazardous substances (document 4J-1), supported to start the work of the network immediately and noted that Germany will possibly provide further comments to the ToR by **30 November 2015**. The Meeting underlined the need to elect a Chair for the network and encouraged the Contracting Parties to consider this need.

4J.8 The Meeting considered the proposal to establish a HELCOM expert network on eutrophication and supported in principle its establishment and the draft Terms of Reference presented to the Meeting (document 4J-5). The Meeting noted the following statement by Germany: "that she is very well aware that the work on eutrophication indicators is very important and has to proceed within the HELCOM framework. The draft ToR for the proposed network comprise the relevant tasks and working steps, but Germany has some doubts that such a network which would primarily work intersessionally would be the right body to fulfil all the tasks listed. Therefore, Germany suggests a prolongation of the EUTRO-OPER project for three to six months, and will propose this at the next HOD meeting. However, if HOD cannot endorse a prolongation of EUTRO-OPER, Germany supports the expert network approach and the ToR as well".

4J.9 The Meeting took note of the proposed food web indicator on phytoplankton composition submitted by Finland, which will be forwarded to the Phytoplankton Expert Group (PEG) for their consideration as a candidate indicator for further development (document 4J-3) and invited the Contracting Parties to provide comments to the proposed indicator to PEG.

#### *Development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II)*

4J.10 The Meeting considered the progress of the project for the development of the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II) (document 4J-4, **Presentation 5**), as presented by Ms. Lena Bergström, Project Coordinator of HOLAS II.

4J.11 The Meeting took note that the implementation of a number of components of the HOLAS II project are supported through the EU financed HELCOM coordinated project BalticBOOST (document 4J-2, **Presentation 6**), in particular the development of assessment tools for biodiversity and hazardous substances.

4J.12 The Meeting took note of the information from Sweden on the national initiative to develop an ecosystem based approach for developing and testing of pelagic food web indicators and welcomed her willingness to share information on the ongoing work.

4J.13 The Meeting took note of the comment from Germany proposing that 'Concentration of contaminants' and 'Contaminants in seafood' should be assessed separately and not be mixed in the further development of the HELCOM hazardous substances assessment tool. The Meeting took note of the comments from Germany on the CHASE tool and welcomed Germany to submit the comments to the upcoming HOLAS II 4-2015 meeting.

4J.14 The Meeting acknowledged that guidance for integrated assessment is being developed as part of the MSFD CIS and noted that HELCOM will be in a position to provide input to the development of such a guidance document and encouraged that the workshops on tool development carried out under the BalticBOOST project should be scheduled with this in mind.

4J.15 The Meeting took note of the information on the HELCOM application for a direct grant from the EU: 'Development of HELCOM tools to assess pressures and status of the marine environment (HELCOM TAPAS) for the second holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea ecosystem health' (**Presentation 6**).

4J.16 The Meeting took note of the comment by Germany on the importance of developing transparent tools that, e.g. allow for the possibility to check the data being used, and that the criteria developed during the first HOLAS II biodiversity workshop must be used as a basis for the development of the tool. The Meeting noted that a platform for viewing and quality assuring data will be developed as far as possible for the different thematic components of the HOLAS II project and that the tool development under the BalticBOOST project will deliver R-scripts or similar products as well as protocols for the use of the assessment tools.

4J.17 The Meeting took note of the information on the planned assessment tool development through BalticBOOST (document 4J-8), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting noted that test runs of the tools will be carried out during the second half of 2016 and that data availability for those test runs is critical and encouraged the Contracting Parties to identify suitable case study areas for the tests.

#### **Agenda Item 5J Baltic Sea Environment Fact Sheets**

Documents: 5J-1-Rev.1, 5J-2

5J.1 The Meeting took note of the status of Baltic Sea Environment Fact Sheets (document 5J-1-Rev.1), as presented by the Secretariat and noted that since the submission of the document, updates have also been received to the following BSEFS:

- Spatial distribution of winter nutrient pool
- Development of Sea Surface Temperature in the Baltic Sea

and that the following two new BSEFS have been accepted by the HELCOM Pressure Working Group and will be uploaded to the HELCOM Website:

- Atmospheric emissions of PCB-153 in the Baltic Sea region
- Atmospheric depositions of PCB-153 in the Baltic Sea region

5J.2 The Meeting considered the proposed revision of BSEFS procedure to better differentiate BSEFS and HELCOM core indicators (document 5J-2), as presented by the Secretariat, and agreed on the conceptual difference between core indicators and BSEFS as outlined in the document and to use the word 'parameter' instead of 'indicator' in the BSEFS. The Meeting agreed to update the BSEFS procedure according to the suggestion contained in Annex 1 of the document, noting that a reference to the Pressure Working Group will be added as some of the BSEFS are considered by the Pressure Group.

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

Documents: 6J-1, 6J-2

*Mapping of landscape and biotopes*

6J.1 The Meeting took note of the reported national metadata on biotopes, as presented by the Secretariat (document 6J-1) and the available data for development of distribution maps for non-benthic species (document 6J-2) and discussed for which habitats, biotopes and species HELCOM should aim to develop Baltic-wide maps, as a first step to support assessments under the HOLAS II project.

6J.2 The Meeting took note of the information from Finland on national mapping activities carried out under the VELMU programme (**Presentation 7**). The programme has covered benthic habitats, fish spawning areas and species observations on e.g. *Zostera*, *Fucus*, *Furcellaria* and *Stuckenia pectinata*. Species distribution modelling of *Zostera*, *Fucus*, *Mytilus* and *Potamogeon perfoliatus* has also been carried out.

6J.3 The Meeting proposed to make use of available landscape maps for the Baltic Sea, currently being updated by EUSeaMap, and for EU Member States to provide maps on the habitats as defined in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive, and 'predominant habitats' according to the MSFD, i.e. at EUNIS level 2.

6J.4 The Meeting proposed to develop maps for selected species, as a starting point for the species listed in the BSAP (*Fucus* spp., *Zostera marina*, *Mytilus* spp., *Furcellaria lumbricalis* and *Charales*) and complement the list as needed and feasible. The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to inform to the Secretariat on availability of data and existing maps (shapefiles) for these species ([ioni.kaitaranta@helcom.fi](mailto:ioni.kaitaranta@helcom.fi)) by **30 November 2015**. The Meeting took note that the Secretariat will make a call for relevant data and existing national maps in late 2015 or early 2016.

6J.5 The Meeting proposed that when developing maps for non-benthic species (document 6J-2), the focus would be on the distribution or functional habitats for harbor porpoise, seals, selected birds and fish species and recognized the need to collect new data and information to support the development.

6J.6 The Meeting proposed to make the best use of available data as regards both commercial and non-commercial fish species, as well as to consider selecting species based on the interest towards them from both the commercial and biodiversity perspective, potentially also considering linkages to ecosystem services. The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to propose for which fish species to focus the development effort by **30 November 2015**.

6J.7 The Meeting recalled that the follow-up of HELCOM 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' will provide maps related to Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBA), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and migration routes for birds. The Meeting welcomed the information that Germany is prepared to look into the possibility to support the development of data layers on birds.

6J.8 The Meeting took note of the information by Germany that the European Seabird at Sea database should be used for assessing issues related to birds.

*Monitoring of benthic habitats*

6J.9 The Meeting took note of the activities of the intersessional network on benthic habitat monitoring and noted that one physical meeting has been held jointly with the Marmoni project in January 2015. The Meeting noted the possibility to convene a meeting of the network back-to-back with an international seminar to be held in Tallinn between mid-December 2015 and mid-January 2016.

6J.10 The Meeting noted that the definitions for the terms 'landscape' and 'detailed landscape mapping' have been discussed in the network, as requested by State and Conservation 2-2015, but not yet concluded and that the issue will be further discussed with the view of informing State and conservation 4-2016.

6J.11 The Meeting suggested the network to initiate intersessional communication as soon as possible to plan for the future work of the network.

6J.12 The Meeting agreed that the Secretariat together with the Chair will propose a revision of the current Terms of Reference for the network in order to reflect the new tasks placed for the network by HOD 48-2015, which will be communicated with the network. The Meeting further agreed that the new draft ToR will be circulated to State and Conservation contacts for a one-month commenting period.

6J.13 The Meeting noted the information from Germany on a workshop on marine biotope mapping for conservation purposes in the Baltic and North Sea areas that will be organized on the Isle of Vilm between 30 November and 2 December 2015.

#### **Agenda Item 7J Any other business**

Documents: 7J-1, 7J-2, 7J-3, 7J-4, 7J-5

7J.1 The Meeting considered the draft Regional Baltic Underwater Noise Roadmap (document 7J-3), as presented by the Secretariat and suggested that the Roadmap is communicated to the [CMS, ACCOBAMS/ASCOBANS Joint Noise Working Group](#).

7J.2 The Meeting noted the list of recent meeting hosts (document 7J-2). The Meeting thanked Germany for exploring her possibilities to host the next meeting in spring 2016 (State and Conservation 4-2016) and welcomed the preliminary invitation by Estonia to host the autumn 2016 meeting (State and Conservation 5-2016).

7J.3 The Meeting agreed that the next meeting of the Working Group (State and Conservation 4-2016) will be held on 11–15 April 2016 and the autumn meeting (State and Conservation 5-2016) on 7–11 November 2016.

7J.4 The Meeting amended the list of contacts and observers of State and Conservation (document 7J-1), as included in **Annex 2**.

7J.5 The Meeting took note of the following information provided by Poland and Germany on recent activities on the reintroduction of sturgeon to the Baltic Sea:

A new LIFE+ application has recently been submitted, including proposals for e.g. rearing and stocking practices, assessment of fisheries practices and habitat characteristics. The HELCOM BSAP action concerning sturgeon has been emphasised in the application.

Poland has got two brood stocks of sturgeon and as soon as also females are able to breed (it should happen within 2-3 years when they get matured) stocking material will be obtained. Germany has already got mature sturgeon individuals and can therefore provide her own stocks. Stocking is conducted annually in Poland also in cooperation with Russia (Pregola river tributary - Wegorapa). Mortality on dams has been studied, indicating significant mortality with increasing amount of dams. Sturgeon is also easily by-caught in the fishing nets and therefore it is important to improve reporting of sturgeon by-catch by fishermen. Since the year 2008 over 1.5 million sturgeon individuals at all ages have been released into the Baltic Sea by Germany, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia and Estonia (who are also the partners in the LIFE+ project application).

7J.6 The Meeting noted that Poland and Germany will inform the next meeting of the Working Group on whether the LIFE+ project application has been successful.

7J.7 The Meeting took note of the proposal for actions to save European eel in the Baltic Sea (document 7J-4) submitted by CCB. The Meeting noted that since this was a late submission the Meeting was not in a position to provide comments on it. The Meeting noted that the document will be submitted for the consideration of the next meeting of HELCOM Fish Group (FISH 3-2015), to be held on 26-27 November 2015.

7J.8 The Meeting took note of the physical loss and damage to the sea floor caused by marine sediment extraction in the Baltic Sea (document 7J-5), submitted by CCB, and noted that the Pressure Group

has initiated a review of HELCOM Recommendation 19/1 to be further discussed at the next meeting of the Group.

**Agenda Item 8J and 5MA**

**Outcome of Monitoring and assessment and Joint themes**

Documents: draft Outcome

8J.1 & 5M.1 The Meeting adopted the outcome of the monitoring and assessment and joint themes and noted that the outcome will be available (together with the outcome of the nature conservation theme) at the [STATE & CONSERVATION 3-2015 Meeting Site](#) together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting.

## Nature conservation and biodiversity session (N)

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

Documents: 1-1, 1-2

1N.1 The Meeting adopted the Agenda items 1N-6N as contained in documents 1-1 and 1-2.

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

Documents: 2N-1, 2N-2

#### *Follow-up of HELCOM agreements related to birds*

2N.1 The Meeting considered the plan for update of HELCOM maps on important bird areas and mapping of migration routes (document 2N-2), as presented by the Lead Country Sweden.

2N.2 The Meeting appreciated the plan and agreed to nominate national contacts and provide written comments to the plan to Sweden and the Secretariat by **30 November 2015** ([Norbert.haubner@havochvatten.se](mailto:Norbert.haubner@havochvatten.se), [ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi)).

2N.3 The Meeting took note of the amended guidelines for marine bird monitoring (document 2N-1), as presented by the Secretariat. The Meeting proposed to revise the title to clarify that the guidelines only refer to monitoring of wintering birds. The Meeting noted that the guidelines will be uploaded to the HELCOM website as HELCOM guidelines for coordinated monitoring of wintering birds.

2N.4 The Meeting took note of the proposal from Finland to give higher attention also to breeding birds in HELCOM.

### Agenda Item 3N HELCOM network of coastal and marine Baltic Sea Protected Areas

Documents: 3N-1, 3N-2, 3N-3, 3N-3-Add.1, 3N-4, 3N-5, 3N-6, 3N-7

#### *New database for HELCOM MPAs<sup>1</sup>*

3N.1 The Meeting took note of the structure and new features of the HELCOM MPA database (document 3N-5, **Presentation 8**), as presented by Ms. Janica Borg, Project Coordinator.

3N.2 The Meeting welcomed the new database and the work that has been carried out by the Secretariat and the MPA Task Group and thanked Sweden for the financial support for the development of the database.

3N.3 The Meeting noted that the database is not fully updated yet and urged the Contracting Parties to complete the national updates as soon as possible.

3N.4 The Meeting discussed the proposed amendments in document 3N-5 and agreed:

- to include information and contact details to the responsible institutes for the MPA, but not to make the data provider information in the database publicly available,
- that the database should provide the possibility to enter both national names and English names of the MPAs,
- to include the full check-lists of Baltic Sea macro-species in the database rather than amending the current list.

3N.5 The Meeting took note of the proposal by Finland to have the possibility to provide a short description and picture of the MPAs on the page of the database where the individual sites are presented.

3N.6 The Meeting noted that when updating the information in the database countries have noticed some features that could be improved and agreed to submit feed-back on the database to the Secretariat ([ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi](mailto:ullali.zweifel@helcom.fi)) by **11 March 2016** for further consideration at State and Conservation 4-2016.

3N.7 The Meeting took note that the list of pressure will be amended as needed to reflect the revision of the list of pressure and human activities in MSFD Annex III and the outcome of HOLAS II, recognizing also the Natura 2000 standard data form.

3N.8 The Meeting took note of the written comments provided by Denmark on the work on HELCOM MPAs<sup>1</sup> as contained on document 3N-7.

3N.9 The Meeting took note of the draft Finnish guidelines for standardizing the MPA pressure evaluation (document 3N-2, **Presentation 9**), as presented by Finland. For each listed pressure in the database the relevant activities have been identified and criteria have been proposed for assessing the respective pressure as high, medium or low.

3N.10 The Meeting welcomed the Finnish guidelines and recognized the need for Baltic-wide guidelines for evaluating pressures on MPAs, however, noted that the data available for such an analysis will vary substantially between sites.

3N.11 The Meeting discussed the applicability of the guidelines for larger areas than MPAs and noted that due to the scale of pressures relative to the small size of MPAs the criteria are not directly applicable to the Baltic Sea scale. The Meeting still encouraged cooperation in the development of the Baltic Sea Pressure and Impacts Indices.

3N.12 The Meeting noted the comment by Germany to consider the criteria for pressures from marine litter in more detail, taking into account the work on marine litter carried out in OSPAR.

3N.13 The Meeting supported the further development of the draft guidelines towards Baltic-wide guidelines for use by HELCOM for MPA pressure evaluation. The Meeting invited the Contracting Parties to submit comments to Finland ([matti.sahla@metso.fi](mailto:matti.sahla@metso.fi)) by **15 February 2016** with a view to coming back to the guidelines at State and Conservation 4-2016.

3N.14 The Meeting agreed that guidelines for standardizing other issues in the MPA database will be discussed by the MPA Task Group once the ecological coherence analysis is finalized and further noted that guidelines for the use of the modernized database will be prepared by the Secretariat.

#### *Assessment of ecological coherence of the Baltic Sea MPA network*

3N.15 The Meeting considered the proposed methodology for assessing the ecological coherence of the Baltic Sea MPA network (documents 3N-3 and 3N-3-Add.1, **Presentation 10**), as presented by Ms. Janica Borg, Project Coordinator for ECONET.

3N.16 The Meeting noted that the proposed methodology has been discussed and further developed by the HELCOM MPA Task Group based on the methodological principles used in the previous HELCOM assessment of ecological coherence (BSEP 124B) in accordance with agreement at State and Conservation 2-2015.

3N.17 The Meeting discussed the proposed 'indicator biotopes' and 'indicator species'<sup>2</sup> as contained in Table 1 and Table 2 of document 3N-3-Add.1. The Meeting took note of the clarification that when evaluating indicator species and biotopes the first step of the analysis is to make use of distribution maps to identify in which areas the species/biotopes exist and that only those indicators that are relevant for the respective sub-basin are included in the analyses. The Meeting agreed:

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<sup>1</sup> former BSPAs

<sup>2</sup> as terms are used in document 3N-3 - not related to the HELCOM coreset indicators.

- to include marine biotope complexes of Annex I of the Habitat Directive which have been included in the MPA database as 'indicator biotopes', (i.e. 1110, 1130, 1140, 1150, 1160, 1170, 1180, 1610, 1620, 1650, 8330),
- to include harbour porpoise as an 'indicator species',
- to exclude cod as an 'indicator species'.

3N.18 The Meeting regretted that only one macrophyte species was included on the list of 'indicator species', however, noted that 'photic areas' are covered in the assessment by the analysis of representativity of marine landscapes, also representing the area of potential macrophyte cover.

3N.19 The Meeting proposed that for future assessments the representativity of birds should be based on analysing the number of breeding and migratory bird species reported in the respective group, rather than the number of individual bird species.

3N.20 The Meeting noted the view of Finland that a proper analysis of representativity needs to be based on the representation of species and biotopes outside as well as within the MPAs.

3N.21 The Meeting stressed the importance to clarify the limitations of the analysis of representativity in the upcoming assessment report, e.g. that it is restricted to information on species and biotopes within the MPAs, how the potential lack of complete reporting of species and biotopes to the database may affect the results, as well as how the selection of indicator species and biotopes may influence the assessment. The Meeting agreed that the assessment report should include a chapter that summarizes the limitations of the current assessment and provides guidance for the future.

3N.22 The Meeting considered the proposed assessment methodology. Regarding representativity, the Meeting agreed :

- to keep the original target for sub-criteria 'indicator species and biotopes' used in the 2010 assessment: all 'indicator' species and biotopes are required to be present in every MPA,
- to use the target for sub-criteria 'geographical distribution': minimum 10% coverage for each sub-basin and each zone.

3N.23 Regarding adequacy, the Meeting agreed:

- to use the target for minimum MPA size: more than 80% of marine areas of a minimum size of 3000 ha and terrestrial areas of a minimum size of 1000 ha,
- not to use the sub-criteria "MPA quality with regard to 'indicator species and biotopes' and essential habitats" in the current assessment but to consider using it in the upcoming assessment based on the protection status of species and biotopes reported in the HELCOM MPA database.

3N.24 The Meeting noted the comment by Sweden that in some cases only the Natura 2000 area of the national MPAs is generally regulated, meaning that the size of HELCOM MPAs does not necessarily reflect the area of managed MPAs.

3N.25 Regarding the evaluation parameters, the Meeting agreed:

- not to use national marine area as a parameter due to lack of ecological relevance,
- to use new zonation categories (coastal waters: extending 1 nm seaward from the baseline, outer coastal sea: extending from the outer boundary of coastal waters and out to 12 nm seawater from the baseline, and open sea: water beyond 12nm seaward from the baseline) instead of offshore/inshore index and TW/EEZ as in the previous assessment.

3N.26 The Meeting discussed how to aggregate the results from the respective sub-criteria to arrive at the status of the main criteria and, furthermore, to the overall assessment on ecological coherence. The Meeting agreed that the 'one-out-all-out' principle could be used between the four main criteria but could

not agree on how to aggregate the results of sub-criteria. The Meeting further noted the ongoing work to set targets for the two sub-criteria used to assess connectivity.

3N.27 The Meeting invited the Secretariat to prepare a set of examples based on different approaches for aggregating the sub-criteria as well as to present the proposed targets for assessing the sub-criteria for connectivity by **26 November 2015** and to circulate the proposals for a two-week commenting period to State and Conservation and MPA Task Group contacts.

3N.28 The Meeting agreed to use available spatial information on eutrophication status, ship traffic and fishing intensity as supporting information for the assessment since there is no guidance for how to introduce pressures in the aggregated analysis of ecological coherence. The Meeting, furthermore, agreed to use the new data available for pressures, IUCN protection categories and national legal protection status reported in the HELCOM MPA database as supporting information for the assessment.

3N.29 The Meeting agreed to the proposed timetable for completing the analysis of ecological coherence and noted that the assessment report will be submitted for review by State and Conservation in January 2016 with the view of submitting the report for endorsement at HELCOM 37-2016.

3N.30 The Meeting took note of the information presented by Finland on the Life+ MareBaltica project application (Optimizing effectiveness of Marine Protected Areas in the Baltic Sea Region) (**Presentation 11**). The Meeting noted that HELCOM is a partner to the project, specifically to the activities that aim to update management plan guidelines, assessment of effectiveness of management practices, refining assessment of ecological coherence.

3N.31 The Meeting took note of the list of contacts of HELCOM MPA Task Group (document 3N-1) and that Russia will provide a contact to the Secretariat.

#### *Information on ongoing work to identify ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs)*

3N.32 The Meeting took note of the participation by Finland in a workshop to discuss criteria of nominating EBSAs in the Arctic region, as presented by Finland (**Presentation 12**). The Meeting noted that similar workshops have been held in other European marine regions to discuss the application of criteria for nominating EBSAs in the respective region. The Meeting noted the information by Estonia that they will consider proposing existing HELCOM MPAs as EBSAs. The Meeting noted the commentary from Germany that the process is mainly focused on identifying large areas that qualify as EBSAs, many of them in areas beyond national jurisdiction and in particular new areas not yet designated as MPAs. The Meeting was of the view that the whole Baltic Sea could possibly be considered as an EBSA.

3N.33 The Meeting took note of the letter on a call for action regarding the alarming situation around Kurgalskiy Nature Reserve (document 3N-4, **Presentation 13**) and the call for action regarding the situation around Kronshtadskaya Kolonia Reserve in Russia (document 3N-6), presented by CCB.

3N.34 The Meeting welcomed the information, invited CCB to keep State and Conservation informed on the issue, and proposed CCB to send the two documents also to HELCOM HOD.

#### **Agenda Item 4N Recommendations on conservation of Baltic Sea species and underwater biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes**

Documents: 4N-1, 4N-2

##### *Draft Recommendation on species*

4N.1 The Meeting took note that Denmark is not yet able to lift her study reservation on the draft Recommendation on species, however, a solution is sought bilaterally between Denmark and Germany, with the support of the Secretariat.

4N.2 The Meeting regretted that no proposal was presented to State and Conservation as agreed at HOD 48-2015 and urged Denmark to come to a solution at HOD 49-2015. The Meeting stressed the

importance of Danish representation in the State and Conservation meetings to participate in the discussion on matters of nature conservation at the Working Group level.

4N.3 The Meeting recalled that the Danish study reservation is related to the Kattegat and Danish Straits being transitional areas where many species are naturally rare, as well the fixed years for achievements of specific actions included in paragraph 1 of the “Recommends” part (Outcome of HOD 48-2015).

4N.4 The Meeting emphasized that the draft Recommendation should not be interpreted in such a way that a conservation plan needs to be developed for each threatened species. The protection of associated biotopes may be sufficient and cover the protection of several species. The Meeting also underlined that when assessing the Kattegat area as part of the HELCOM Red list assessment, the particular transitional situation of the Kattegat was taken into account.

#### *Upcoming Recommendation on biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes*

4N.5 The Meeting took note that Germany is willing to take the lead on the planned Recommendation on biotopes but not before the associated Recommendation on species has been adopted. The Meeting thanked Germany for her willingness to take the lead on the Recommendation on biotopes and concurred with the German position to await the adoption of the Recommendation on species.

#### *Analysis to support the implementation of the Recommendations*

4N.6 The Meeting noted that Finland has submitted information to the reporting request on national conservation plans (document 4N-2) and emphasized that it would be beneficial to receive this information from all Contracting Parties by State and Conservation 4-2016 as a basis for forthcoming analyses related to the conservation of species and biotopes (document 4N-1) as agreed at State and Conservation 1-2014 (AI 4N and Annex 2).

4N.7 The Meeting agreed not to restrict the inventory of existing plans to ‘conservation plans’ but to also include recovery- and/or action plans as well as other relevant programmes and measures. Regarding threatened species, the Meeting, furthermore, agreed to indicate also those plans that indirectly protect the species through the protection of their associated biotopes and habitats, as well as management plans for e.g. commercial fish species.

4N.8 The Meeting recalled that Sweden presented a national programme of measures for marine threatened and species and habitats at State and Conservation 2-2015, including a national analysis of the need for conservation plans, and that for some species Sweden will only be able to indicate that there are ongoing discussions to develop conservation plans.

4N.9 The Meeting took note that Poland has recently adopted a conservation programme for harbour porpoise.

### **Agenda Item 5N Plans for implementation of work plan and emerging issues**

#### *Regional targets for the implementation of the strategic plan for biodiversity*

5N.1 The Meeting recalled the agreement at the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting ‘to develop by 2015 regional targets for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity’ and that the implementation of this agreement is outlined as task 3.3 in the work plan of the State and Conservation Working Group.

5N.2 The Meeting considered the proposal by the Secretariat to align existing HELCOM agreements and indicators with the CBD Aichi Biodiversity Targets as a starting point for the activity. The Meeting supported the approach presented to the Meeting and proposed that it should be further developed and presented to State and Conservation 4-2016.

### *Marine ecosystem services*

5N.3 The Meeting took note of the presentation on an example of marine ecosystem services by Finland (document 5N-1).

5N.4 The Meeting noted that projects related to valuation of ecosystem services and/or mapping are ongoing in Estonia, Finland and Sweden and noted, furthermore, that in Sweden the national programmes of measures are linked to the evaluation of ecosystem services. OCEANA informed on preliminary plans to assess ecosystem services.

5N.5 The Meeting noted that Finland, Germany and Sweden would be interested to participate in activities related to assessing and mapping ecosystem services and agreed to return to the topic at State and Conservation 4-2016.

### *Next meeting of the Nature and Conservation session*

5N.6 The Meeting expressed the wish to start the meeting of State and Conservation 4-2016 with the nature conservation session, to have a longer nature conservation session, and to seek time for an excursion during the meeting.

5N.7 The Meeting discussed the focal areas for the upcoming meeting and agreed to consider:

- issues to be raised jointly by HELCOM countries at the upcoming meeting of CBD SBSTTA (April 2016),
- realization of proposed 'actions still needed' by the State and Conservation Group (paragraph 3J-12), based on the outcome of HOD 49-2015,
- the follow-up of a biogeographic seminar for marine Natura 2000 sites which took place in 2015 ,
- getting updated on the HOLAS II project,
- getting updated on the BSAP implementation, especially regarding biodiversity related issues,
- plans for next HELCOM Red list assessment planned for 2019.

### **Agenda Item 6N Outcome: Nature conservation**

Documents: draft Outcome

6N.1 The Meeting adopted the outcome of the nature conservation theme and noted that it will be available (together with the outcome of the monitoring and assessment and joint themes) at the [STATE & CONSERVATION 3-2015 Meeting Site](#) together with the documents and presentations considered by the Meeting.

## Annex 1 List of Participants

Representing	Name	Name of organization	E-mail address
<b>Co-Chairs</b>			
Co-Chair for Nature Conservation theme	Penina Blankett	Ministry of the Environment	penina.blankett@ymparisto.fi
Co-Chair for Monitoring and Assessment theme	Urmas Lips	Marine Systems Institute at Tallinn University of Technology	urmas.lips@msi.ttu.ee
<b>Contracting Parties</b>			
Denmark	Jens Würgler Hansen	Aarhus University on behalf of the Nature Agency, Ministry of Environment and Food	jwh@bios.au.dk
Estonia	Kaspar Anderson	Ministry of the Environment	kaspar.anderson@envir.ee
Estonia	Liina Vaher	Ministry of the Environment	liina.vaher@envir.ee
Estonia	Georg Martin (online participation during agenda item 6J)	Estonian Marine Institute, University of Tartu	georg.martin@ut.ee
Finland	Jan Ekebom	Parks & Wildlife Finland (Metsähallitus)	jan.ekebom@metsa.fi
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