



PRESS RELEASE

HELCOM takes steps in many fronts to craft new measures for a healthy Baltic Sea

18 June 2013, Helsinki, Finland – The members of the Baltic Sea Marine Environment Protection Commission ([HELCOM](#)), formed by the nine coastal countries and the EU, have completed their 2-day Meeting filled with intense discussions, particularly on the precise contents of the [Declaration proposed](#) for the Ministers of Environment in less than 4 months' time. In October, the Baltic Sea Ministers will review the progress in implementing the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (2007– 2021) and set priorities for action.

The Delegations agreed to pass the proposed changes to [Annex VII](#) of the Helsinki Convention, which is expected to considerably strengthen the Baltic Sea pollution response cooperation in situations where oil or other substance has reached the shore. This means a series of amendments to the Helsinki Convention, to more explicitly include response on the shore. The meeting agreed also on a related regional HELCOM response manual. So far, such response on the shore has largely been a national matter. Both of the documents will be forwarded for adoption at the 2013 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting.

The revised Monitoring and Assessment Strategy of HELCOM has been approved yesterday for immediate implementation and for later formal adoption by HELCOM Ministers. This will streamline the joint regional assessments of the marine and coastal waters, as well as assist in reporting purposes under other international frameworks. Measuring the marine environment is the basis of HELCOM, as the efficiency of any measures can't be reliably evidenced without these activities.

The Baltic nations also jointly discussed today the report addressing environmental risks from phosphate fertiliser production and phosphogypsum waste handling sites in the Baltic Sea region, considered a significant potential source of pollution to the Baltic Sea. The report, compiled by experts and HELCOM Land Group and related to the follow-up of implementation of [HELCOM Recommendation 17/6](#), identifies eight such facilities in the Region. The missing information from some - 2 sites in Poland, 1 site in Sweden and 1 in Russia - prevented the Contracting Parties from full assessment of risks of potential significant leaching into the surrounding waters.

The Meeting endorsed the conclusions of the fertiliser production report, such as the measured phosphate concentrations have been detected at considerably high levels in some rivers close by the fertilizer production sites, as also pointed out by other recent reports. To prevent the fertilizer industry from generating excessive pollution, regular monitoring in the vicinity of respective industrial sites and the phosphogypsum piles should be continued, and additional clarifications for details are imminently needed from some sites. The Meeting also welcomed the information on cooperation of Ministers between Finland and Poland, on joint sampling and assessment of the situation near Wislinka phosphogypsum site in Gdansk, Poland.

As an outcome of the Meeting, HELCOM endorsed a classification of Baltic underwater habitats and biotopes, which will significantly contribute in planning and management of sea areas. Further, a report is about to be released on species in danger of extinction, providing in depth information on a great number of fishes, birds, invertebrates and marine mammals.

The Meeting unanimously approved a particular guidance document to assist the delivery of untreated sewage at ports, soon obligatory for any passenger ship entering the Baltic Sea and a result of a successful initiative of HELCOM countries within IMO.

Heads of Delegation of HELCOM will continue in September the negotiations towards the 2013 Ministerial Meeting.

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Note for editors:

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, usually referred to as [HELCOM](#), is an intergovernmental organization of the nine Baltic Sea coastal countries and the European Union. HELCOM has worked since 1974 to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution and to ensure safety of navigation in the region. HELCOM is the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area," more usually known as the Helsinki Convention.

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[HELCOM Ministerial Meeting](#) will be held on 3 October 2013 in Copenhagen, Denmark. The Ministers of the Environment of the nine Baltic coastal states and the EU Environment Commissioner will gather to discuss the status and the future of the Baltic Sea marine environment – reviewing the progress in implementing the Baltic Sea Action Plan (2007– 2021), and setting priorities for action. The outcome of the 2013 Meeting is expected to revolve around the still unsatisfactory status of the Baltic Sea; the ecosystem approach as the basis for blue and green growth, the opportunities for more coherent policies and implementation, as well as committing to do more for a healthier Baltic Sea.

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For further information:

All the Meeting documents [Heads Of Delegation (HELCOM HOD/HOD 41, 2013)] can be accessed by tomorrow, without any log-in, at [HELCOM Meeting portal](#)

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