

**HELCOM's on-going activities related to Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea
(Contribution to UN Secretary-General's annual report to the General Assembly)**

For 40 years – since 1974 – HELCOM has governed the Helsinki Convention, one of the first Regional Seas Conventions. The Convention obliges the Contracting Parties – all coastal countries and the European Union – to take all appropriate legislative, administrative or other measures to prevent and eliminate pollution of the Baltic, and follow HELCOM Recommendations and the **Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)**. Moreover, HELCOM makes sure that other frameworks in global and European contexts, e.g. the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive; EU Regional Strategy; OSPAR; REMPEC etc. are taken into consideration in activities and plans.

In October, the **2013 HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Meeting** was held to assess the effectiveness of the BSAP and the overall progress towards Good Environmental Status of the Baltic Sea by 2021. About one third of the previously agreed actions have been assessed as accomplished. The rest are either in the planning phase, partly achieved, or at varying degrees of implementation.

A key achievement of the Ministerial Meeting was the adoption of the updated figures on **Maximum Allowable Inputs of nutrients** to the Baltic Sea, and on the sharing of the pollution reduction burden between HELCOM countries. The revised HELCOM nutrient reduction scheme now includes airborne nitrogen and explicitly extends to sources outside the Baltic Sea countries.

The five-year-long HELCOM project on red listing species, habitats and biotopes was finalised, enabling more effective protection of Baltic biodiversity.

The new HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy was adopted, for improved and more cost-efficient environmental monitoring; as well as the Roadmap for maritime spatial planning.

Another major achievement was the adoption of the joint HELCOM/OSPAR Guidelines on the granting of exemptions under the ships' international Ballast Water Management Convention – important in the process to better protect coastal ecosystems from alien species.

The legal basis to cases of major pollution on the shore will be extended thanks to the passed amendments to the Helsinki Convention. Year 2013 also saw the launch of the Baltic cooperation platform for green shipping and alternative fuels.

Other results included an agreement on measures to reduce nutrient loads from agriculture; also in Russia (BASE Project), and continuous work for sustainable fisheries management. A major achievement was the agreement to develop a Regional marine litter action plan by 2015.

In 2013 HELCOM published reports on Chemical munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea; Climate change; Radioactivity in the Baltic Sea; Eutrophication status, and Marine Protected Areas, among others.