



30 June 2015

Executive Summary

Update on the activities of the Baltic Marine Environment Commission – Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)

06-2014 – 06-2015

Contribution to the second part of the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/245 of 29 December 2014, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”, with references to the resolution (A/RES/69/245).

The Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter for the Baltic Sea has been adopted in 2015, with concrete regional actions to reduce the input and presence of marine litter including plastics and microplastics. The implementation has now started, while cooperation with other Regional Seas Conventions (e.g. OSPAR/North-East Atlantic, Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions) continues on common actions. Additionally, the implementation of the Litter Plan will benefit from the joint efforts with the Global Partnership on Marine Litter specifically in the fields of microplastics and abandoned/lost fishing gear. **[Reference to A/RES/69/245: 163-164; 181-184]**

Safety and security & pollution from ships: The Annex VII of the Helsinki Convention was amended in July 2014 to explicitly cover response on the shore for oil or other substances **[Ref: 208]**. The regular activities to strengthen the regional spill response and safety at sea include oil spill response exercise in June 2014 as well as annual reports on aerial surveillance and ship accidents **[Ref: 89-90; 146; 208]**.

Intensive efforts in ballast water issues have continued. Preparing for the entry into force of the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention, the coastal countries of the Baltic and North Seas (OSPAR) as well as EU have e.g. further developed the jointly agreed regional procedure for applying and granting exemptions. **[Ref: 174-175]**.

In early 2015, new report was released by HELCOM on cruise ships in the Baltic Sea as well as their visits to ports with sewage reception facilities. Such an overview is useful to assess the needs of cruise ships in terms of sewage reception in ports, when the IMO Special Area status (MARPOL Annex IV), as decided on July 2011, will be enforced in the Baltic Sea region **[Ref: 189]**.

Marine environment: HELCOM core indicators, new generation to be launched in the summer 2015, are a main contributor to the HELCOM task of implementing the ecosystem approach - Baltic Sea Action Plan - by defining the targets to clarify what measures are needed the most **[Ref: 200 d]**.

The preparations have started for the Second Holistic Assessment of the Ecosystem Health of the Baltic Sea (HOLAS II), with release set for mid-2018, interlinking the on-going work on HELCOM assessments **[Ref: 176; 200-202; 253]**.

HELCOM Recommendation on coastal and marine Baltic Sea protected areas (Rec 35-1) was adopted in 2014. Modernization of the database will be completed by end of 2015. The area of HELCOM marine protected areas covers about 12% of the marine area of the Baltic Sea, exceeding the target of 10% spatial coverage set by the Convention on Biological Diversity. **[Ref: 223-228]**