

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR HELCOM GROUP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ECOSYSTEM APPROACH (HELCOM GEAR)

As agreed by the HELCOM Heads of Delegation on 17 September 2014

The Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach will work towards region-wide co-operation on all elements of national marine strategies, building both on national activities based on a legal framework and HELCOM's work, such as HELCOM's coordinated monitoring programmes, core indicators with good environmental status boundaries, thematic and integrated assessment reports, including assessment of pressures on the marine environment, as well as commonly agreed measures, with the view to facilitate adaptive management and strive for improved state of the Baltic Sea.

The Group will serve as a regional instrument for the national work of the HELCOM EU Contracting States in implementing the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive. For the MSFD related coordination for those Contracting Parties that are also EU member states, the tasks of the group will in particular cover Articles 8 (Assessment), 9 (Determination of good environmental status), 10 (Establishment of environmental targets), 11 (Monitoring programmes) and 13 (Programmes of measures).

It will also include coordination with activities under the Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation.

The integration and coherence between the working groups and coherent implementation of the ecosystem approach in HELCOM (reflected with dashed line in the organogram on the HELCOM working structure) will be the specific role of GEAR, in practice requiring that GEAR will continue planning activities that support regional coordination, steering the development in relevant projects and of relevant deliverables according to the Roadmap of HELCOM activities on ecosystem approach. GEAR will also continue to serve as initiator of the processes and review the relevant deliverables to guarantee that these have an optimal timing and content responding to management and policy needs. GEAR, however, will not be expected to verify scientific-technical content of any deliverables and that task should rest at the other subsidiary bodies. By this, GEAR will be facilitating the work and decision-making of the Heads of Delegation, and HOD will have possibility to focus the discussions on more strategic and policy relevant issues, since the scientific-technical outcomes will be coordinated from the management needs perspective by GEAR.

GEAR will analyse relationships between activities of HELCOM and EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and propose ways on how to get better synergies in the implementation and improve coordination between HELCOM and the EU Strategy.

Based on the general rule that projects are decided by the Heads of Delegation, the Group will have an initiative to propose setting up projects.

Meetings will be scheduled to keep up with the HELCOM activities and coordinate with other relevant meetings.

Terms of Reference of the Group

Background

The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) adopted by HELCOM in 2007 contains a set of actions to achieve a Baltic Sea in Good Environmental Status by 2021.

For those HELCOM Contracting Parties being also EU Member States the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD, 2008/56/EC) establishes a framework within which the Member States shall take the necessary measures to achieve or maintain good environmental status of the marine environment by the year 2020 at the latest (Article 1).

For the Russian Federation, the relevant policy document enhancing the delivery of good environmental status is the Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation.

The HELCOM Moscow Ministerial Declaration on the implementation of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (2010) *inter alia*:

- stresses that shared scientific understanding and quantification of the good environmental status are to be used in policy making at the international, regional and national levels,
- contains the decisions:
 - to develop the role of HELCOM as the main driving force of the implementation of the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities in the Baltic Sea marine area,
 - to establish, for those HELCOM Contracting Parties being also EU Member States, the role of HELCOM as the coordination platform for the regional implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD), including striving for harmonised national marine strategies for achieving good environmental status according to the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and the EU MSFD,
 - that core set of indicators with quantitative targets shall be developed for each of the segments of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, while ensuring that the indicators can also be used for the other international monitoring and reporting requirements *inter alia* the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive,

The HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration (2013) states that in order to further align the implementation of the ecosystem approach through HELCOM BSAP, MSFD implemented by the HELCOM contracting Parties being also EU Member States and the Maritime doctrine of the Russian Federation, the Contracting Parties decided to:

- promote the regional knowledge and specificities of the Baltic Sea at the European and international fora;
- use limited resources effectively by better drawing on synergies between the work of HELCOM, other relevant international organizations, including Regional Seas Organizations, and the Common MSFD Implementation Strategy;
- produce joint documentation in support of regional coordination and coherence – “Baltic Sea roof reports”.

The duties of HELCOM GEAR are to:

- A. Advise the Commission in discharging its duties under Article 20 of the Helsinki Convention.
- B. Steer the process of successful implementation of the HELCOM BSAP and subsequent decisions of the HELCOM Ministerial Meetings from managerial point of view, to meet the ecological objectives and achieve good ecological/ environmental status of the Baltic Sea by 2021 at the latest, as well as propose “Baltic Sea roof reports”, strategies, and recommendation according to the existing priorities as well as requests by the Heads of Delegation.

To fulfill these duties the Group will:

1. Act as the responsible body for the regional coordination for the implementation of the MSFD, for those Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States, and to include coordination with activities under the Maritime Doctrine of the Russian Federation, with the aim to achieve respective coherent national marine strategies (Assessments; Determination of Good Environmental Status; Establishment of environmental targets; Monitoring programmes, Programmes of measures);
2. Identify areas where there is a need for consistency and opportunities for cooperation and coordination between HELCOM and other Regional Seas Conventions focusing on OSPAR and the Black Sea Commission;
3. Serve as a platform for exchange of information on related national activities and link the implementation of the BSAP and subsequent decisions of the HELCOM Ministerial Meetings to activities under other

international frameworks, especially the Marine Strategy Framework Directive for those Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States, including ensuring that national programmes of measures are developed towards the same directions to meet the common goals and thus they incorporate and reinforce the BSAP measures and HELCOM recommendations in national work;

4. Act as a managerial level coordination body and give guidance and ensure coordination of scientific and technical activities of HELCOM, including to:
 - a) integrate and utilize the work of other working groups and projects so as to ensure the implementation of the ecosystem approach,
 - b) communicate the needs for activities and deliverables (e.g. their content and timing) to other HELCOM subsidiary bodies,
 - c) see to the timely finalization of the processes and delivery of products, following the scrutiny in the scientific and technical working groups,
 - d) propose/initiate projects according to HELCOM needs,
 - e) assist and guide in identifying funding to implement relevant activities in accordance with the Roadmap of HELCOM activities on ecosystem approach.

Participation

The Group for the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach will preferably consist of nominated representatives of HELCOM Contracting Parties who work nationally to implement the Baltic Sea Action Plan and/or the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Chairs and Vice-Chairs of HELCOM subsidiary bodies will be invited to the Meetings. In addition, HELCOM observers will be invited to participate. HELCOM GEAR may invite additional experts on a case by case basis to participate in its work.

The Group will report to the HELCOM HODs.