

# Memo of the second informal consultation session of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 2-2023)

## Table of Contents

Introduction .....	2
Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda .....	2
Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from other HELCOM and VASAB work .....	2
Agenda Item 3 Development of the regional MSP framework.....	3
Agenda Item 4 Information and data for MSP.....	7
Agenda Item 5 Coordination of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning, MSP projects related projects and initiatives .....	8
Agenda Item 6 Intergovernmental cooperation and follow up progress in regional MSP.....	10
Agenda Item 7 Any other business .....	12
Agenda Item 8 Future planning .....	12
Agenda Item 9 Memo of the Session .....	13
Annex 1 List of Participants .....	14

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## Memo of the second informal consultation session of the HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 2-2023)

### Introduction

0.1 The second informal consultation session of the joint HELCOM-VASAB Maritime Spatial Planning Working Group (IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 2-2023), hosted by Finland, was held on 9-10 March 2023 in Helsinki.

0.2 The Session was attended by representatives of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Poland and Sweden. HELCOM observers were represented by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and participated online to the Session. The Session was also attended by invited guests from the EU MSP Platform and the EUSBSR Baltic Sea Strategy Point. The list of Participants is contained in **Annex 1**.

0.3 The Session was chaired by the Co-Chairs of the Working Group: Joacim Johannesson, Sweden and Kai Trümppler, Germany.

0.4 The Co-Chairs opened the Session and welcomed the participants.

0.5 The Session recalled the current strategic pause of official HELCOM Meetings, until further notice, in the HELCOM work due to the political situation.

0.6 Lotta Ruokanen, HELCOM Professional Secretary, assisted by Florent Nicolas, Associate Professional Secretary and Dmitry Frank-Kamenetsky, Special Advisor, acted as Secretaries of the Session.

### **Agenda Item 1 Adoption of the Agenda**

1.1 The Session took note of the information that Finland will inform under the agenda item 5 the decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Montreal, Canada on 7-19 December 2022.

1.2 The Session adopted the Agenda and its annotations elaborated by HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats in consultation with the Co-Chairs and vice-Chair of the Working Group (documents 1-1 and 1-2 Rev.1).

### **Agenda Item 2 Matters arising from other HELCOM and VASAB work**

2.1 The Session took note of the information on the HELCOM activities since IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 1-2023 (document 2-1). The Session also took note of the matters arising from VASAB work (document 2-2). The Session took note of upcoming VASAB Experts Conference and 9<sup>th</sup> VASAB Ministerial Conference on 1-2 June 2023 in Wismar, Germany.

2.2 The Session took note of the latest information on the Third holistic assessment of the Baltic Sea Marine Environment (HOLAS 3), with indicator reports and data being made available online by the end of March 2023, thematic assessments being under review and the summary report currently being drafted by Lena Bergström, Sweden, and the HELCOM Secretariat. The Session invited the Contracting Parties to inform

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the HELCOM Secretariat ([florent.nicolas@helcom.fi](mailto:florent.nicolas@helcom.fi)) as soon as possible if interested to join the drafting group for the HOLAS 3 summary report.

2.3 The Session took note of the information on the renewal of the HELCOM Meeting Portal presented by the HELCOM Secretariat (**presentation 1**).

### **Agenda Item 3 Development of the regional MSP framework**

#### Implementation of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG workplan (2022-2024)

3.1 The session took note of the latest developments related to the workplan as well as of the result of the correspondence procedure launched with the HELCOM Heads of Delegation to approve the workplan, as well as VASAB CSPD/BSR approval during its 88<sup>th</sup> meeting (document 3-5).

3.2 The Session recalled that IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 1-2022 invited the HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats to prepare a simplified version of the workplan for communication needs. The Session took note that this document was not submitted to the session but took note of the proposal from HELCOM Secretariat. The proposal includes a colour code per objective and removing some detailed information not needed for communication or tracking needs. The Session discussed and recommended to add a column to follow the implementation of each task.

3.3 The Session took note of the proposal from Finland on sorting the tasks following the timeframe of their implementation to have a better overview of the upcoming but also the long terms tasks.

3.4 The Session discussed the importance of keeping track of the implementation of the workplan and recommended the Working Group (WG) go through the tasks once a year to check thoroughly the implementation. The Session recalled that several tasks of the workplan are continuous.

3.5 The Session discussed specifically the implementation of the task 2.5 on policy instruments of land-sea interactions and took note the information from Mārtiņš Grels, Latvia, task lead. The Session took note that the Land-Sea-Act project is finalized and could share input with the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to ensure implementation of the task. The Session also took note of the newly funded project Baltic Sea2Land which will also contribute to this topic.

3.6 The Session welcomed the information from the European Commission that related to the tasks 3.2 and 3.5 in the Roadmap "Develop a Baltic SEA-framework including themes, common data, assessment methods for impact evaluation, cross-border consultations" and "Promote the use of methods and tools in MSP for assessing cumulative environmental and other impacts of sea-based activities" and as mentioned in the workplan, the EU MSP platform is ready to support with having new contract in force and a nominated contact point for the Baltic Sea Region ([balticsea@msh-platform.eu](mailto:balticsea@msh-platform.eu)).

3.7 The Session took note of the proposal from WWF on adding concrete links or project outputs in this simplified visualisation of the workplan. For example, the input from Land-Sea-Act project, as mentioned in the paragraph 3.5 could be added in the document.

3.8 The Session noted that this document will be amended by the HELCOM Secretariat, based on the discussions held during this session, and will be submitted to the next session of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to further follow-up the workplan implementation.

#### Next steps to plan the interim assessment of the progress in the Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation

3.9 The Session recalled the discussion held during IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 1-2022 on this topic. The Session further recalled that the Regional MSP Roadmap is a key document adopted at very high level and the interim assessment of progress is an important process to plan carefully.

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3.10 The Session further discussed the planning of the interim assessment of the progress in the Regional MSP Roadmap 2021-2030 implementation. The Session welcomed the offer from the HELCOM Secretariat to initiate this process and invited the countries to contact the HELCOM Secretariat ([lotta.ruokanen@helcom.fi](mailto:lotta.ruokanen@helcom.fi), [florent.nicolas@helcom.fi](mailto:florent.nicolas@helcom.fi)) for an initial brainstorming and planning to be presented at the next informal consultation session of the WG.

[Initial discussion on the scope of the update of Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning \(MSP\)](#)

3.11 The Session took note of the proposal for the scope of the EBA guideline revision as presented by the HELCOM Secretariat (document 3-1, **presentation 2**). The Session recalled that the Guideline was adopted in 2016 and that policies related to the application of ecosystem-based approach in MSP have been significantly renewed (e.g. Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), Regional MSP Roadmap, EU Biodiversity Strategy, European Green Deal, etc.), as well as the knowledge on the state of the Baltic Sea and its ecosystems.

3.12 The Session recommended to initiate the revision of the guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning and to start the work from identification of its scope.

3.13 The Session recommended to establish a dedicated task force for the revision of Guideline for the implementation of ecosystem-based approach in Maritime Spatial Planning, reporting to HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, as a driving force for the revision.

3.14 The Session further provided general guidance for the revision processes pointing out that the revised Guideline should be:

- More concrete;
- Relevant to the new policy landscape and easy for practical use;
- Reflect the VASAB Vision 2040 in the policy landscape;
- Avoid references to short-term processes;
- Include ecosystem accounting as a vital component of the ecosystem-based approach which should be properly addressed in the Guideline;
- Considering with caution the carrying capacity of ecosystems, primarily via linkage of MSP and MSFD;
- Strengthening nature restoration and respective law should be addressed in the policy landscape.

3.15 The Session exchanged views on one of the proposed key elements, accounting for nature value and ecosystem carrying capacity, and took note that HELCOM State & Conservation Working Group has finalised the draft of the regional common understanding of the OCEM criteria, presented together with guidance from CBD, IUCN and the EU Commission as context and reference, as well as a brief overview of how OECMs can support the coherence of marine protected area (MPA) network based on information prepared under CBD, IUCN and HELCOM and the decision tree to support identification of potential OECM, this is submitted for recommendation and adoption at IC HELCOM 1-2023. The Session invited the task force to be established to take into account in its work the HOLAS 3 results and the work of HELCOM Working Group on the Implementation of the Ecosystem Approach (GEAR).

3.16 The Session further underscored that many current regional projects (e.g. [SELINA](#), Baltic Sea2Land, etc.) can substantially contribute to the work of the task force, and that outcome of accomplished projects (i.e. Pan Baltic Scope) should also be considered.

3.17 The Session took note of that there is no intention to change any relevant content as such but to strengthen the Guideline and to account for the developments in the policy landscape and level of knowledge, for example on the ecology of the Baltic Sea.

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3.18 The Session recommended that the task force to be established start the work elaborating a detailed workplan bearing in mind that overall deadline for the revision is set in the MSP Roadmap as 2025 and according to the workplan a draft should be available in 2024. The Session welcomed the offer by Finland, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, WWF and possibly Germany as well as HELCOM and VASAB Secretariats to take part in the task force for the Guideline revision.

3.19 The Session invited the countries to nominate representatives to the task force, provide written comments on the scope of the revision process and recommend possible projects contributing to the work of the task force. This information is to be provided to the HELCOM Secretariat ([dmitry.frank-kamenetsky@helcom.fi](mailto:dmitry.frank-kamenetsky@helcom.fi)) by **23 March 2023**.

#### Implementation of the new HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) and information related to the production of maps on sensitivity of migratory birds

3.20 The Session took note of the updated information on the 2021 BSAP and associated actions relevant for the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG (document 3-2).

3.21 The Session noted the general comment from Sweden on the relevance related to the tasks and the proposal to explicitly highlight how the work is relevant for HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG. The Session took note of the clarification that the information presented in the document 3-2 is based on draft workplan documents used by other HELCOM WGs and submitted to the relevant sessions of these WGs.

3.22 The Session discussed how to communicate the tasks shared with other WGs. The Session invited these HELCOM Working Groups (WG Sea-based pressures for BSAP actions S58 and S64, WG Biodiv for B12-13 and WG GEAR for HT7) to present the planned implementation of such actions in the next session of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.

3.23 The Session took note of the information on the new HELCOM Expert Group on Birds Migration (EG BIRDMOVE), presented orally by Florent Nicolas from the HELCOM Secretariat, as well as on the preliminary tasks of EG BIRDMOVE, specifically the tasks highlighted in yellow which are of relevance for the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG (document 3-3).

3.24 The Session took note that there will be further communication between EG BIRDMOVE and HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to support the production of relevant products (i.e. maps) for MSP. The Session also took note that the maps to be produced by the EG should be made available publicly online, if approved by the Contracting Parties.

3.25 The Session took note of the question from WWF if there is a plan to produce maps of migratory fish in the Baltic Sea. The Session took note of the information from the HELCOM Secretariat that such tasks is not planned in the current work of the Expert Group on Fish Migration (FISH-M). However, a presentation on monitoring system for migration of fish was given by a Swedish expert during the first informal consultation session of the HELCOM Expert Group on migratory fish species (IC FISH-M 1-2023). As the presentation is not publicly available, the Session noted that the Secretariat will liaise contact with WWF to share the contact of this expert.

#### Information of the VASAB Vision for the Territorial Development of the Baltic Sea Region in 2040

3.26 The Session took note of the information that the VASAB Vision 2040 has been approved by VASAB CSPD/BSR in December 2022 (document 3-4). It is expected to be endorsed by 9<sup>th</sup> VASAB Ministerial Conference on 2nd June 2023 in Wismar, Germany. The Vision 2040 and its accompanying documents can be found on the [VASAB website](#).

3.27 The Session was invited to acknowledge the VASAB Vision 2040 in the Working Group's work, and also make references when needed and possible, within national policies, documents, activities or cooperation projects.

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Discussion on the cooperation between HELCOM-VASAB MSP Working Group and HELCOM Biodiversity, Protection and Restoration Working Group

3.28 The Session took note of the information on the newly approved HELCOM Biodiversity, Protection and Restoration Working Group, which is the successor of State & Conservation Working Group.

3.29 The Session took note that a document on the future discussion between HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and the successor of State & Conservation Working Group was submitted to IC STATE & CONSERVATION 2-2022 held on 11-14 October 2022 in Karlskrona, Sweden, to consider possible cooperation when drafting the work plan for HELCOM Biodiversity, Protection and Restoration Working Group.

3.30 The Session took note that the informal consultation session of the Chairs of the HELCOM Working Groups (IC CHAIRPERSONS 2-2022) held online on 31 October 2022 did not discuss this level of detailed cooperation between the HELCOM groups.

3.31 The Session took note that this topic will be further discussed by the session under the agenda item 5 related to the planning of a workshop on 13-15 June 2023 under the frame of the [eMSP NBSR project](#) with support from PA Spatial Planning and involvement from MSP4BIO project ( cf. para 5.24 to 5.26).

[Information from the Countries on testing the approach described in the Regional MSP coherence report](#)

3.32 The Session recalled that the approach can be tested on a voluntary basis by the countries.

3.33 The Session recalled, based on the information shared by Sweden, that the approach is being tested within the eMSP NBSR project involving Finland/Estonia bilaterally, and Germany/Poland/Sweden trilaterally. The Session took note that some countries from the North Sea are also testing the approach.

[Implementation of HELCOM Recommendations relevant for the WG](#)

3.34 The Session took note of the information on the implementation of HELCOM recommendations relevant for the WG (document 3-7).

3.35 The Session considered the proposal of taking the [HELCOM Recommendation 24/10R](#) solely under the remit of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, and taking into account the work previously conducted for revising the Recommendation and the upcoming Baltic Sea2Land project work, the Session was of the view that it is very relevant for the work of the WG. The Session recommended to aim for an agreement on hosting the Recommendation in the next informal consultation session.

3.36 The Session took note of the clarification that follow-up or tracking progress of HELCOM Recommendation implementation is usually the responsibility of the relevant Working Groups and could be also shared among several Working Groups. The Session further took note that the tracking could be organized in different ways, for example with preparing questionnaires to countries or under project work.

3.37 The Session took note that matters related to [HELCOM Recommendation 17/3](#) have also been discussed by the BSR MSP Data ESG and Planners' Forum and that it would be important to consider the Recommendation in the WG's work. The Session proposed that the HELCOM WG Sea-based pressures would consider (co-)hosting it and recommended to come back to the matter in the next session.

3.38 The Session invited the countries to review the Recommendations and further consider whether to host the Recommendation 17/3 under the remit of the WG during the next informal consultation session.

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## Agenda Item 4 Information and data for MSP

### Progress in the work of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-Group

4.1 The Session took note of the information that the second informal consultation session of the BSR MSP Data Expert Sub-Group (IC BSR MSP Data ESG 2-2023) hosted by Finland, was held in Helsinki on 8 March 2023 with some participants attending online.

4.2 The Session took note of the key outcomes of IC BSR MSP Data ESG 2-2023 communicated by the Chair of the BSR MSP Data ESG, Zajac Natalia, Poland.

4.3 The Session highlighted that the process of drafting a workplan for the BSR MSP Data ESG will be initiated by the HELCOM Secretariat with the support of the VASAB Secretariat.

4.4 The Session recalled that data harmonization concerns only output MSP data which is compiled in Basemaps and visualized in a harmonized way. This step of data harmonization needs a verification of spatial data displayed in Basemaps, for example to identify overlaps and gaps between the areas reported by the Contracting Parties.

4.5 The Session recognized the importance of Basemaps for the MSP data availability as well as the transparency of regional MSP work in general and encouraged national MSP data providers as well as the contacts of the BSR MSP Data ESG to fulfil required testing and data validating procedures in due time.

### Last developments of the EU Technical Expert Group (TEG) on MSP data

4.6 The Session took note of the information on the latest developments of the EU Technical Group (TEG) on Data for MSP, presented orally by Joni Kaitaranta from the HELCOM Secretariat. The last meeting of the TEG was held in November 2022 and the next meeting will be held in April 2023.

4.7 The Session took note of the current availability of the Maritime Spatial Plan data into the EMODnet portal and updates from activities of the TEG sub-groups:

- MSFD and MSP data management;
- Metadata standard on marine plans;
- Network services on MSP;
- MSP data framework;
- Socioeconomic impact of MSP.

4.8 The Session recalled the use of the EU MSP Data model which is based on and compatible with HELCOM-VASAB MSP guideline and applied in Basemaps which makes it possible for HELCOM Contracting Parties to provide data to EMODnet in same format as to Basemaps.

### Presentation of the ReMAP project: Reviewing and Evaluating the Monitoring and Assessment of

#### Maritime Spatial Planning

4.9 The Session took note of the information on the ReMAP project, presented by Deborah Shinoda from the HELCOM Secretariat. The kick-off meeting was held in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain, on 13-14 December 2022. The Session also took note how the project will support some data related tasks in the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG workplan and is highly linked to objective 1 from the Regional Baltic MSP Roadmap (document 4-1 and **presentation 3**).

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## Agenda Item 5      Coordination of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning, MSP projects related projects and initiatives

5.1            The Session took note that for this agenda item, the Session is acting as Steering Group of the EUSBSR Policy Area Spatial Planning (PA SP).

[Information on recent developments and activities related to the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region \(EUSBSR\) Action Plan and Policy area \(PA\) Spatial Planning](#)

5.2            The Steering Group took note of the information on the activities related to the Policy Area (PA) Spatial Planning of the EUSBSR and organizational matters (document 5-1 Rev.1 and **presentation 4**). The Steering Group also took note of the activities implemented with the support of PASPS project.

5.3            The Steering Group took note of the information on the 4<sup>th</sup> Macro Regional-Strategies (MRS) Week, to be held on 24-28 April 2023 in Brussels, Belgium, in hybrid format and of an attempt to arrange a stakeholder session on renewable energy as a part of the Week. The SG members are invited to attend the MRS week sessions on 26 and 27 April onsite.

5.4            The Steering Group further took note that a concept of the online stakeholder session was elaborated by PA coordinators and that contact points from other MRSs were approached to join the workshop application. Unfortunately, the application was not finalized due to lack of interest from other MRSs.

5.5            The Steering Group noted that Baltic Sea Strategy Point is willing to assist in finding respective contacts in other MRSs.

5.6            The Steering Group was of the view that the topic is of high relevance and took note that in the frame of the MRS Week the Commission is planning to arrange a physical meeting between MRSs to discuss issues of high political significance. The Steering Group noted that since renewable energy is of high political importance, the EC would be interested to initiate such thematic meeting and invite PA SP to take active part in the discussion. The Steering Group supported establishing of a dialog with other MRSs on renewable energy and encouraged PA coordinators to undertake necessary steps.

5.7            The Steering Group supported arranging of a workshop on wind energy in the frame of EUSBSR Annual Forum in Riga, Latvia, on 4-5 October 2023 and recommended PA coordinators to lead the organization of such a workshop. The Steering Group encouraged relevant projects to support and take active part in the workshop.

5.8            The Steering Group considered the reasoning for structuring the SG Agenda and minutes (document 5-2). The Steering Group agreed on the proposal being based on PA workplan and Rules of Procedure.

5.9            The Steering Group thanked coordinators of PA SP for the organizational work done to operationalize the work of the Steering Group.

5.10          The Steering Group considered the proposed structure for the identification of project needs (document 5-6).

5.11          The Steering Group welcomed the proposed structure and recalled that several project ideas were already proposed at the latest Planners' Forum.

[Follow-up and progress of regional projects and/or initiatives with high regional significance](#)

5.12          The Steering Group took note and welcomed the progress achieved by eMSP NBSR project, emphasising high relevance of project outcomes for the implementation of PA Spatial Planning goals and regional policy commitments (document 5-5 Rev.1 and **presentation 5**).

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5.13 The Steering Group recommended anticipated project deliverables for consideration at the next HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG informal consultation sessions or PA Spatial Planning SG meetings.

5.14 The Steering Group encouraged its members to participate in respective eMSP project events and recognized the growing popularity of the community of practice concept applied in the eMSP project.

5.15 The Steering Group took note of the presentation on the recently started Baltic Sea2Land project funded by Interreg Baltic Sea 2021-2027 programme presented by Mārtiņš Grels, Latvia, as project lead partner (**presentation 6**).

5.16 The Steering Group recommended to keep the discussion on land-sea interaction alive and encouraged the project to contribute to this discussion.

5.17 The SG discussed the type of data to be produced by the project highlighting that the data on coastal zone management is of high relevance for MSP. The Steering Group further noted that the project is planning to feed respective data in Basemaps but the format of this cooperation requires further investigation. Non-spatial information which is planned to be produced by the project primarily involves statistical data or qualitative information on respective human activities.

5.18 The Steering Group took note of the information on the latest development of [MSP4BIO](#) project, presented by the HELCOM Secretariat (document 5-4 and **presentation 7**).

5.19 The Steering Group took note that in some countries MPAs are designated by regional authorities thus they are designated and managed at governmental level which differs from the authorities responsible for MSP. This highlights the importance of continuous dialogue and cooperation between various governance levels.

5.20 The Steering Group discussed the representativeness of various experts and authorities in the project's CoP and the interviews conducted by MSP4BIO, invited any interested members of the group to contact HELCOM Secretariat ([kemal.pinarbasi@helcom.fi](mailto:kemal.pinarbasi@helcom.fi)) for joining the CoP and welcomed offer by eMSP project to cooperate in finding more respondents for the next interviews within the project's CoP.

5.21 The Steering Group took note that MSP4BIO is maintaining close cooperation with [MarinePlan](#) project and will coordinate with other related projects within the MSP4BIO General Assembly on 20-21 March 2023 ensuring synergies of the project work.

5.22 The Steering Group took note of the preliminary information from the HELCOM Secretariat on the newly funded HORIZON Europe project PROTECT BALTIC. The Steering Group took note of the linkages between this new project and MSP and invited the Secretariat to further share information during one of the next informal consultation sessions of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.

5.23 The Steering Group took note that EC is planning to undertake a revision of project websites to make project outcomes better searchable and usable. Furthermore, the Steering Group invited PA coordinators to keep doing important work on coordinating activities between various project to ensure smooth cooperation, mutual learning and synergy of project outputs.

[Workshop on Maritime Spatial Planning for strengthening spatial conservation measures and supporting sustainable blue economy \(13-15 June 2023\)](#)

5.24 The Steering Group took note of the concept of the Workshop on Maritime Spatial Planning strengthening spatial conservation measures and supporting sustainable blue economy, to be held on 13-15 June 2023 in Helsinki, Finland (document 5-3, **presentation 8**).

5.25 The Steering Group highlighted the view of WWF that certain industrial sectors and practices hinder the implementation of a sustainable blue economy in the Baltic Sea region and that it would be good to include this in the discussions during the MSP EBA-SBE workshop to be held in Helsinki in June 2023 as focusing only on sectors that support a SBE will not ensure successful achievement.

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5.26 The Steering Group invited the organizers to share the invitation to the workshop with all interested expert communities and groups. The Steering Group took note of the information from the HELCOM Secretariat that the invitations will be submitted to the relevant HELCOM contacts as indicated in the PA Work Plan (2.1.1.).

#### Other relevant information

5.27 The Steering Group took note of the information on the decision adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), as presented by Penina Blankett, Finland, vice co-Chair of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG (**presentation 9**). The Conference was held in Montreal, Canada, on 7-19 December 2022 and the decisions can be found [online](#).

5.28 The Steering Group was of the view that agreed targets are very ambitious noting that some issues were not included in the final decision due to mainly financial reasons. The Steering Group pointed out that setting of separate 30% target for marine, coastal and inland waters is highly beneficial for nature conservation. The Steering Group also discussed how the targets are to be achieved and how they can be aligned with respective HELCOM work strands.

### **Agenda Item 6 Intergovernmental cooperation and follow up progress in regional MSP**

#### Follow up of MSP at the regional level based on the new follow-up mechanism

6.1 The Session took note of latest information on the follow-up of the national MSP developments and that Latvia was the only country providing input (document 6-2 based on document 6-1). The Session invited the countries to further contribute to the follow-up mechanism for the next informal consultation session of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG.

6.2 The Session invited the countries and the EU to further provide updates to the follow-up mechanism, with a special view on recent and ongoing EU strategies and proposals related to MSP and their relationship to each other.

6.3 The Session took note of the information from Kristina Veidemane representing the EU MSP Platform on a new [report](#) from the European Commission on assessing the relevance and effect of the Maritime Spatial Planning Directive in the context of the European Green Deal (published in June 2022).

#### Exchange of information on recent developments of the MSP framework (e.g. meetings, workshops, MSP focal points, etc.)

6.4 The Session recalled that IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 1-2022 was of the view that the regional calendar of national MSP-related processes and meetings and other events (cf. [document 6-5](#) submitted to IC HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG 1-2022) is useful but could be integrated in the [EU MSP platform calendar](#) and not to prepare a separate calendar anymore. The Session took note of the information that the EU MSP platform calendar has been successfully updated with the information from the Baltic Sea countries.

6.5 The Session took note that the new template of the country fiches is now in use. The updated fiches are available on [HELCOM](#) and [VASAB](#) websites. The Session invited the countries which did not communicate updated fiches to do it as soon as possible to the VASAB Secretariat ([elina.veidemane@vasab.org](mailto:elina.veidemane@vasab.org)).

#### Follow up of the Planners Forum

6.6 The Session took note of the information on the latest news from the Planners' Forum (document 6-3). The last session of the Planners' Forum was hosted by Finland and held in Helsinki on 8 March 2023. The Session took note that the European Green Deal will be a topic to be discussed during the next Planners' Forum to be held in fall 2023.

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6.7 The Session took note of the information that the first Planners' forum which took place on 4 November 2022 invited the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG to consider the topic of OECMs as part of the Group's agenda.

#### Development of the offshore energy in the Baltic Sea Region (i.e., follow-up on the cooperation with DG Energy and/or BEMIP) based on national communication with contact points

6.8 The Session took note of the information given by the VASAB Secretariat on difficulties in liaising with BEMIP.

6.9 The Session discussed the possible mechanism for cooperation with BEMIP including reaching out to national contacts.

6.10 The Session recalled that this task of cooperating with BEMIP is included in the workplan and invited the countries to further try to liaise with national BEMIP contact points. The Session also recalled that cooperation had been initiated by BEMIP and that the process has never achieved concrete results. The Session welcomed the offer from the EC to investigate the state of the organization and inform the WG on possible ways for cooperation, if it is still foreseen.

#### Consideration of climate change in national maritime spatial plans.

6.11 The Session recalled that consideration of climate change in MSP is to be reflected in the updated template of the country fiches and took note that certain information was updated. However, the Session took note of additional information from Contracting Parties on addressing climate change in national MSPs as following:

- Sweden focused on strengthening resilience involving green infrastructure concept, mitigation is mainly considered through offshore wind development, potential areas for CO<sub>2</sub> storage are considered. Symphony tool was applied to model climate change consequences which revealed that it causes the most severe damage to the environment compared to all other pressures. Sweden will update this section of national country fiche;
- Poland updated the country fiche reflecting current climate change related considerations; climate change reflected in national MSP based on available scientific evidence and forecast of changes; coastal protection and its resilience to sea level rise is a major topic which will be reflected in detailed plans; offshore wind energy is the primary mitigating measure; areas for CO<sub>2</sub> storage are considered;
- Latvia is planning to expand climate change related aspects of national MSP after an environmental assessment; offshore wind is the primary mitigation measure, but adaptation and resilience will be addressed;
- Denmark's national MSP designates zones for CO<sub>2</sub> storage in North Sea in former oil and gas reservoirs, but some new sites might be used.

#### Conservation of harbour porpoises and MSP

6.12 The Session took note of the information of the process of drafting Cetacean-friendly MSP guidelines. The development of the guidelines is progressing as planned: in March 2023 there will be a first early draft available to share with the dedicated ASCOBANS WG on MSP for which the HELCOM Secretariat is a member. As for now, it seems to be realistic that the ASCOBANS Parties will look at the draft guidelines at the Advisory Committee Meeting (AC28) in September 2023.

6.13 The Session invited the HELCOM Secretariat to submit a document on the topic for to discuss the guideline at the next informal consultation session of the WG.

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6.14 The Session took note of initial information on the new ASCOBANS Working Group on offshore renewable energy and welcomed the offer from the Secretariat to follow the process in relation to the action and to update the MSP WG on the topic.

#### Underwater heritage and MSP: follow-up and next steps

6.15 The Session invited the countries to share results on their national consultations.

6.16 The Session took note of the information from Denmark on ongoing work to define marine archaeological deposit sites which would be used to place artefacts found during investigation and/or construction of structures in contact with the seabed, for example offshore windfarms. The ongoing work includes cooperation with the relevant heritage agency to promote such sites which could also be used as recreational sites, for example for diving.

6.17 The Session took note of the information that such deposit sites were considered in Germany but the concept did not come into use since some artefacts need to be highly protected from human activities and should stay buried under sediments. The Session took note of the information that the concept of keeping some artefacts buried is also developed in Denmark.

6.18 The Session took note of the information from Germany that a conference on underwater cultural heritage will be held on 22-26 March 2023 in Lübeck, Germany. The programme and the registration are available [online](#).

6.19 The Session took note of information from the EC that the topic of underwater heritage will probably be added to the agenda of the next Member State Expert Group (MSEG) on MSP which be held in Santorini, Greece, on 25 of April 2023. The Session invited Denmark and Germany to liaise with the EC to share input on the topic during the meeting, if possible.

6.20 The Session took note of the information that in Estonia's MSP there are protected areas for underwater cultural heritage, as well as designated areas for deposit sites but the latter are not yet in use. The removal or artefacts will be considered case by case.

6.21 The Session took note of the information that the current maritime spatial plans in Finland are highlighting one specific area (Ruotsinsalmi) in the Gulf of Finland which used to be a battle area. The topic will be developed in the next plans with the involvement of the cultural heritage agency.

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

7.1 The Session took note of the updated list of Contacts for the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG (document 7-1). The Session invited the Countries to nominate the Lead of Delegation for HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG by informing the HELCOM Secretariat ([florent.nicolas@helcom.fi](mailto:florent.nicolas@helcom.fi)) as soon as possible.

7.2 The Session took note of the information that the information related to the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG, such as invitations for informal consultation sessions or meetings and notifications of the documents` submission are always shared with the contacts of the HELCOM Head of Delegations and relevant contacts.

7.3 The Session took note of the invitation from the EC to join physically the next MSEG Meeting, to be held in Santorini, Greece, on 25 of April 2023, to share experiences from the Baltic Sea Region.

#### **Agenda Item 8 Future planning**

8.1 The Session discussed the potential dates for the next session or meeting of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG and recommended to organize it provisionally on **24-25 October 2023**. Latvia offered to explore the opportunity to host the next Session in Riga, possibly as a hybrid session and back-to-back with a relevant

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project event. The Session invited Latvia and the HELCOM Secretariat to share additional information in due time to the contacts of the HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG of EU and EU Member States.

8.2 The Session discussed the possibility to have a physical session only every other meeting, recommended that the intersessional work be held online and also recommended physical attendance for the next sessions. The Session noted that if the hybrid format is offered by the host, it should be communicated in due time to the contacts of HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG of EU and EU Member States, for example in the invitation.

**Agenda Item 9      Memo of the Session**

9.1 The Session approved the memo of the Session.

## Annex 1

## List of Participants

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