

Reply by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) to the request by the UN Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea regarding information on recent developments concerning the Resolution 66/68 on Sustainable fisheries

Organization: Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)

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Executive Summary:

The Helsinki Commission, HELCOM, works to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution through intergovernmental co-operation between Denmark, Estonia, the European Community, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. 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.

Development of policy and management measures addressing commercial fisheries in the Baltic in the Baltic Seas performed within the frame of the European Common Fisheries Policy. Coordination of fisheries policy with the only HELCOM non-EU country – Russia, is done by the EU on a bilateral basis.

The HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP)¹, adopted by the Ministers of the Environment of HELCOM Contracting States and a representative of the European Commission, in 2007, addresses competent fisheries authorities who should, in collaboration with HELCOM and due regard to Common Fisheries Policy, take action to develop long-term management measures in the Baltic Sea.

HELCOM contributes to sustainable fisheries in the Baltic through the BSAP and by coordinating on a regional level, environmental and fisheries related dialogue and cooperation between the HELCOM Contracting States and the European Commission. For example, the HELCOM Baltic Fisheries and Environmental Forum brings together relevant authorities from both fields twice a year to discuss and find common ground on current environmental and fisheries related issues in the Baltic.

HELCOM also coordinates the implementation of EU policies, such as the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)², on the Baltic Sea level. MSFD, likewise BSAP, is based on ecosystem approach and aims at achieving a good environmental status of the Baltic Sea. For example, the HELCOM CORESET³ project is developing core indicators and determining thresholds for Good Environmental Status in order to assess the state of the Baltic Sea, including the fish stocks.

¹http://www.helcom.fi/BSAP/en_GB/intro/

²<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/marine/ges.htm>

³http://www.helcom.fi/projects/on_going/en_GB/coreset/

HELCOM also coordinates monitoring of the Baltic Sea environment, both within comprehensive monitoring programme, COMBINE, addressing the status of the marine environment, which has been running since 1979, as well as focused components e.g. coastal fish monitoring, under the HELCOM FISH-PRO project⁴. Assessments of the status of the environment are an essential part of HELCOM's activities.

The data is collected to databanks, including a databank hosted by the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES). HELCOM also has a map and data service to make environmental information accessible for interested users and the general public, where GIS data can be viewed and downloaded⁵.

HELCOM has adopted guidelines for the management of the Baltic Sea Protected Areas (BSPAs), which take into account potential impacts from fisheries. This has also been addressed in a new HELCOM Managing Fisheries in Baltic Marine Protected Areas (BALTFIMPA) project.⁶

⁴http://www.helcom.fi/projects/on_going/en_GB/FISH_PRO/

⁵http://www.helcom.fi/GIS/en_GB/HelcomGIS/

⁶http://www.helcom.fi/projects/on_going/en_GB/BALTFIMPA/