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| **8th Strategy Forum of the EUSBSR in Berlin 13 – 14 June** |

**Summary report**

**Latest status of the sea revealed – what can we do about it together?**

**Time:** Tuesday, 13 June, 15:15 to 16:45 hours, Weltsaal

**Moderator:** Michael Gilek, Södertörn University, Sweden

**1st panelists:** Erja Tikka, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland

 Thomas Johansson, Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management

Monika Luxem-Fritsch, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety, Germany

 Mikhail Durkin, Coalition Clean Baltic

**2nd panelists:** Benjamin Boteler, Ecologic Institute

 Heini Ahtiainen, HELCOM researcher on social and economic analysis

**Presenters:** Monika Stankiewicz, HELCOM Executive Secretary

 Heini Ahtiainen, HELCOM researcher on social and economic analysis

The HELCOM seminar “Latest status of the sea revealed – what can we do about it together?” focused on the first results of the HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report (First version 2017, to be updated in 2018) and its connectivity with other policies and initiatives. The report provides a holistic view on the latest status of the marine environment. The pressures and cumulative impacts from human activities and the economic and social contribution of the marine environment to society in the whole Baltic Sea region are also assessed. The regional report is a coordinated assessment and a major undertaking of all Baltic Sea countries.

In general, the first results show that, although signs of improvement in the state of the Baltic Sea are seen in some cases, the Baltic Sea Action Plan goals and ecological objectives have not yet been reached. One additional conclusion is that some of the measures already put into operation have not been in place long enough to have an effect.

The panelists agreed that the report is useful for analyzing the progress towards the shared goal of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and of the EUSBSR to achieve a healthy Baltic Sea and that it can also provide a baseline for following-up the ocean-related United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in the Baltic Sea to be achieved by 2030. It is also of use for implementing the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive for those countries who are EU members. The panelists noted that the HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report is a good example of collective work by the coastal countries based on mutual trust and good cooperation, providing a common view on the status of the sea and its transboundary problems.

As for further improvements to be included in the update of the State of the Baltic Sea report in 2018, the panelists encouraged HELCOM to fill in the data gaps that are now still left in the report as well as add conclusions on policy response and actions to be taken to further improve the status of the Baltic Sea. Further, the panelists highlighted the need to increasingly address climate change and its implication on the marine ecosystems and management, as well as the importance of local actions to reduce pollution and protect the Baltic Sea.

Economic and social analyses are incorporated in the HELCOM State of the Baltic Sea report in this extent for the first time. The analyses examine the importance of the Baltic Sea marine environment to society, covering the contribution of marine activities on the economy and human welfare, and the impacts on human well-being from the degradation of the marine environment.

The first results show, for example, that if the good environmental status of the Baltic Sea is not reached with regard to eutrophication, the annual welfare losses for citizens can range up to 4000 million euros annually.

The panelists appreciated the ground-breaking work for the State of the Baltic Sea report on economic and social analysis and agreed that it is important to continue the work by developing the methods and gaining more background data.