

The HELCOM Jubilee Session Helsinki, Finland 4 March 2004



Presenting the Past,
Present and the Future

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On 22 March 2004 30 years had elapsed from the signing of the first Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area. In order to commemorate this milestone a Jubilee Session was arranged in conjunction with the 25th annual meeting of the Helsinki Commission on 4 March 2004 at the House of Estates, Helsinki, Finland.

The Jubilee Session focussed on the history and the future role of HELCOM with regard to environmental cooperation within the region as well as achievements of HELCOM and foreseen threats to the Baltic Sea.

The presentations given at the Jubilee Session enlightened the different aspects of HELCOM's work in the past and the present time giving also a clear message that we should all continue to strive for our common goal – a healthy Baltic Sea.

The feedback from those who attended the Jubilee Session was very positive. The atmosphere was warm and friendly bringing the HELCOM family together in a less formal setting. We look forward to many more Jubilee Sessions in the future.



Anne Christine Brusendorff

Anne Christine Brusendorff
Executive Secretary of the Helsinki Commission

**Speech by the President of the Republic of Finland,
Ms. Tarja Halonen, at the opening of HELCOM 25/2004**

"The future of the Baltic Sea is in our hands. We all have a responsibility to keep the Baltic alive. I would like to thank you for your continuous and persistent work in favour of the Baltic Sea."

It is a great pleasure and honour for me to open the 25th annual meeting of the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM). The significance and historical nature of this meeting is underlined by the fact that we are also celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Convention.

The Helsinki Convention is a pioneer. The convention which was signed in 1974 and came into force six years later was the first international convention designed to protect the marine environment. First but not premature. The need to protect the Baltic Sea was already quite apparent. The convention had radical but realistic objectives. It included a commitment to stop pollution and mechanisms for the issuing of detailed implementation rules.

The revision of the Helsinki Convention in 1992 improved possibilities to protect the unique nature in the Baltic Sea. The convention was expanded to the entire catchment area and to include agriculture as well as the protection of marine life.

HELCOM was established on the basis of the Helsinki Convention. Thanks to the legal foundation provided by the Helsinki Convention and successful co-operation, HELCOM is a key actor in protecting the Baltic Sea. Achievements range from prohibiting toxic substances to improving maritime safety.

Today Baltic cooperation and the operating environment are significantly different from what they were when the Helsinki Convention was first signed. The number of independent states and signatories has grown. Our region has also become more clearly a region

The accession of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland to the European Union two months from now will also affect HELCOM's activities. HELCOM will remain a key actor in protecting the Baltic Sea, however. It is important to have a forum to which all the states in the region have made a commitment as equal and sovereign actors.

HELCOM should be able to agree on measures which are necessary to protect the Baltic Sea and are binding on all members in the future as well. HELCOM has a great responsibility to produce information concerning the state of the Baltic Sea and its special protection needs and to bring the necessary measures to the attention of national authorities and international organizations.

The Baltic is one of the most polluted seas in the world and the situation is particularly poor in the Gulf of Finland. All the coastal countries share the blame for this. Other European states also bear their own responsibility for the pollution of the Baltic Sea. Too many countries have neglected the need to protect our common sea in past years and there are still many deficiencies in committing to protection decisions, not to mention implementing them.

We know that all too many nutrients flow into the Baltic Sea. We also know that measures are needed quickly and still we will have to wait a long time for effects. We need measures to reduce emissions from communities, agriculture and industry now so that future generations can have a chance to enjoy the Baltic Sea.

Strong growth in maritime traffic in the Baltic Sea brings new challenges. It is gratifying to note that HELCOM has concretely promoted common rules in winter navigation as well as cooperation in preventing oil spills. Improving maritime safety requires continued efforts within HELCOM.

All of us have reason to be self-critical, but we coastal states have a special need for cooperation. Even more so in the future, since economic growth in the region can cause an additional burden on the Baltic. This is not inevitable, however, if we can find the common will to take care of the matter otherwise.

Citizens expect effective measures to protect the Baltic Sea. People's commitment to sustainable development is visible and should be visible in public decision-making. This takes place above all at the level of the nation-state, but it is visible also in international organizations such as HELCOM. A good example of this is the Youth Forum, which has been organized in conjunction with this HELCOM annual meeting.



The future of the Baltic Sea is in our hands. We all have a responsibility to keep the Baltic alive. I would like to thank you for your continuous and persistent work in favour of the Baltic Sea.

I wish this 25th annual meeting of HELCOM success and the ability to make positive decisions to ensure the future of our common sea.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tarja Halonen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tarja Halonen
President of the Republic of Finland

"Youth for the Baltic"

Resolution

1 March 2004

We, young people from several States bordering the Baltic Sea, but also from other parts of the world,

having assembled in Helsinki at the HELCOM Youth Forum at the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the signing of the 1974 Helsinki Convention,

conscious of the indispensable values of the marine environment, in particular of the Baltic Sea, and of the ongoing need to protect and preserve the environment for future generations,

aware of the present ecological situation of the Baltic Sea,

welcoming the work already done by the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) and the Baltic Sea States,

noting with concern the still existing threats to the Baltic Sea environment which require a large variety of additional protection measures,

emphasizing the co-operation in the Baltic Sea Area as an example for the protection of the marine environment in other parts of the world,

strongly encourage the Contracting Parties of the Helsinki Convention to undertake additional measures by considering among others the following issues:

1. The principle of **sustainable development** should be explicitly incorporated in the Helsinki Convention and thus also contribute to an integrated coastal zone management;
2. Additional measures to avoid **eutrophication**, caused by nutrient inputs from agriculture and sewage have to be taken.

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy of the EC aiming at environmentally friendly agricultural practices should be actively supported. This should include the introduction of organic farming, the reduction in the use of manure and of mineral fertilisers, new sustainable technologies, respective education of farmers as well as economic incentives such as taxation of fertilisers and subsidies for environmentally sound practices. Adequate treatment should be obligatory for all sewage entering the Baltic Sea, including sewage from summer cottages.

3. HELCOM should contribute to the revision of the EU Chemical Policy with the aim to reduce the input of new unknown **hazardous substances** which may adversely effect the Baltic Sea environment, thus applying the precautionary principle.
4. Environmental **impacts of fishery** activities should be covered by the Helsinki Convention aiming at a balance with economic interests; this includes capacity reduction and the establishment of protected zones.
5. Environmental sound standards for **aquaculture** have to be developed.
6. To protect and restore **biodiversity** the establishment of Baltic Sea Protected Areas should be further promoted, especially in those areas where BSPAs have not yet been designated; legal instruments must be introduced to control, reduce or ban adverse activities in BSPAs.
7. To prevent **pollution from ships** additional measures to improve maritime safety are needed. They must include the designation of particularly sensitive sea areas, vessel traffic management systems with the support of AIS, shipping routes for tankers and other vessels carrying dangerous cargo, the establishment of places of refuge, adequate response capacities and the ratification of the bunker oil convention. As international standards are needed the Baltic Sea States should further intensify their cooperation in IMO. HELCOM should also give particular attention to harbour construction and related dredging activities.
8. With regard to **offshore activities** the Helsinki Convention should be broadened to cover all respective activities such as extraction of sand and gravel, cables and pipelines and wind energy
9. HELCOM should intensify the efforts to monitor and supervise the **implementation** of the Convention and the Recommendations. HELCOM should evaluate national reporting with regard to gaps and deficiencies and should get the competence to request improved information. The Baltic Sea States should nominate inspection teams that should be authorized to control the implementation in third States.

To support the mobilisation of financial resources HELCOM should establish an international Baltic Sea Environment Fund, based on a system that potential polluters and users have to contribute to the fund by fees and taxes.

10. The relationship between **HELCOM and EU** should be strengthened, e. g. by mobilising EU funding for HELCOM purposes.
11. With regard to the EU enlargement the continuation of **good partnership** between all Baltic Sea States is of outstanding importance.
12. The efforts to make HELCOM visible to the general public must be further intensified; regular publications such as the periodic assessments are helpful tools to disseminate relevant **information**.

To increase the involvement of the private sector industry has to be made aware of the advantages of contributing to marine protection. A HELCOM eco-label could be of benefit for products and services.

13. The contacts with other **environmental bodies** should be strengthened to exchange information and experience and to serve as an example for environment protection in other marine areas.

request HELCOM to continue with the Youth Forum regularly with the understanding that

- the forum will be open for interested students representing different disciplines,
- the agenda will be focussed on a limited number of specific topics,
- the topics will be prepared by introductory papers and statements,
- enough time will be available for a substantial discussion.



The Youth Forum resolution was drafted at the University of Helsinki on March 1, and handed to President Halonen at the opening of HELCOM 25 by Åsa Hägg who was born on March 22, 1974-the date of the signing of the Helsinki Convention.

Opening statement by the Minister for the Environment of Finland, Mr. Jan-Erik Enestam, at the HELCOM Jubilee Session

"We need HELCOM as an important forum for riparian countries to discuss and formulate common opinions related to the specific problems in the Baltic Sea and to the need for its protection. Good and effective co-operation and coordination between the European Union and HELCOM are essential."

Mr. Chairman, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,



It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this Jubilee Session to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Helsinki Convention. On the 22nd of March 1974 only a very few of us gathered here today were present when the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area - known as the Helsinki Convention - was signed by all seven riparian countries. In 1974, an agreement like this was unique and the signing of it was a historic milestone;

for the first time ever, all the pollution sources around an entire sea were made subject to a single convention. The years since 1974 have seen some changes, the Convention has been revised once and the region has undergone major political transformations. Currently, there are ten Contracting Parties actively working towards the protection of the Baltic Sea and also an ever-increasing number of observer organisations.

Today, the Helsinki Commission is an important forum in which the riparian countries can openly discuss the need to protect the Baltic and necessary protection measures. Through their own actions, jointly or individually, the riparian countries can influence the state of the Baltic marine environment and its sustainable use. The regional Helsinki Convention, as a legally binding instrument, has been and should continue to be an effective channel for introducing local and regional aspects into global conventions and agreements, and also into the European Union.

As a result of the 30-year joint co-operation, several positive signals have already been reported regarding the state of the Baltic Sea. Numerous projects have been completed or are under implementation in the fields of wastewater treatment, air pollution control, waste management, preservation of biodiversity and improvement of maritime safety, to mention only a few.

However, in spite of the 30 years of effort, HELCOM is still facing several challenges in the near future. Let me take a few minutes to briefly highlight some of them.

First, the continuous increase in tanker traffic has considerably raised the risk of environmental disasters and accidents at sea, especially in the Gulf of Finland. According to recent estimates, by the year 2010 the amount of oil transported in the Gulf will double from its present 70 million tonnes. Illegal, deliberate discharges of oil at sea are also of continuing concern.

Another problem, which seems to have no end, is eutrophication. Despite numerous efforts in the past several decades, excessive inputs of nutrients causing eutrophication are still a problem. We know that almost all Contracting Parties to the Convention have successfully reduced point source discharges and most have met the reduction goals set earlier with HELCOM, but for diffuse sources the situation is much more unsatisfactory. It is quite clear that the main sources of excessive nutrient inputs are nitrogen from agriculture, airborne nitrogen inputs from both land-based and sea-based sources and waterborne inputs from urban areas, small municipalities and some industries. It is also worth noting that the EU enlargement process will bring large areas of the Baltic Sea catchment under the EU Common Agricultural Policy and that this may lead to even higher nutrient inputs into the sea.

These topics are also included in Finland's National Programme for the Protection of the Baltic Sea. The implementation of this programme is among the government's top environmental priorities.

Finally, HELCOM will face major challenges when Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland become full EU members at the beginning of May. The political and economic state of affairs around the Baltic Sea will change. Although being much welcomed, the changes in the economy and trade in the region will pose new challenges for environmental protection.

For the protection of the Baltic marine environment, membership of the European Union and the fulfilment of the appropriate EU directives might not always be sufficient, nor the only means. In the changing framework, HELCOM should concentrate on activities that bring added value to the ongoing work within the Contracting Parties and also in the whole catchment area. Furthermore, given the changes foreseen in the near future, it is important to involve Russia, and also Belarus and Ukraine, in the HELCOM co-operation for the Baltic marine protection.

One of the particular features of the Baltic Sea region is the number of organisations and bodies that have been established, especially in the 1990s. In this framework, HELCOM should take a more active leading role in the protection of the Baltic Sea and should act as a catalyst in promoting international and intersectoral collaboration. We need HELCOM as an important forum for riparian countries to discuss and formulate common opinions related to the specific problems in the Baltic Sea and to the need for its protection. Good and effective co-operation and coordination between the European Union and HELCOM are essential.

To meet the above-mentioned challenges, and to maintain HELCOM as a strong intergovernmental organisation for the protection of the Baltic Sea marine environment, the Contracting Parties must continue to give strong political support to HELCOM's work.

I am pleased to note that on the basis of the ministerial meeting decisions in Bremen last year, the Helsinki Commission decided earlier this week on its future role, responsibilities, working structure and methods. By this I trust that the Helsinki Commission will continue to play the key role in protecting the Baltic Sea, even after the EU enlargement.

Pollution does not recognise man-made borders. For this reason, countries occupying the same region share environmental problems and have to work together to solve those problems. The Baltic Sea environment is very sensitive and has been polluted for such a long time that even if all inputs were reduced today, the Baltic Sea would only recover very slowly. Therefore, I would like to stress that the state of the Baltic Sea will improve and the risk of oil damage will diminish only if all countries bordering the sea continue to work actively and sustainably to protect it.

**Opening words by the Chair of HELCOM, Ms. Inese Vaidere,
(presented by Mr. Guntis Drunka, Vice-Chairman of HELCOM)**

"One possible future function we see for HELCOM is to support and mediate environmental development issues not only between Russia and the EU, but also in relation to Belarus, Ukraine and to a certain degree also Norway, which are not EU members."

Minister, your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,
dear Colleagues,



I am very glad to have the opportunity to welcome you to this celebration of our common child – the Helsinki Convention – which in a few weeks will become 30 years old.

It all started in the 1970s. HELCOM was born at a time when it became apparent for all the countries around the Baltic Sea that we were facing serious environmental problems and that something should be done to improve the situation. Considering the political situation at that time, "environment" was a good, neutral issue for international cooperation in the Region - and so it started.

Since then it has been a busy time for HELCOM growing up. We have faced many problems but also many successes. The basis for this has been the open and constructive commitment from all Contracting Parties which has made it possible for HELCOM to make a difference and improve the Baltic Sea environment. In many ways HELCOM has been a frontrunner being one of the most experienced regional environmental organisations.

During the Latvian Chairmanship since July 2002 many important things have happened. I would like just to mention the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the preparation of the European Marine Strategy, the first Joint HELCOM/OSPAR Ministerial meeting, the Bremen Declaration and other important activities. And now we are standing only a few months before the historical EU enlargement.

Yes, the political scene around the Baltic Sea is changing once more. With the EU enlargement on the 1st of May eight out of nine states bordering the Baltic Sea will be EU members. This development will influence all our work. One possible future function we see for HELCOM is to support and mediate environmental development issues not only between Russia and the EU, but also in relation to Belarus, Ukraine and to a certain degree also Norway, which are not EU members.

HELCOM is prepared for the future. The HELCOM Ministerial Session in Bremen last year prepared a Declaration which will guide the work of HELCOM during the forthcoming years. Special emphasis was given to the changes in environmental regulations that are likely to occur in connection with the accession of the three Baltic countries and Poland to the EU.

The Ministers underlined the independent and strong position of the Helsinki Commission and that HELCOM should continue to serve as the environmental focal point for the Baltic Sea region in relation to other international forums. The Ministers also indicated that areas of special priority for HELCOM should include:

- joint monitoring and assessment
- eutrophication and hazardous substances
- maritime safety and emergency response
- nature conservation and biodiversity

The Ministers agreed that all HELCOM activities should be based on an ecosystem approach to the management of human activities. For this purpose, ecological quality objectives that express a "good quality status" described by appropriate indicators of the ecosystem status are now being developed by HELCOM.

In the light of these developments and based on the results of the Ministerial meetings in Bremen we have yesterday adopted an updated strategy defining HELCOM's future role, priorities and organisation. I would say that with the strategic work we have been doing within HELCOM we are well prepared to take on board the future challenges.

The Baltic Sea region is where Russia and the EU meet and it raises exciting perspectives for collaboration and economic development in the region. Exactly here is the importance of HELCOM as the forum for regional environmental cooperation between equal partners - because environmental protection must be part of the regional development. Only a common approach to developing the regions potential will lead to the sustainable development goal we aim for – and no one can do it alone!

I think we have today good reasons to celebrate the Helsinki Convention. During the meeting today we are happy to meet with old friends of HELCOM. Some of them will speak about the history of HELCOM, the environmental threats and HELCOM's role in regional environmental cooperation. We will also hear some views about how they see the role of HELCOM in the future. Refreshing are the ideas which came out of the Youth Forum which took place in the beginning of the week. I find it important that young people are allowed to express wishes and ideas even if they are not all very realistic.

I would like to mention that in conjunction with the 30th anniversary of the Convention and the Baltic Sea Day in March some HELCOM Contracting Parties are organising special events, such as an international conference on Cooperation for the Baltic Sea Environment in Riga, Latvia and a seminar on hazardous substances in St. Petersburg, Russia.



Mr. Guntis Drunka, the Vice-Chairman of HELCOM.

These initiatives are supported by HELCOM and you all are very welcome to participate in these events. To conclude, I think that HELCOM in the next few years will meet many new challenges and even problems. It is important that we maintain our good relations and open minds for the future cooperation. The Baltic Sea development and cooperation cannot be successful without the commitment and participation by all countries around the sea or without the commitment by the European Commission to the work of HELCOM.

The history of HELCOM: “How HELCOM was born” Mr. Olli Ojala, Ministry of the Environment of Finland

“The strength of the Convention lies on its comprehensiveness, the good co-operation between the Contracting Parties, the institutional framework, including the Secretariat, and the serious, devoted work done by the people participating in the co-operation for the improvement of the environmental conditions of the Baltic Sea area .”

Marine environment causes concern – from scientific findings to headings in media

The Baltic Sea was born roughly in its present shape about 8.000 years ago. Scientists have studied the Baltic Sea in modern sense since the last decades of the 19th century. The history of the deterioration of marine environment is at least in the Baltic Sea Area shorter than a century. First after the 2nd World War the impact of human activities in the marine environment of the Baltic Sea began to grow seriously.

In 1960s scientists became aware about the eutrophication syndrome. At the same time the reproduction of seals and predatory birds on the top of the

food pyramid was shown to be disturbed because of slowly degradable but physiologically active chemicals, such as DDT and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Oil spillages were frequent and killed waterfowl and soiled bathing places. The last mentioned phenomenon was quite spectacular and therefore attracted the media. But gradually even the findings of scientists began to leak out into the press.

I quote a heading of the German journal *der Spiegel* from 1973: "Ein Meer voller Unrat und Hässlichkeit – A sea full of trash and filth". This kind of language made politicians and other decision-makers aware of the problems. One rather early example was the Baltic Sea Week appeal of about 30 members of parliament from Baltic Sea countries at Warnemünde in July 1972 although it was obviously thought to serve also other purposes in addition to environmental protection.

In the beginning of the efforts to prevent the deterioration of the marine environment in the Baltic Sea Area the key role, however, was played by international non-governmental forces. In 1957 the biannual Conference of the Baltic Oceanographers was established in Helsinki at the first gathering of specialists from all – at that time seven – coastal countries. In 1968 the Baltic Marine Biologists were organised. At national level the nature conservation organisations were active even in the field of the marine environment.

Enacting international environmental law for the protection of marine environment

For the research of shared sea areas before HELCOM from late 1960s or early 1970s bilateral agreements existed between Denmark and Sweden for the Sound (this activity was started already in 1955), between Finland and USSR for the Gulf of Finland and between Finland and Sweden for the Gulf of Bothnia.

Several new legal instruments were added to international environmental law at the end of 1960s and in the beginning of 1970s. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden had concluded an Agreement on Co-operation concerning Measures against Pollution of the Sea by Oil in 1967 and extended it in 1971. For the protection of the marine environment of the North-eastern Atlantic there were the 1971 Oslo Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft and the 1974 Paris Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-based Sources. A global agreement, the 1972 London Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter also existed. The Inter-Governmental Maritime Consulting Organisation – IMCO – (nowadays International Maritime Organisation, IMO) concluded in 1973 an International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships which deals with normal ship operations.

Proposal and preparation for a convention

International co-operation in the field of environment was seriously hampered by a political constraint in early 1970s with its culmination at the time of the big and very important UN Conference on Human Environment in

Stockholm, June 1972, *viz.* that all at that time seven coastal states of the Baltic Sea were not in the position to participate in international co-operation on an equal basis, since neither the Federal Republic of Germany nor the German Democratic Republic were recognised by all other European states. The head of the Finnish delegation to the UN Conference on Human Environment stated, however, that Finland aimed at inviting the coastal states to a conference concerning the protection of the Baltic marine environment. Only a few weeks later Finland made it clear that both the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic shall be recognised by Finland. Thus, the diplomatic way for negotiations was open. It has been stated that the process of *détente* provided a ground for a successful co-operation for the protection of the Baltic Sea.

In October 1972 Finland approached the other coastal states of the Baltic Sea Area enquiring whether they would be interested in the preparation of an agreement for the protection of the Baltic Sea and, for that purpose, agree to participate in a Baltic Sea Conference on the Marine Environment of Government representatives of all the Baltic Sea States convened and arranged by the Government of Finland.

At the same time the Foreign Ministry of Finland, assisted by Finnish environmental specialists, started to draft a framework for negotiations with a view to create an international, legally binding instrument for the protection of the Baltic marine environment. Rather early the instrument was named Convention. The goal was ambitious: the Convention should be comprehensive, maybe one can say holistic, since it should cover all the environmental problems relevant for the Baltic Sea.

The response from the Baltic Sea States was positive and encouraging. In the meanwhile consultations took place between Finland, Denmark and Sweden. In February 1973 the Finnish Government distributed an explanatory memorandum to the other Baltic Sea countries and the preparation of a Convention was started at the end of May with the participation of all Baltic Sea countries. Two more preparatory meetings took place and a Diplomatic Conference for the finalisation and signing of the Helsinki Convention could be held in March 1974. The regulation of fisheries and sustainable use of fish stock were at an early stage excluded from matters to be dealt with at the Conference, since they had already been treated separately with the outcome that the International Baltic Sea Fishery Commission was already established during the preparatory process of the Helsinki Convention.

From the very beginning it was assumed that the Convention should deal with land-based as well as airborne pollution, pollution from ships, arrangements for scientific and technical co-operation, joint monitoring, dumping of wastes into the sea, accidents of oil and other noxious substances, activities on the continental shelf and also leisure time activities and international tourism. Furthermore, the Convention contains, *inter alia*, provisions on institutional arrangements, responsibility and settlement of disputes. The comprehensive character of the Convention made it some kind of a model for a number of parallel legal instruments, *e.g.* the 1976 Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution, produced on the initiative

of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as a part of its regional seas approach. Nature conservation and landscape protection were, however, first included in the objects of the Helsinki Convention in the 1990s. From the very beginning English was chosen for the language of co-operation and for the Convention.

In 1974 the Contracting Parties were not well prepared to fulfil all the provisions of the Convention. There were numerous scientific and technical questions to be solved. The terminology agreed upon needed clarification and explanation in many respects, since the goals and required measures are formulated in a rather general way. Afterwards it is easy to state that the implementation of the Convention was initiated in rather bewildered minds. The national legislation needed improvement which may have hampered the ratification process. The last instruments of ratification were deposited in 1979. However, the Diplomatic Conference not only decided upon the final contents and signing of the Convention but it also adopted resolutions.

The Interim Commission

Besides a number of resolutions on issues, which were not mature enough to be included in the Convention, *e. g.* concerning navigation, the Conference recommended the establishment of an Interim Commission since it was realised that some time will elapse between the signing of the Convention and its coming into force.

After a foreseen preparatory meeting the Interim Commission started its work. The Interim Commission held six meetings (IC 1 – 6) and it had a Secretariat provided by Finland.

The Interim Commission established, at its first meeting, the **Scientific-Technological Working Group** (STWG) and, at its second meeting, the **Maritime Working Group** (MWG).

The Terms of Reference of the STWG were given by IC 2 and amended slightly by IC 3. The tasks of STWG included, *inter alia*,

- to elaborate standards and criteria in view of common criteria for issuing permits, methods for the assessment of conditions of the marine environment and the necessary definitions for the implementation of the Convention;
- to develop co-operative monitoring programmes;
- to consider the concentrations of noxious substances in bottom sediments and dredged spoils, and in this context possible numerical values for the phrase "significant quantities";
- to update annually the Bibliography on literature of pollution of the Baltic Sea Area and to compile a list of current scientific and technological investigations related to pollution of the Baltic Sea Area;
- to consider technological aspects on prevention and abatement of pollution from land-based sources;
- to consider the question of airborne pollution load in the Baltic Sea Area;
- to encourage the Baltic Sea States to arrange, on voluntary basis, seminars, expert meetings, etc, to elucidate different problems of water pro-

- tection technology;
- to encourage the Baltic Sea States to arrange seminars on the determination methods of pollutants, including intercalibration and standardisation;
- Guidelines for publishing of the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings.

The STWG prepared a series of draft definitions and a proposal for reporting formats which were recommended for adoption already by IC 2 as well as the general principles regarding monitoring and a list of substances of high priority (halogenated hydrocarbons, including DDT and PCB's; Hg, Cd and their compounds; oil and oil products, including aromates; As, Pb, Cu, Zn, Cr and their compounds; phosphorus compounds) which were adopted by IC 2. Even other anti-fouling agents than mercury, lead and copper compounds were dealt with but for example organotin compounds became actual first in the 1980s.

In the STWG an intensive discussion had been held on whether the criteria and standards for the regulation discharges should be based on emission or immission norms. The conclusion of IC 4 was, however, that the common criteria for permits cannot be based on either ecological and water use criteria or on technological standards but that both of these approaches must be taken into consideration simultaneously.

For the Baltic Monitoring Programme provisional guidelines were adopted by IC 6. The first phase of the co-ordinated monitoring programme started in 1979 and continued for a five-year period.

Water protection technology was frequently dealt with in seminars arranged in all Baltic Sea States. The first seminar, arranged by the Federation of Swedish Industries, took place in 1975 in Sweden.

The Interim Commission established close co-operation with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Baltic Marine Biologists (BMB). Both the ICES and the BMB contributed to the work of the STWG especially in matters regarding assessment, monitoring and intercalibration.

The Terms of Reference for the MWG included various aspects of marine pollution from ships and combating marine pollution. It took, in accordance with its Terms of Reference, into account the work of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the IMCO. Already before the establishment of the MWG the Interim Commission (IC 1) started to deal with the question of the safety of navigation and possible pilotage of certain ships in the Sound.

Since IC 2 the agenda of the MWG included, *e. g.*

- tagging of oil residues
- standards and test methods for sewage treatment plants onboard ships
- reception facilities for oil residues, sewage and garbage in ports, including the question of fees ,noxious liquid substances carried in bulk, harmful substances in packaged form, mustard gas; consideration of this item was postponed by IC 3
- Baltic Sea communication scheme for reports on significant spillages at sea
- response regions for combating marine pollution

- use of dispersants, sinking agents and absorbents in oil combating operations
- remote sensing techniques for oil spill detection
- information booklet on reception facilities for oil residues
- co-operation between neighbouring countries in combating marine pollution statistics and analysis of ship casualties in the Baltic Sea Area
- liability for damage concerning the pollution of marine environment in the Baltic Sea Area

In the Interim Commission Denmark and the Federal Republic of Germany proposed that the European Communities be invited to participate in the work as an observer. The Interim Commission could not agree upon this issue, which was greatly regretted by the proponent delegations at IC2 and IC 3.

The 5th meeting of the Interim Commission (IC 5) drew for the first time attention to the importance of long-term planning.

I have intentionally deferred from mentioning the names of those who did the work since I could not be objective enough in such a matter and there is no space for the large person gallery of HELCOM. But I want to make one exception: The late Ambassador Paul Gustafsson who chaired all the major meetings with excellent skills and diplomacy has to be always born in mind when dealing with the early history of HELCOM.

The first meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Before entering into force of the Convention a meeting to prepare the first meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, *i. e.* the HELCOM was held in February 1980 at the invitation of the Government of Finland. The meeting finalised four documents which had been prepared by the Interim Commission which also had decided to recommend them for adoption by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission:

1. Draft Rules of Procedure (recommended for adoption by IC 1)
2. Draft Financial Rules (recommended for adoption by IC 1 and revised by IC 6)
3. Draft Agreement on the Offices and Privileges of the Commission (recommended for adoption by IC 6)
4. Draft Staff Regulations (recommended for adoption by IC 4)

The preparatory meeting also dealt with the organisation of the work of the Commission, the composition of the Secretariat, the post descriptions of the Secretariat until the end of the year 1981 and the Terms of Reference of the Working Groups also until the end of the year 1981 as well as the budgets of expenditures for 1980 and 1981 and a budget estimate for 1982. Budget matters used to be, by the way, rather frustrating, as in many inter-governmental organisations.

The first meeting of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission was held in May 1980 in Helsinki. The meeting adopted the draft documents per-

The meeting also adopted definitions for certain terms and phrases, reporting formats for quantity, quality and way of discharge of noxious substances and materials listed in the Annex II of the Convention, guidelines for publishing of the Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings and a number of Recommendations. During the interim period the Maritime Working Group had prepared 13 Recommendations which the Interim Commission had decided to recommend to be adopted by the Commission. These Recommendations deal, *inter alia*, with reception facilities for wastes from ships, national ability to combat oil spillages, minimisation of the use of dispersants, sinking agents and absorbents in oil combating operations, position reporting system for ships and loading and unloading of hazardous substances in packages.

The work of the Commission was facilitated by the entering into force of the Convention since the Commission now could make its decisions with a full formal competence. Since the concrete decisions for environmental protection mostly are Recommendations they have to be implemented by including them in the national (and EU) legislation.

Later developments

I have, in accordance with the heading of my presentation, only dealt with the initial phases of the HELCOM. Some more recent milestones deserve, however, to be mentioned.

In 1988 the annual meeting of the HELCOM at Ministerial Level adopted a Declaration on a substantial reduction of the discharges of nutrients, heavy metals and slowly degradable and toxic substances

In 1990 the Prime Ministers of the Baltic Sea States issued the Ronneby Declaration, which has been implemented by the preparation and carrying out the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme, adopted at the 1992 Diplomatic Conference together with the new, revised Convention.

In 1995 the European (ECE) Ministers of Environment adopted at their third Conference in Sofia (Environment for Europe) a Declaration aiming at implementing the emission provisions of the European Union in the whole ECE area.

Concluding remarks

The Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area has some weaknesses, similar to all other instruments of the law of the sea and the international law in general, such as lack of an effective enforcement mechanism and sanctions as well as compulsory judicial settlement of disputes.

The strength of the Convention lies on its comprehensiveness, the good co-operation between the Contracting Parties, the institutional framework,



including the Secretariat, and the serious, devoted work done by the people participating in the co-operation for the improvement of the environmental conditions of the Baltic Sea area. It has been a fantastic experience to work together with all those who believe that it is possible to make progress in the work for the benefit of our common Baltic Sea!

**The role of HELCOM in environmental cooperation in the region
Mr. Stephen Lintner, Senior Technical Advisor, the World Bank**

"A shared vision in the management of Environment ensures the ecological restoration of the Baltic Sea and the preservation of its ecological balance"



Mr. Lintner's presentation is available as a slide show.

The Baltic Sea - Threats and Expectations
Mr. Peter Ehlers, Former Chairman of HELCOM,
Federal Maritime and Hydrographic Agency, Germany

"The problems we still face do not only affect politicians, administration, science and industry. Fundamental improvements and fundamental changes require the involvement of all of us."



Let me start by referring to a report I recently found where someone had observed a tremendous number of dying fish in the Baltic Sea. However, this report dated from the 11th century and was given by a monk. It illustrates that this Sea, due to its natural conditions, is a very sensitive and vulnerable marine area. It is a very shallow brackish water area; the exchange of saline water inflows from the North Sea through quite narrow channels is very limited and irregular. Pollutants, therefore, remain in the Baltic

Sea for a long time. As a saline boundary layer is formed between the upper water layer and the deeper parts, the deeper water is poorly ventilated which leads to natural periodic oxygen depletion. All the more additional burden and stress through contamination from human activities by a population of about 85 million in the whole catchment area has to be avoided. Using the Baltic Sea as a final reservoir for getting rid of polluting substances is extremely hazardous.

At the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s scientists from various Baltic Sea States raised alarm that the environmental situation of this marine area was substantially deteriorating. The growing concern led to the Helsinki Convention which did not only regulate all sources of pollution, but also became a promising basis for a close scientific cooperation. This cooperation aims in particular at joint monitoring programmes, pollution load compilations and regular scientific assessments of the ecological status of the Baltic Sea. Though in the meantime important measures have been taken to protect the marine environment and to reduce pollution, enormous threats still exist. Without entering into any details I will try to present an overview about the most challenging problems of the Baltic Sea ecosystem which is profoundly affected by excessive nutrient inputs, hazardous substances, increased maritime transport and fisheries.

Eutrophication caused by nutrient inputs extends the natural oxygen deficiency problem. Visible by intense algal blooms it is still the most dramatic threat for the Baltic Sea. Considerable efforts have been taken to reduce the input of nutrients. With regard to phosphorus the existing 50 % target has been achieved to a large extent especially for point sources. However, nitrogen inputs from agriculture, from transport through atmospheric deposition and from other sources such as industrial and municipal wastewater outlets have decreased less. Eutrophication will remain an issue of major concern for a long time; there is scientific evidence that even if the input of nutrients would come to a stop, the existing concentrations in the sediments and the possibility of their remobilization would adversely influence the ecosystem for quite a long time.

As concerns hazardous substances the loads of some substances have been reduced considerably over the past 20 - 30 years. At least in parts this positive development is strongly enhanced by investment and remediation projects carried out under the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme which identified the most significant pollution "hot spots". In particular discharges of heavy metals have decreased, however, their concentrations in the Baltic Sea still are many times higher than in the northern Atlantic and have not decreased any more since the 1990s. No wonder that the most encouraging results have been achieved with lead due to the increasing use of unleaded petrol. However, the picture is quite inconsistent. Cadmium concentrations, e.g., have declined in the waters, but increased in organisms in some areas.

In the past 50 years great amounts of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) have been released into the waters from different sources, including industrial discharges, runoff from farmland, antifouling paints and dumped wastes. Several POPs, such as DDT, PCB and lindane, have significantly decreased, probably due to the fact of strict HELCOM regulations. The same is true for dioxins, though dioxin concentrations in fish still exceed the EU food safety limits. Some recent measurements show high levels of TBT in marine snails which may have biological effects. Even greater concern is given by the fact that due to the lack of monitoring activities and accurate data the concentration levels of many organic contaminants are still unknown, not to mention possible adverse effects. And day by day new unknown substances may enter the Baltic Sea.

Pollution from ships still is a matter of concern. Illegal discharges of oil residues from ships statistically amount to 10 % of all the oil in the Baltic Sea. Despite all HELCOM activities to prevent illegal discharges from ships round about 400 spillages are detected annually by airborne surveillance; the total number of discharges including unobserved spillages probably is much higher. Besides that the intense shipping and the steadily increasing oil transportation raises the risk of a large oil spill, caused by a grounding or a collision. Forecasts indicate that by 2015 more than 130 million tonnes of oil will be transported in the Baltic Sea per year. Growing maritime transport also means increases in NO_x emissions. Due to the international and global character of shipping measures taken by HELCOM must remain incomplete, if not complemented by action of the International Maritime Organisation.

Beyond direct pollution problems the marine environment may be threatened by alien species, either deliberately introduced for fishing or aquaculture, or accidentally brought in by ships in ballast water. About 100 non-native species have been recorded in the Baltic Sea and may induce considerable changes in the ecosystem, also hampering the use of the seas or even represent a risk to human health.

The development of fish stocks is significantly influenced by ecological changes, including the impacts of eutrophication, the falling salinity levels, but also by man-made interventions, such as the damming of spawning rivers, and by overexploitation. Cod stocks are seriously on the decline, in the eastern Baltic their numbers are below safe biological limits. Spawning stocks of herring have steadily decreased since the 1970s, whereas the productivity of wild salmon is increasing. Excessive fishing pressure can also harm other species such as porpoises, seals and seabirds, and can affect the productivity of marine ecosystems and reduce biodiversity.

This emphasises the importance of nature conservation and the protection of biodiversity. Measures to protect species and habitats have positively influenced the increase of breeding success rates of some top predators such as the white-tailed eagle and the Baltic seals, though they still face health problems. The designation of marine and coastal Baltic Sea Protected Areas by HELCOM was an important step to give legal protection to endangered biotopes around the Baltic Sea.

Summing up these observations the encouraging result is that the environmental situation in the Baltic Sea has improved at least in some respect, confirming that the endeavours already made were not in vain. However, enormous threats still exist. Besides land-based inputs as the main source of pollution we have to be aware of increasing activities at sea. That is not only true for transportation, but also for aquaculture and for offshore activities, including pipelines and cables as well as the extraction of sand and gravel. When searching for regenerative energies offshore wind energy plants will play an important role, as is shown by wind parks which already exist. Protection measures have to be more and more incorporated into integrated marine planning and management procedures aiming at a sustainable development. By no means the work of HELCOM is going to be finalised in the near future. There is no chance to step back and take a rest. The workload remains tremendous and may even increase. The problems we still face do not only affect politicians, administration, science, industry. Fundamental improvements and fundamental changes require the involvement of all of us, of what today is called the civil society. And in particular we need the involvement of the young generation, all the more as we are aiming towards preserving the marine environment for coming generations. We have to listen very seriously to their fears, their expectations and their ideas. That is why in conjunction with this HELCOM meeting, for the first time, a Youth Forum was organised.

The idea was born during a course on marine environmental cooperation I held this winter at Hamburg University. This course was attended by students and scholars from different parts of the world. We took the Baltic Sea as an example to learn about the legal and organisational instruments for an efficient cooperation of neighbouring States. And when the idea came up to visit HELCOM to get some practical insight, this idea was further developed why not to try to meet young people from other States to exchange views about the Baltic Sea. The result was the proposal to organise a Youth Forum. Of course I have to admit that the time for preparation was very short, so the participation was not so broad as I had preferred. Not all the Baltic Sea States were present. However, there were participants from Russia, Finland, Estonia, Germany, but also from Georgia, Slovakia, Armenia, Philippines, China and Sri Lanka. For me it was a great pleasure to chair this forum.

We had very good and frank discussions. It was quite impressive that the participants within very short time identified the major problems and brought up a lot of interesting and exciting ideas which in the end resulted in a "Youth for the Baltic" Resolution. This resolution was already presented on Tuesday to the President of Finland. It is my pleasure to inform you about the results in some detail. And when you hear these proposals please bear in mind that it is the privilege of young people to express views free from any constraints whereas we - the older generation - tend to kill immediately all ideas which seem to be unrealistic and unachievable. And one further warning: Do not expect that young people during a four-hours meeting will bring up totally new solutions. I am sure that most of their ideas are well known to insiders, though not always liked by them. Nonetheless, I think it can only be beneficial for our work to learn something about the views and expectations of the young generation.

First of all the Forum discussed proposals to review and amend the Helsinki Convention with regard to specific issues. Taking into consideration the development of environmental law since 1992, especially enhanced by the Rio and Johannesburg Conferences and the Agenda 21 process, it is strongly advised to incorporate the principle of sustainable development expressly in the Convention. Future activities of HELCOM should be brought into line with this concept, thus contributing to broader and integrated management decisions in the Baltic Sea area.

As agriculture is a main source for nutrient inputs, additional measures are needed. The EU reform of the Common Agricultural Policy should be actively supported by HELCOM aiming at environmentally friendly agricultural practices. This should include organic farming, the reduction in the use of manure and of mineral fertilisers, new sustainable technologies, education of farmers and economic incentives. As sewage is another source for nutrient inputs, adequate treatment should also be obligatory for summer cottages.

To reduce the input of unknown hazardous substances HELCOM should contribute to the revision of the EU chemical policy.

The Helsinki Convention should also cover environmental impacts of fishery activities, aiming at a balance with economic interests. For aquaculture environmentally sound standards have to be developed.

The establishment of marine and coastal Baltic Sea Protected Areas should be further promoted, especially in those areas where BSPAs have not yet been designated. Legal instruments must be introduced to control, reduce or ban adverse activities.

Additional measures to continuously improve maritime safety are needed. They must include the designation of particularly sensitive sea areas, vessel traffic management systems with the support of AIS, shipping routes for tankers and other vessels carrying dangerous cargo, the establishment of places of refuge, adequate response capacities and the ratification of the bunker oil convention. Attention should also be given to harbour construction and dredging activities.

At present the Convention only regulates offshore activities concerning the exploration and exploitation of oil and gas. These provisions should be extended to cover all respective activities such as sand and gravel, the laying of cables and pipelines and wind energy.

The success of HELCOM does not depend on the elaboration of protective measures only, but in particular on their implementation and application in the Baltic Sea States. HELCOM should intensify the efforts to monitor and supervise the implementation of the Convention and the Recommendations also by evaluating national reporting with regard to gaps and deficiencies. Inspection teams should be authorized to control the implementation in third States. To ensure sufficient financial resources in particular for investments, an international Baltic Sea Environment Fund should be established, based on a system that potential polluters and users have to contribute to the fund by fees and taxes.

Not only in the light of the European enlargement process the relations with the EU should be strengthened, e. g. by mobilising EU funding for HELCOM purposes. At the same time the continuation of good partnership between all Baltic Sea States is of outstanding importance.

To raise public awareness the visibility of HELCOM must be further intensified by appropriate information and public relation activities which also include the establishment of a HELCOM eco label.

And one additional observation was made. As the Forum was also attended by some students from other parts of the world, they compared our activities with what is going on in their home regions. They concluded that HELCOM can serve as an example for environment protection in other marine areas. So HELCOM should continue to be open for the exchange of information, experience and expertise.

So much about the main results of the HELCOM Youth Forum which reflect the expectations of young people. Of course there are a lot of pros and cons, when considering these proposals. And HELCOM has considered many of them already at one occasion or the other, some of them with the conclusion that they cannot be realised, for many various reasons. But times may be changing, conditions may be changing and new ideas and incentives may come up. At least we should take these young people -, and that means: the young generation in our countries - seriously. Even if we could not meet all their expectations, we should make our decisions and constraints transparent, we should show them that we share their concern and that we are doing our best to make further progress towards our aim to protect the Baltic Sea. This also includes raising public awareness and promoting environmental education. Therefore, it seems worth while to accept one last proposal of the Youth Forum as HELCOM has already done: i. e. to continue with this form, and that means to continue the dialogue with the young generation, not only here in Helsinki, but everywhere around the Baltic Sea.

The future of HELCOM –in the hands of the Contracting Parties Mr. Lennart Gladh, WWF

"WWF expects HELCOM to show real leadership and deliver real conservation in the Baltic Sea that will not only help save the Baltic Sea and its biodiversity, but also inspire other regions and thereby help put the environment back on the international agenda."



The Baltic Sea region is one of the fastest developing areas in the world when it comes to trade and business. The co-operation in these sectors is really flourishing, creating many new possibilities but also potential threats. Economic development and social problems have effects on the environment. That is a lesson we should have learned. Functioning ecological systems and services are prerequisites for any kind of sustainable economic and social development, both in urban and rural areas.

While the trade and business sectors are very practical and action-oriented, the environmental sector seems to be mostly talk and little action, for instance when it comes to nutrient reduction.

WWF has now been active in the Baltic Sea Region and HELCOM for more than 13 years. Through its role as lead party for the "Management Programmes for Coastal Lagoons and Wetlands", WWF learned that an integrated, transparent and democratic process is needed for real environmental improvements. This is also what WWF actively has stressed in the Updating and Strengthening of the JCP as well as in the HELCOM revision process. This approach should be obvious for all actors today as the sources of pollution are more and more related to lifestyles - agriculture, transports and energy. These are all problems not yet properly addressed as they are so strongly related to very strong economic interests.

It is also obvious that multinational co-operation for protection of the Baltic Sea environment is highly needed. In principle, regional political structures such as HELCOM offer remarkable opportunities to formulate such a co-operation. Unfortunately, the member states seem at present more occupied with a fight about real or possible national positions, rather than setting up adequate policies and goals addressing needed actions. The real agenda for HELCOM is to find new ground under its feet after a review process in 98-99 and the EU enlargement revealed that the organisation has lost its role and is drifting around with an outdated structure and an unclear strategy.

For the moment WWF sees no clear governance and leadership in the Baltic Sea Region.

WWF sees the BSR as the region which, from an European perspective as well as globally, has by far the best possibilities to see a full fledged regional co-operation in this field. No other region on Earth holds such opportunities. This is almost a cry of obligation to the Baltic Sea States. WWF expects political leadership in this process. As HELCOM never can be stronger than its Contracting Parties, among them the EU, this is really in your hands.

An Ecosystem-based Approach to the Management of the Marine and Catchment Environment

WWF considers the application of the ecosystem approach, including the precautionary principle, as fundamental to achieving the sustainable use of the Baltic Sea Region and in seeking truly comprehensive and integrated governance. WWF identifies the following six points as critical for the development and implementation of an ecosystem approach:

- Setting a vision and environmental goals with measurable targets and clear timetables
- Developing an integrated marine and catchment policy
- Assessing the resource and status of the resource
- Establishing a spatial planning system
- Identifying delivery tools
- Developing a strategy for delivery

In other words, HELCOM needs a new action programme and not, as is the case now in practice, close the old action programme and dissolve the only group responsible for actions and investments.

As problems still exist to reorganise HELCOM, focus on activities and implementation of the most important recommendations to solve the well known problems, agree on binding decisions-new recommendations will not solve any problems. If needed to deal with the problems the Contracting Parties should agree on a new convention to have an effective tool to deal with the existing situation.

HELCOM, EU AND THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Within a few months, the Baltic Sea will almost be the equivalent of an internal EU sea, which means that many tools for actions are applicable in 8 out of 9 Contracting States. This means that the various directives and recommendations could be tested here to improve the environmental situation in the Baltic Sea Region. These include the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, Water Framework Directive (including the nitrate directive, habitat directive etc), the Marine Strategy and the recommendation paper on Integrated Coastal Zone Management. It also means that the Common agricultural policy, EU chemical policy and the Common fishery policy need to be revised or at least allowed to have a Baltic touch if the situation should improve. However, this will not be enough as one country - in fact the largest country in Europe-is NOT a member of the EU and obliged to fulfil EU legislation.

General policy might not be a topic for HELCOM but it is obvious that the enlarged EU will have many , not yet openly discussed long-term consequences. One of these is the relations with Russia. There seems to be no commitment to solve this problem today. In fact, not even a long-term agreement concerning visas for the people living in Kaliningrad has been reached. This leads to a situation where environmental agreements are very low on the agenda or, even worse, used for bargaining or "political blackmail"!

The first case has just been tested – designation of the Baltic Sea as a PSSA. Without a general long-term agreement between Russia and the EU, the Baltic Sea will suffer. Again, this is also a part of your responsibility as you are national delegates from the enlarged EU and from the Russian Federation.

The Baltic Sea region has been the cradle of serious nature conservation and environmental policy at least since the Stockholm Conference in 1972. The conclusion from Johannesburg is clearly that environment is in a free fall on the global agenda. Putting it back as a serious priority is the responsibility of the countries in the Baltic Sea region.

WWF expects HELCOM to show real leadership and deliver real conservation in the Baltic Sea that will not only help save the Baltic Sea and its biodiversity, but also inspire other regions and thereby help put the environment back on the international agenda. WWF is ready to play its role so let's get serious and stop pretending!

**HELCOM and Russia—Partners in caring for the environment
Ms. Irina Osokina , Deputy Minister of Natural Resources of
the Russian Federation**

"Russia recognizes the importance of the Helsinki Convention, which is the legal basis and the mechanism for resolving environmental issues, and contributes much to the provision of sustainable development of the Baltic countries."

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I consider it an honor and I am very glad to be with you at the HELCOM jubilee session to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Convention. 30 years ago the primary goal - to restore the ecological prosperity of the Baltic Sea by joint efforts of 7 countries - was posed. World history has gained the first experience of constructive cooperation of countries with different political sys-



tems on decisions of global environmental problems. We note with great respect the special role of Finland who is one of the main initiators and the leader of this environmental integration. The fact that Finland is the country - depository of the Convention and Helsinki is the place where the Secretariat is situated confirms the universal acknowledgement of its historical services. At last the Convention itself bears (not legally but approved by life) the name-Helsinki Convention.

Three decades have passed. Far from the all the posed problems have been fulfilled. It was difficult to foresee the huge geopolitical changes that have happened and are happening in Europe during the last 15 years. The course of history has been accelerated and it is necessary to reply on its new challenges.

The Helsinki Convention and its executive body the Helsinki Commission have demonstrated their absolute viability and good adaptability to changing of the geopolitical conditions. The experience gained, the model of organization and methods of its work have served as a basis for birth of many other international Conventions and Agreements. One of the best advantages of the Convention is the consensus methods of decision making, allowing to find the general points of interaction on a voluntary basis, helping to settle contradictions among the countries. The given principle is necessary as a basis of our interactions also in the future.

The necessity for implementation of the HELCOM Recommendations and its program's decisions called into being the different forms of two-sided and multisided cooperation of the Baltic Sea Region countries. The joint Russian-Finnish-Estonian project on the Gulf of Finland which aimed at reduction of eutrophication was started 10 years ago. Monitoring, analysis and assessment of the Gulf of Finland's condition, carried out in the framework of this program, gave invaluable information for elaboration of the practical decisions. The project has demonstrated its successfulness and it is planned that since 2004 the European Union will also be participating in this project.

Long-term cooperation between the Ministry of Natural Resources of the Russian Federation and the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) is on going. The Project (Systems for establishing effluent limits based on best available technology in accordance with HELCOM Recommendations for improving environmental conditions) has been carried out since 1998 and in the framework of this cooperation it was included in the list of the 10 best projects on the European program LIFE. Five pilot enterprises, which participated in the project, have already received temporal environmental permits. Thus we could note that the Helsinki Convention adopted 30 years ago, being the major international agreement in the field of environmental protection of the Baltic Sea region, contributes much to the provision of sustainable development.

Russia recognizes the importance of the Helsinki Convention, which is the legal basis and the mechanism for resolving environmental issues, and contributes much to the provision of sustainable development of the Baltic countries. It is a bright example of international cooperation, which has given impetus for the development of new forms of international cooperation in the field of environmental protection.

The executive body of the Convention, HELCOM, has been showing its high value for 30 years for all countries of the Baltic Sea region, and is far from exhausting its resources. In order to resolve all emerging problems, the Contracting Parties to the Convention develop within HELCOM special recommendations, identify priority problems of the Baltic Sea pollution, carry out monitoring and survey the changes in the background status of the marine environment. All this is necessary for the evaluation of the efficiency of measures taken and scientific developments implemented.

In our view, all HELCOM Contracting Parties should hold high responsibility not only in elaborating recommendations, but also chiefly in their implemen-

tation for sustainable development, and not for momentary benefits. I hope that the present meeting will facilitate the development of collaboration for the resolution of common environmental tasks for the Baltic Sea protection.

Russia attaches special importance to the present jubilee meeting, which takes place in the period when most of the Helsinki Convention member-states will join the European Union. This will create a new format of interaction in HELCOM, however, not changing the spirit and the letter of the Convention.

The new situation will require the enhancement of Russia's role in HELCOM and we distinctly recognize this fact. Moreover, the eastern part of the catchments basin has significant impact on the entire all Baltic Sea.

Taking into account the presented point of view, proposals from a number of HELCOM members which are related to changing of the structure and methods of Commission activities cause a preoccupation. A number of questions (mechanism, mandate, and financial consequences) have not yet clear answers.

We can note with pleasure that Russia has always been fulfilling the HELCOM Recommendations. In this respect in 2003 our country adopted the federal law "On the ban to produce and market leaded gasoline in the Russian Federation". Its enforcement has led to a significant reduction of emissions from road transport.

The new law of the Russian Federation "On environmental protection" adopted in 2002 has a new approach to setting environmental standards based on the best available technologies with account of economic and social factors that fully meets the basic principles and responsibilities of the Helsinki Convention. Russia has practically implemented the tasks of the Ministerial Declaration 1988 provided for reducing of discharges to the Baltic Sea by 50%. Discharges of heavy metals with wastewater of Saint Petersburg have been reduced steeply (Hot Spot N^o 22, JCP).

Russia gives a great attention to environmental education, enlightenment and rising of knowledge about HELCOM activities. For the 5th time Russia hosts the International Baltic Sea Day on March 22-23 in St. Petersburg attended by the representatives of the HELCOM Secretariat and the Baltic States. This Baltic Sea Day will be devoted to the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Convention.

Russia published 3 editions of the HELCOM Recommendations in Russian language. Extensive environmental education of young people has been performed, as well as a contest of children's environmental drawings and essays.

To conclude, I would like to thank Finland, who has for 30 years taken valuable initiatives. In particular we welcome the very interesting idea of Mr. Jan-Erik Enestam related to creation of a common European environmental area.

I would like to thank the European Commission for long-term cooperation in HELCOM and directly with Russia and welcome new EU related ideas on development of neighboring states' and cooperation (Neighboring Program) on the problems of transboundary transfers, forests, specially protected areas.

I express many thanks to all countries-members of the Convention, members of a big and friendly HELCOM family.

I would like to express appreciation and thanks to all Chairpersons, HELCOM Executive Secretaries and Secretariat members for their activities during the 30-year period. Their energy and enthusiasm have provided the necessary conditions for our joint effective work.

To conclude, we highly appreciate the work done by the Helsinki Commission and trust that such a body as HELCOM should exist further on and we hope that the jubilee meeting will facilitate the development of solutions how to enhance the significance of HELCOM in the Baltic Sea region. We believe that our activities will help to find perfect approaches for successful fulfilment of all priority tasks and, as was demonstrated by HELCOM more than once, to find an adequate and worthy reply on history's challenge.

The future role of HELCOM from an EC perspective Mr. Patrick Murphy, European Commission

"HELCOM has the political, legal and scientific framework to play a leading role in the protection of the Baltic."



Mr. Murphy's presentation is available as a slide show.



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