



ANNEX 10

Statement by the Executive Secretary at HELCOM 36-2015

Dear Colleagues,

2014 was the year of the 40th anniversary and the modernization of HELCOM. The jubilee celebrations were pleasant and joyful – a moment of reflection on our grand past and a look into the desirable future. It was also an opportunity to show appreciation to all involved in the common mission.

Modernization sounds less joyful, although it shouldn't be, otherwise we would not be doing the right job. The streamlining of HELCOM has now been concluded. Time will show how successful we will be – the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat in delivering what has been promised - with clearer priorities and more structured planning, a new working structure, improved work flows and more effective communication. Also, hopefully, HELCOM will not be an isolated case but all major organizations and processes in the Baltic Sea region will follow suit to secure synergies and integration.

We can already prove increased synergies, which was in the heart of HELCOM's modernization. HELCOM and OSPAR are working together on core indicators to assess the status of the marine environment and on the harmonized implementation of the BWMC. The HELCOM Monitoring Manual was prepared and published last autumn for the countries' use in their reporting under other international obligations. Next holistic assessment of the Baltic ecosystem health has been agreed to serve as "roof report" to be reported in 2018 by the HELCOM EU countries under the MSFD.

Coordinating work and assessments, yes, this has progressed well. But importantly, new measures in the region continue to be coordinated to effectively implement HELCOM acquis (the requirements of the Helsinki Convention, HELCOM Recommendations), also taking into account the requirements of the MSFD and relevant legislation in the Russian Federation. After all, taking all appropriate measures to prevent and eliminate pollution is the basic requirement of the Helsinki Convention, and it is only through concrete measures that we can improve the status of the Baltic Sea.

My last point also concerns measures, in the maritime field.

Since its beginning HELCOM has been the regional platform to discuss and agree among the riparian countries on harmonized implementation of IMO conventions and, if and when proved necessary, on additional and stricter requirements to be applied by ships operating in the sensitive area of the Baltic Sea. The discussions have not always been easy and processes fast but, nevertheless, we could say with confidence that in our region pollution from ships has been addressed adequately. The maritime field has been one of the most successful areas of cooperation in HELCOM.

Also last year a lot of efforts were invested in working out solutions for green shipping and regarding ballast water, sewage from passenger ships, emissions of pollutants and use of alternative fuels. There is both a willingness among the administrations and a clear need for such solutions. Shipping industry and other stakeholders are actively engaged. One could say we have all it takes to propose and then agree on workable solutions on these important issues, for the benefit of the Baltic marine environment.

Yet, the agreements that are needed to conclude the processes on time have recently proved to be difficult to make. We are running a risk and are very close to a situation, when it will no longer be possible to state that shipping is the most environmentally friendly mode of transport, at least not in the Baltic, as the controls over land-based pollution sources tighten. This would not be good for the region, for the marine environment or the industry itself.

I realize the difficulties and challenges, the issue of competences and legal complexity, varying expert or scientific opinions, economic concerns. But it is possible for us to overcome these, with phased-in implementation schemes, suitable timetables, and appropriate legal and other solutions, as long as political will is there.

After the jubilee year the streamlined HELCOM is ready to face any future challenges. HELCOM's strength is cooperation, which is based on trust and equality between the Contracting Parties. Let's build on the successful past and ensure that HELCOM delivers also in the future.