

**Statement by the Executive Secretary of HELCOM, Ms. Monika Stankiewicz,
at HELCOM 33/2012**

I'm today to give my account to you on the activities of the Commission in 2011. With my recent appointment as the Executive Secretary, following a five-year long assignment as HELCOM MARITIME and RESPONSE Professional Secretary, my perspective to HELCOM activities has naturally changed. But one thing is certain – HELCOM has continued to grow strong during this year and a great deal of work has been done.

The strength of the HELCOM position in environmental policy making comes from its forward thinking approach to the changes in marine and maritime governance. Our Baltic Sea Action Plan is such a forward-looking programme and long-term policy. It is based on an ecosystem approach, which is central also to global and European policies addressing marine environment, it is setting the goal - a good environmental status of the marine environment by 2021, and the means to achieve it – measures and actions, as well as tools to assess the progress. The Action Plan foresees adaptation of policies and measures, which might be needed due to the new scientific information, knowledge of effects of actions taken and other factors such as climate change.

While the foundation of the HELCOM work is the Baltic Sea Action Plan and its follow up, Ministerial decisions and HELCOM Recommendations, operationalized through National Implementation Programmes, at the same time, it is also essential to look to the needs stemming from other international requirements and continuously ensure linkages to European and global developments.

From this perspective, the year 2011 has been marked with intensified efforts to ensure synergies with other on-going processes, with milestones making the Baltic Sea again a forerunner as to the application of ambitious environmental standards, and with substantial progress to put in place a system to measure the success of the Action Plan.

Allow me to highlight a few examples.

In 2011 HELCOM has fully embarked on its coordinating role as a regional platform for implementation of the ecosystem approach, starting with determination and assessment of the good environmental status according to the Baltic Sea Action Plan and for those HELCOM countries being EU countries, also according to the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

The world is not standing still. For HELCOM to remain and feel strong in a driving seat of a process to obtain a healthy Baltic Sea, HELCOM needs to evolve and promptly respond to the needs upcoming in the future and closely linked to the cycles of adaptive management, that the Contracting Parties agreed on in 2007 and 2010. The expression of such a need is the proposal to this meeting for a new group to focus on coordinated implementation of the ecosystem.

The strong national commitments allow us to reach beyond our own policies and address global regulations. HELCOM, with recent designation by the International Maritime Organization of the Baltic Sea as a special area for sewage discharges from passenger ships, has proved once more that it is possible to implement ambitious measures. And with the progress in the Fisheries and Environmental Forum, Agriculture and Environmental Forum as well as joint HELCOM-VASAB Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning, possibilities are open for addressing also sectoral policies, so ecosystem approach is to a larger extent incorporated into these policies. Regarding the Fisheries and Environmental Forum an important project BALTFIMPA has just been launched, and more precisely its inception phase, which will also be the ground for pooling expertise of two organizations HELCOM and ICES, in addition to other stakeholders, for better advice on sustainable fisheries and improved management of the Baltic Sea Protected Areas.

Lastly, 2011 is the year when intensive work has started and continued regarding putting in place a system to measure the success of the Baltic Sea Action Plan. A new group on follow-up of national progress towards reaching BSAP nutrient reduction targets, the LOAD Group, has made enormous progress towards the review of maximum allowable nutrient inputs and update of country-wise nutrient reduction targets, based on new knowledge, better data and enhanced modelling tools. This work is supported by many experts and important projects such as CORESET and TARGREV projects.

These and other HELCOM processes, guided by the Swedish Chairmanship of HELCOM will capitalize when the Ministers meet in 2013 under the upcoming Danish Chairmanship, to provide a good ground for further efforts to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea.

Witnessing hard work and dedication of all the colleagues in the Secretariat make me convinced that also from the Secretariat side the team work and good contribution will continue, also in the course of the preparations for the ministerial meeting.

Thank you.