

## **Alan Haynie, ICES General Secretary, HELCOM 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Keynote**

25 April 2024

Good afternoon, your excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, friends. It is a great honor to join you today at this great time of celebration. Thank you very much for the opportunity to share a few thoughts on our current challenges and opportunities.

The International Council for the Exploration of the Sea is a Copenhagen-based intergovernmental marine science organization, meeting societal needs for impartial evidence on the state and sustainable use of our seas and oceans. Since our creation in 1902, ICES has helped bring together scientists to address the challenges of the Baltic, the Atlantic, and beyond. We partner with HELCOM in a variety of activities.

More than 6000 scientists from our twenty member countries and many others are involved in our activities. Our system of scientific cooperation means that we can draw on great marine scientists from around the world to help address the challenges of the Baltic. ICES has long provided advice on fishing opportunities including 19 annually in the Baltic. Fishing is no longer the only pressure on stock status considered and our assessments require information on a changing ecosystem. Our partnership with HELCOM is of growing importance.

Today is about dreams. We celebrate and reflect on the dreams of the past and we dream of how we can archive greater success in the future.

In this spirit, I want to appeal to the everyday heroism of HELCOM and ICES to address the challenges of the Baltic.

What I see is that we have the right people, tools, and institutions to solve our problems.

Our challenge is putting all the pieces together in an ongoing manner. How do we do this?

**First, we need to fully appreciate the heroic nature of our common purpose.**

We don't usually think of managing data, doing science or being a bureaucrat as heroic roles, but they are. Together, the combination of data, science, and effective management is the basis for successfully addressing our challenges.

Over the past 10 years, HELCOM together with ICES have developed a system called the HELCOM Eutrophication Assessment Tool (HEAT). This system has served as a template for developing similar assessment products that are linked to hazardous substance databases also held in ICES data centre. Actions like this help form the scientific foundation that we need.

There is great potential for HELCOM and ICES experts to work together to move us forward during the next 50 years to reach favourable status for the key commercial fish stocks. This success will maintain the culturally important Baltic fisheries and related activities that provide income and livelihoods for numerous coastal communities.

Our challenge – sustainably using and preserving the Baltic marine environment - is as important as any work in the world. In a broader sense, working across nations to find science-based management solutions for our world is THE central challenge of our time.

50 years ago, HELCOM was a bold idea and we again re-commit to its ambitions today.

**There is also great heroism in Cooperation and collective action. We are making progress, but there is more work ahead.**

Across the Baltic and our nations, across disciplines and our personal histories, the collaboration between HELCOM, ICES and all of you enables us to break barriers to tackle the hardest problems of our age.

Part of this challenge is supporting the Heroes in all of us. Promoting gender equality and all forms of diversity is a central need of our community. We do this not only because it is right, but because it makes us stronger. This doesn't mean that all the change we want will happen overnight but at ICES, implementing our Gender Equality Plan is helping make ICES a more diverse and inclusive organization.

At the same time, our ICES Stakeholder Engagement Strategy is broadening the ICES community to bring the right people to the table to provide the knowledge needed to inform the complex trade-offs that we face.

Today both HELCOM and ICES are striving to support early career scientists. In ICES, our strategic initiative on the integration of early career scientists is thriving. We more senior scientists started the effort but the early career scientists have taken charge of all aspects of the initiative and it is revitalizing ICES.

Becoming more inclusive in all ways will make us better able to attract great minds to help meet our challenges, but these efforts need our ongoing support and commitment.

Another challenge that we face is the reality that we need broader and more effective engagement across disciplines in both science and advice. The challenges that we face are fundamentally multi-disciplinary and involve both social and natural sciences. Fortunately, both ICES and HELCOM have interdisciplinarity in our organizational DNA.

Our joint ICES/HELCOM Working Group on Integrated Assessments of the Baltic Sea plays a pivotal role in delivering evidence for the Baltic Sea ecoregion Ecosystem Overview. Social science is entering ICES advice through many avenues.

Another area where we need to improve our collaboration is in connecting scientists with managers, both informally and formally. As we work to develop new approaches to interdisciplinary science and advice, we need to have repeated interactions between policy makers and scientists to help focus scientific work on the right questions. This will also help policy makers better understand the limitations and uncertainty of science and enable scientists to better present their research in a useful and understandable manner.

If you are a policy maker, I encourage you today and when you are home to communicate with the scientists who you think are the most interesting people around. Vice versa if you are a scientist. Ask questions and listen. This sounds straightforward, but doing this consistently is transformative.

**Finally, we need to convert our words into results.**

Diligence and urgency are both called for. Built on a common vision – that our challenges require teamwork and collaboration – we must go forward with a mixture of flexibility and determination.

Being flexible requires us to be vulnerable as leaders. We are innovating a new path and we need to recognize that we will have to continue to revise how we work. Acknowledging our mistakes and making corrections is essential.

Our biggest danger is not that we will be too bold, it is that we will be too timid.

We have all been entrusted by our countries, our citizens, and our children to address the challenges of the Baltic.

We are at a pivotal moment where the challenges we face make it clear that business as usual is not an option. Climate change, the biodiversity crisis, the new goals that we have of using the ocean to generate renewable energy, all provide us with a choice. We can use science well, but we need to support and build our scientific capacity now to coordinate this work effectively over the coming decades.

While I anticipate the next 50 years of HELCOM accomplishments, I have a strong sense of opportunity and urgency. Our time is now. Let us draw upon one other with vision and humility, and leave a Baltic for our children that is better than the one we find today.

To the HELCOM Secretariat, community, and family, the ICES Secretariat, network, and family extend our heartfelt congratulations. Our biggest challenges and successes lie before us and we are excited to work as partners now and in the decades that come.

Thank you.