

**REPORT OF THE SECOND HELCOM / BSRP THEMATIC WORKSHOP ON THE RISKS RELATED TO THE BALLAST WATER MEDIATED INTRODUCTIONS OF NON-INDIGENOUS SPECIES IN THE BALTIC SEA**

Helsinki, Finland, 19-21 April 2006

**1. Introduction**

1. The Second HELCOM/BSRP Thematic Workshop “Risks related to the ballast water mediated introductions of non-indigenous species in the Baltic Sea” was arranged by the Secretariat of the Helsinki Commission, in cooperation with the Baltic Sea Regional Project (BSRP) Lead Laboratory on Alien Species, in Helsinki, Finland, at the premises of the HELCOM Secretariat on 19-21 April 2006. The Workshop was based on the decisions of the BSRP/HELCOM/COLAR Workshop “Ballast Water Introductions of Alien Species into the Baltic Sea” (Palanga, Lithuania, 20-24 February 2005).

**2. Participants of the Workshop**

2. The Workshop was attended by participants from all Contracting States to HELCOM, representing scientific community and governmental institutions and administrations. Mr. Sergej Olenin, the Baltic Sea Regional Project (BSRP), acted as Chairman of the Meeting. Mr. Tadas Navickas and Mr. Juha-Markku Leppänen, Professional Secretaries of HELCOM, acted as Secretaries of the Meeting. The List of Participants is contained in **Annex 1**.

**3. Aims of the Workshop**

3. The Meeting agreed that the Workshop was arranged to
- consider the outcome of the HELCOM risk assessment project and
  - develop proposals for further concrete HELCOM actions to reduce the risks related to the ballast water mediated introductions of non-indigenous species in the Baltic.
4. The Meeting took note of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan including the system of vision, strategic goals, and ecological objectives, also referring to environmentally friendly maritime activities and introduction of alien species (Presentation 1).

**4. Agenda of the Workshop**

5. The Meeting adopted the Agenda of the Workshop as contained in **Annex 2**.

**5. IMO Ballast Water Convention**

6. The Meeting took note of the summary of the IMO International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water and Sediments (BWC) by Mr. Stephan Gollasch, Germany.
7. The Meeting emphasised the importance of ratification of the BWC by the Contracting States.
8. The Meeting noted that at present six countries with less than 1 % of the gross tonnage of the world have ratified the BWC and that none of the HELCOM Contracting States have ratified the Convention so far, although the process has started in several countries. Estonia informed the Meeting that she is in a process of ratifying the Convention.
9. The Meeting expressed that it is difficult to ratify the Convention as long as all the guidelines have not been adopted. A number of questions regarding how the Convention can

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be implemented are still unclear, i.e. exemptions from ballast water exchange (BWE), designation of BWE zones in the Baltic/in European coastal waters.

10. The Meeting took note of that some of the Baltic Sea riparian countries are currently carrying out research projects related to ratification of the Ballast Water Convention and invited the countries to share the outcomes of such studies within HELCOM, especially HELCOM MARITIME, HELCOM MONAS and HELCOM HABITAT.

11. The Meeting noted the Swedish concern regarding “non compliance” with the BWC in case no ballast water exchange can be carried out in accordance with IMO criteria (Presentation 2). The Meeting recalled that most of the shipping coming to the Baltic Sea area has very limited possibilities to carry out the ballast water exchange in accordance with the BWC but some experts expressed their opinion that this should not be seen as violation of the provision of the BWC and prevent the HELCOM Contracting Parties from ratifying it.

## **6. Outcome of the HELCOM risk assessment project**

12. The Meeting acknowledged the outcome of the HELCOM risk assessment project (Risk Assessment of Ballast Water Mediated Species Introductions – a Baltic Sea Approach by Mr. Erkki Leppäkoski and Mr. Stephan Gollasch and Presentation 3) and recommended its publication on the HELCOM website.

13. The Meeting considered the recommendations in the aforementioned project outcome and noted that they are well covered by the BWC, and its implementation should be the first priority for the Contracting Parties.

14. Taking into account the situation that the ballast water exchange (which will be one of the main risk management options until 2009-2016) is limited option for the most of the Baltic shipping the Meeting agreed on the following recommendations based on the aforementioned risk assessment:

- for ships in oceanic voyages, ballast water should be exchanged;
- ships in intra-European service should undertake exchange of ballast water whenever possible (OSPAR to be contacted for consultations on possibilities to designate ballast water exchange zones in the North Sea).

15. The Meeting had various opinions concerning the use of ballast water exchange for intra-Baltic traffic and designation of ballast water exchange zones but emphasised that there might be a need for ballast water exchange in the Baltic Sea for ships which are plied between two freshwater ports separated by brackish waters and situated in different sub-areas (e.g. from the northeastern to the southwestern Baltic). However, this option needs further careful consideration and proper scientific justification as many of the freshwater species can tolerate salinities up to 5-6 psu.

16. The Meeting requested HELCOM HABITAT 8/2006 to consider the following recommendation: “Intra-Baltic traffic should use ballast water exchange only when risk is high provided that a ballast water exchange zone is designated”, especially concerning definition of “high risk” and designation of a ballast water exchange zone. The Meeting emphasised that further investigation should be done concerning suitable ballast water exchange zones in the Baltic Sea, preferably in co-operation with OSPAR.

17. The Meeting discussed the issue of port reception facilities as one of the possible options for ballast water management according to the BWC and had the view that it could be considered in case no other management options are available.

18. The Meeting was in favour of developing a ballast water management decision support system (Presentation 4) and was of the opinion that it would be useful also after the interim period until 2016 when according to the BWC all ships should be equipped with ballast water treatment system on board. The Meeting emphasised that a decision support system should be simple enough in order to be easily operational. Furthermore, it was agreed that the first focus should be on creation of a Baltic Sea regional system which is

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made open enough to be compatible with other systems. The Meeting emphasised that such a system could be developed as a targeted project with the anticipated Phase II of the BSRP.

19. The Meeting emphasised the usefulness of the risk assessments based on environmental match, and was of the opinion that:

- research and information for species specific risk assessments is needed;
- there is a need to continue biological port baseline surveys and this information should be made effectively available to HELCOM.

20. The Meeting recalled that in most cases ballast water related information, needed for risk assessments (e.g. origin and volume of the ballast water to be discharged, the duration the ballast water was kept onboard, was a ballast water exchange carried out en-route prior entering the Baltic Sea, etc.), is missing and that such information could be efficiently collected using the IMO ballast water reporting forms.

21. The Meeting was of the opinion that HELCOM COMBINE and the EU WFD monitoring provide some information needed for fulfilling the obligations of the BWC. However, it was pointed out that these programmes are not specifically designed to collect samples in port areas, detect species occurring in low numbers or exceptional events. (Presentation 5); also data especially on littoral and hard bottom communities is largely lacking.

22. The Meeting noted that biological community data submitted to the HELCOM database hosted by ICES is open to be used in invasive species information systems. However, the Meeting expressed its concern about the slow and incomplete reporting of biological community data especially from the coastal areas making its use difficult.

23. The Meeting invited the BSRP Lead Laboratory on Alien Species to provide HELCOM MONAS with a concrete proposal on principles on alien species monitoring and a proposal for a HELCOM project to prepare guidelines for methods to carry out port surveys as well as how to improve the COMBINE monitoring to cover better the monitoring of invasive species. The Meeting welcomed the offer of the BSRP LL on Biodiversity to co-operate on the issue.

## **7. Other business**

24. The Meeting appreciated the information on a risk assessment case study carried out in the Gulf of Finland by Russia including also the role of “northern invasion corridor” linking the Baltic Sea and the Ponto-Caspian region (Presentation 6) as well as information on the Finnish port baseline surveys and studies on ballast water (Presentation 7) and presentation on potential invaders to the Baltic Sea from seas and lakes (Presentation 8).

25. The Meeting emphasised that introductions of non-indigenous species occur also via other vectors than ships’ ballast water, e.g. ship hull fouling, aquaculture, inland water ways, and these vectors also should be considered in the future.

26. The Meeting emphasised that the highest risks of future species introductions exist in case ballast water donor and recipient regions show environmental match (e.g. salinity and temperature regimes). The Ponto-Caspian region (i.e. Caspian, Black and Azov Seas) might be one of the most risky donor areas for the alien species invasions to the Baltic. Therefore, it might be beneficial to establish co-operation on biological invasions between HELCOM and the Caspian Sea Environmental Programme and the Black Sea Commission.

27. The Meeting also took note of the Polish assessment of problems connected with the issue of ballast water in the port of Gdańsk (Presentation 9) and meiofauna in ballast water tank sediment (Presentation 10).

28. The Meeting took note of the Latvian project “Distribution and identification of invasive species in the northeast Baltic Sea ports” (Presentation 11).

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## 8. Further work

29. The Meeting was of the opinion that a road map towards ratification and harmonised implementation of the IMO Ballast Water Convention in the Baltic Sea should be carried out and its implementation should be included into the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan.

30. The Meeting recommended the following concrete actions to be undertaken to facilitate the harmonised implementation of the BWC in the Baltic Sea:

- carry out cost-benefit analysis on implementing the BWC;
- develop a regional ballast water management decision support system;
- develop a comprehensive regional information system on ballast water and invasive species (it could be part of the aforementioned system);
- have the Gulf of Finland as a demonstration site on ballast water management in the Baltic Sea region;
- carry out an international project on risk assessment of species introductions from the Ponto-Caspian area via European inland waterways;
- establish a HELCOM expert network on invasive species based primarily on the national focal points on invasive species. The BSRP LL on Alien Species will develop Terms of Reference for this network for further consideration and approval by HELCOM;
- national institutions involved in biodiversity research in the Baltic Sea, but not submitting data to HELCOM databases, to provide the appropriate information to national focal points to be forwarded to HELCOM. The Meeting invited HELCOM HABITAT 8/2006 to consider this recommendation.

31. The Meeting agreed that the outcome of this workshop should be used as an input to the planning of the anticipated Phase II of the BSRP and the GloBallast Partnership project.

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## **AGENDA**

### **IMO Ballast Water Convention**

- IMO BW Convention: legal and institutional challenges for the Baltic
- Harmonized implementation in the Baltic Sea area

### **Outcome of the HELCOM risk assessment project**

- Findings of the HELCOM risk assessment project:
  - major risks and risk management options
  - ratification/implementation of the Ballast Water Convention vs. regional (Baltic) risk management initiatives
- Needs for further risk assessments
- Monitoring of alien species
- Development of the Baltic ballast water/alien species information and decision support system
- Other findings of the project

### **Further work**

- Further action within BSRP Phase II and HELCOM
- Risks related to Ponto-Caspian region
- Ballast water in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan
- Internal BSRP issues

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## LIST OF PRESENTATIONS

1. Ballast water in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan  
Tadas Navickas
2. IMO Ballast Water Convention – Legal and Institutional Challenges  
Anna Petersson
3. Risk Assessment of Ballast Water Mediated Species Introductions – a Baltic Sea Approach  
Erkki Leppäkoski and Stephan Gollasch
4. Further development of the Information System on Alien Species in the Baltic Sea  
Sergej Olenin
5. Monitoring of alien species in the Baltic Sea  
Juha-Markku Leppänen
6. Risk assessment of non-indigenous species in the Baltic Sea area: the eastern Gulf of Finland case study  
Vadim E. Panov
7. Practical considerations for monitoring of NIS in port areas and ballast water  
Ari O. Laine, Sari Pertola, Marjo Paavola and Erkki Leppäkoski
8. Potential invaders to the Baltic Sea from seas and lakes - remnants of Paratethys. Their salinity tolerance and osmoregulation capacities.  
N.V. Aladin, I.S. Plotnikov, Yu.S. Chuikov, N.A. Lemesko and M.B. Dianov
9. Assessment of Problems Connected with the Issue of Ballast Water in the Port of Gdańsk  
Marta Dudek-Walk, Helena Modrzejewska, Danuta Rybicka and Radosław Opióła
10. Meiofauna in ballast water tank sediment  
Piotr Gruszka, Teresa Radziejewska and Joanna Rokicka-Praxmajer
11. Distribution and identification of invasive species in the northeast Baltic Sea ports  
Solvita Strake

The presentations are available on HELCOM DPS in the folder “Monitoring and Assessment Group (MONAS)”, sub-folder “HELCOM-BSRP Workshop, 2006”.