

## **HELCOM and VASAB to launch a Joint Working Group on MSP**

HELCOM and VASAB on 21 October launched a Joint Working Group on maritime spatial planning (HELCOM-VASAB MSP WG) to further long-term sustainable management and planning for the whole Baltic Sea. The two-day Meeting is expected to discuss the tasks and the draft Working Plan of the Group.

“HELCOM decided to set up this Group at the Ministerial Meeting in Moscow on 20 May 2010,” says Anne Christine Brusendorff, HELCOM’s Executive Secretary. “It was agreed that Maritime Spatial Planning, using as a basis the ecosystem approach, should be developed for the different Baltic Sea areas in close transboundary cooperation with the aim of having long-term sustainable management and planning for the whole Baltic Sea.”

“VASAB already for a long time had been advocating to use maritime spatial planning as a tool to harmonize different maritime activities,” says Talis Linkaits, Head of the VASAB Secretariat. “The VASAB Vilnius Declaration underlines that the Baltic Sea environment and the sustainable use of the sea resources needs to be supported through an integrated land and sea space planning and management. This is a common responsibility and should be shared by all countries in the Baltic Sea Region and relevant national sectoral policies.”

The establishment of a joint, co-chaired HELCOM-VASAB Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning will also enable coordination and integration of the Maritime Spatial Planning related actions and projects implemented within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and its Action Plan so that these reflect and address the goals and targets of the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and VASAB’s Long-Term Perspective for the Baltic Sea Region.

The joint HELCOM-VASAB Working Group will prepare for adoption by HELCOM and VASAB in 2010, a set of joint HELCOM-VASAB broad-scale transboundary Maritime Spatial Planning principles. HELCOM is to test, apply and evaluate the use of these joint principles when developing national Maritime Spatial Planning initiatives, as well as regionally.

The VASAB Vilnius Declaration states that a common Baltic approach for Maritime Spatial Planning should be discussed and tools and methods of such planning developed. Enhanced co-operation is necessary in the field of capacity building actions to ensure exchange of experience, to promote education and to increase competence in Maritime Spatial Planning.

The First Meeting of the Joint HELCOM-VASAB Working Group on Maritime Spatial Planning was held at the premises of the HELCOM Secretariat. The Meeting was jointly chaired by the Working Group Co-chairs Ms. Anita Mäkinen, Finland, and Mr. Andrzej Cieslak, Poland.

The Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, usually referred to as the Helsinki Commission, or HELCOM, is an intergovernmental organization of all the

nine Baltic Sea countries and the EU which works to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution.

HELCOM is the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area," known as the Helsinki Convention.

Visions and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB) is an intergovernmental forum for co-operation of ministers responsible for spatial planning and development of Belarus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation and Sweden.

Mr. Nikolay Vlasov  
Information Secretary  
HELCOM

Tel: +358 (0)46 8509196

Fax: +358 (0)207 412 639

E-mail: [nikolay.vlasov@helcom.fi](mailto:nikolay.vlasov@helcom.fi)