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Mr. Co-Chairman

1. It's a great honour and privilege for me to present in this discussion panel the most recent work of the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission – also known as HELCOM - as regards safety of navigation and thus, measures to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea area.

2. Please allow me to first give you a brief outline of the two things that need to be taken into account when assessing the risk for maritime incidents in the Baltic, namely:

- The sensitivity of the sea area; and
- The character of the traffic, including the number of ships and the type and amount of cargo transported.

3. Let me first say a few things about the Baltic Sea area:

- Around 85 million people live in the catchment area of the Baltic Sea – an area which is four times the size of the sea itself.
- It is a brackish sea, due to the run-off from more than 200 rivers. This pushes many species to the edge of their living conditions and is also the reason for the comparatively low variety of species - only a tenth compared to the oceans.
- During winter times main parts of the sea area may be ice covered. Apart from the summer months the water temperature is between 0-10 degrees.
- The narrow Danish Straits only allow for a total exchange of the waters of the Baltic Sea every thirty years. This together with the low water temperature means that whatever substance is released into the sea will impact the sea area for a long time.

4. Let me also say a few words about shipping in general and oil handling specifically in the Baltic Sea area.

Around 2000 ships are en route on an average day; some 200 of which are oil tankers or product tankers.

A doubling in the transport of goods at sea has been estimated by 2017. Looking at different sectors, general cargo and container traffic is expected to

triple and oil transportation is thought to increase by 40%. Expansion of existing as well as new oil terminals in the Gulf of Finland and the still increasing economic growth in the Eastern Baltic countries may lead to further increases.

5. The Baltic Sea States quite early realized that something multilateral had to be done about the deteriorating situation of the Baltic Sea area. The basis for this is the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, from 1974 and revised in 1992, as well as Recommendations adopted unanimously by the nine countries bordering on the Baltic Sea area and the European Community.

6. The work carried out within the framework of HELCOM has two aims

- To protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution; and
- To restore the ecosystem of the Baltic Sea and preserve its balance.

7. The work to reduce the environmental risks associated with the heavy traffic in the Baltic Sea area is mainly concentrated around:

- Elimination of illegal discharges;
- Improved safety of navigation to reduce the risk for accidents; and
- Adequate ability to respond to an accident.

This work is carried out on the basis of inventories on transport volumes and risk assessments.

8. The quite heavy sea traffic in the Baltic Sea, coupled with narrow straits and shallow waters leading to traffic junctions, each year causes a number of incidents. Most of these do not lead to any outflows. But over the years there has been quite a number resulting in an oil discharge, and also a few with discharges of other harmful substances - the latest one being in March 2001 the collision between a bulk carrier and a tanker, resulting in the biggest outflow of heavy fuel oil in 20 years in the Baltic Sea area.

9. Following this collision the Helsinki Commission - at the request of the Danish Government - arranged an extraordinary ministerial meeting on 10 September 2001 in Copenhagen (HELCOM EXTRA meeting).

10. At the HELCOM EXTRA meeting – the nine Contracting States – being represented by both their ministers responsible for the environment and for maritime transportation – and a representative of the European Community adopted a package of measures to improve the safety of navigation and emergency capacity in the Baltic Sea area.

11. The Ministers and EC representative not only showed their political will and good intentions by adopting a declaration (HELCOM Copenhagen Declaration) – but also showed their acceptance of the legally binding character of the decided measures by amending the Helsinki Convention accordingly. These amendments entered into force 1 December 2002.

12. A three-stage implementation of the decided measures has taken place - ranging from:

- Joint initiatives of the Baltic Sea States within the International Maritime Organization and the 1982 Paris Memorandum of Understanding;
- Implementation by the Baltic Sea States of regulations within the International Maritime Organization and International Hydrographic Organization, where possible with the strictest demands; and
- Initiation of regional actions, to make use of the possibility of HELCOM to act quicker than what is possible in the International Maritime Organization.

13. Let me briefly outline the measures decided on by HELCOM – the majority of which have now been implemented.

14. Several routeing measures have been adopted in IMO – through joint submissions - covering the most densely trafficked areas, including amendments to existing and adoption of new traffic separation and deep-water routes as well as other routeing means.

15. The enhanced use of pilots in acknowledged high-risk areas; namely the Danish Straits and the Sound; has been obtained. A joint submission by the Baltic Sea States to IMO has resulted in the extension of the coverage of ships, which according to two IMO Resolutions are recommended to make use of the local pilotage schemes when navigating through these areas.

16. At the same time the Baltic Sea States have established – within the framework of HELCOM – a system to enhance the compliance with the two IMO Resolutions. This is done through information to ships about the need to use pilots as well as the monitoring of how this in practise is followed.

17. A decision was taken to carry out regular hydrographic surveys – to ensure up-to-date information on water-depths – and thereby to avoid the by far most frequent type of accidents; that is groundings. The political commitment, which was also reflected in a corresponding amendment of the Helsinki Convention, led to the adoption in the Baltic Hydrographic Commission of a Joint Re-survey Plan – which has been initiated by the beginning of 2003.

18. The production and use of Electronic Navigational Charts (ENC) – ensuring that up-to-date nautical charts are available for the intended voyage – and making it possible to make use of Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS), whereby a ship is able to display in real time its own position – was also decided. Accordingly, major shipping routes and ports are covered by Electronic Navigational Charts as of the end of 2002 and secondary ones will be covered by the end of 2004.

19. A joint initiative by the Baltic Sea States within the 1982 Paris Memorandum of Understanding has ensured that as a matter of priority Port State Control Officers will intensify the control of paper charts on ships posing a risk to the marine environment.

20. A Common Baltic AIS monitoring system, which shall be operational by 1 July 2005, is under establishment. This system will enable not only regular monitoring of maritime traffic but also the elaboration of statistics on the nature and extent of shipping as well as the amount of cargo being transported in the Baltic Sea area. This will be used for assessing trends in

the maritime traffic and as a basis for risk analyses. Denmark and Germany have already set up a 24-hour AIS monitoring for the Kadetrenden – a heavily trafficked area in the south-western part of the Baltic.

21. The Baltic Sea States also decided to strengthen the compliance with maritime safety regulations:

- By providing electronic guidance and information for safe navigation; and
- By establishing common procedures for investigations into accidents to promote safety and environmentally conscious practices – having due regard to that around 80% of all accidents at sea are due to human failure.

22. A decision by the Baltic Sea States to refrain from making use of any exemption and relaxation provisions will ensure that single-hull oil tankers will be phased-out at the earliest date possible under the IMO regime.

23. Several of the measures decided on concern a more active involvement of the maritime industry – shippers as well as recipients – in ensuring quality shipping in the Baltic. This is to be obtained through the development of administrative agreements to ensure:

- The carriage of orimulsion in double-hull oil tankers;
- That ships posing a risk to the marine environment are only chartered if they carry ECDIS; and
- That only safe tankers are chartered, by requesting the maritime industry to make use of the information in the EQUASIS database.

24. A HELCOM Ministerial Meeting taking place three weeks from now – will also, as one of the issues on the agenda, consider the environmental impacts of shipping. And let me just mention that one of the issues to be decided on by the Ministers is the possible designation of the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area.

25. Acknowledging the close relations between the Baltic Sea area and the North-East Atlantic and the possible repercussions that decisions taken within one area can have on the other area a joint HELCOM / OSPAR Ministerial Meeting - subsequent to the HELCOM Ministerial Meeting - will also deal with the environmental impacts of shipping.

26. I would like to stress that the Baltic Sea States have been very efficient and successful in their implementation of the HELCOM Copenhagen Declaration and the corresponding amendments to the Helsinki Convention.

This has shown the added value of regional efforts for ensuring safe navigation – something which is especially true when countries are willing to undertake more efforts.

Thank you.

For more information, please visit the HELCOM web-site: <http://www.helcom.fi>