

### **June 3, 2003 – Plenary Session III**

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Your Holiness, Eminences, Excellencies, and dear Participants.

I am not an official HELCOM person. I am just representing HELCOM by chance because Kaj Forsius, the professional representative of HELCOM, could not be here. I have a rather long experience with HELCOM, taking part on a basic level of producing results and taking part in assessing results and quality-assurance activities and other activities. I also was vice chairman of environmental committee of HELCOM for several years, so I think I have some experience as far as HELCOM issues. A paper by Kaj Forsius is entitled “Latest Trends of the State of the Baltic Marine Environment”. I am not going to read this paper because I think it will be very boring to you, although the paper is interesting. I have no audio-visual material to show you. So I think there is no need to repeat quite a lot of information which was given to you yesterday in a very fine way. So I will only pick up some parts of this paper, and if you allow me I will take the liberty to make a few comments from myself about these issues.

Kaj Forsius, again, reminds us what is HELCOM? This is the governing body of the Convention of the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, better known as the Helsinki Convention, or Headquarters of Executive Body of Helsinki Convention, which is usually called HELCOM. Then he goes on to different environmental issues which were presented yesterday; that means eutrophication, over-fishing, contamination and alien species. There are some other issues here, I would say, of rather more local importance. As far as eutrophication, he says that due to HELCOM activities, a lot of success is noticed as far as reduction of emissions of nitrogen and phosphorous to the Baltic Sea. It is approximately 30-50 percent reduction of nitrogen and phosphorous we've noticed in recent years. Nevertheless, there is no visible, positive effect on eutrophication, and I think that has a lot to do with the dynamics of nutrients at sea. Because even if you reduce a lot the nutrients which were already supplied to the water body, they are still in movement, they are still circulating; let us say that shallow water bodies, like lagoons or coastal waters, the organic material which is produced either as a phytoplankton or filamentous algae, they are then decaying later in summertime and then they are mineralized, then the nitrogen or the phosphorous comes back to the system and next year we have the same phenomenon. That means water bloom and excessive plant growth, particularly those which are opportunistic on the coast. So it is very difficult issue and I think it is not here in this paper—it is not here in this paper but it is my opinion—it is very difficult to manage eutrophication, or if it is possible to manage at all, but that scientists should answer this.

As far as the next problem, over fishing, I think it was covered very well yesterday, but he also raises the matter of by-catches. I have to say for myself from also experience in the ice activities, we virtually don't know in the Baltic sea what are the by-catches, what are the non-targeted fish species, how big biomass is. We don't know how many birds and seals and other mammals are dying in nets. Even we have no rough estimation on that. And I think this issue should be raised up, and something

should be done within so-called ecosystem-based approach to management. We have to know what is the effect to fishery. Also, not only as an effect on target species, commercial species, but also those non-commercial species which are non-market value, but the value for the environment, for the ecosystem.

As far as contamination, there are some successes in reducing of mainly chlorinated hydrocarbons. In the 70s there was a ban on some chlorinated hydrocarbons like DDT, PCB, HCH and a few years after that we observed a decline of concentration of these compounds in the water and in marine organisms, and also a recovery of some bird communities, as well as a recovery of seals, which was estimated earlier connected to the decline of seal stocks connected to the contamination. It is a rather success story, but nevertheless new contaminants are coming, and now it is a big issue about dioxins, and dioxin level in commercial fish and fish which enter the market is too high, and really exceeding the European Union food safety values. And we might face the situation that already can be put some regulations or even stopped fishing of cod, and if there will be a ban on herring and sprat and some other fat fish like salmon, we might face the situation that the Baltic fisheries almost close. But that is again my private opinion, but I see there are a number of colleagues from the Baltic countries and they may correct this. But it is a really the situation with dioxins which is very worrying. And also he raises a question of a TBT presence, which I think should be banned and soon will be banned under IMOL and recommendation and special convention. The use of organo metallic, in this case teen and organic part bottle compounds for protection from... It is a local problem close to some ports or to some sport ports.

Then there is an issue on chemical weapons. I think I will not go deeper into this issue. There is professor Paka with us who studied this question in the Bornholm Deep.

Then there is the issue on habitat and bio-diversity at risk. You know biodiversity is effected by pollution, by eutrophication, by contamination, by over-exploitation of fish, and also by fragmentation of biotops, of habitats in other words. We have quite a lot of activities as far as bottom-trawling, but also activities as far as large-scale constructions. I particularly mean cables, high-voltage power cables, there will be pipelines built up. There is a, particularly in the southern part of the Baltic Sea, a quite strong intensive activity of building hard concrete walls against erosion of the coast. This also effects biodiversity. This issue I think will be better focused under the ecosystem-based approach which we are soon going to apply under new projects. I have to say that there is a special working group within HELCOM, this is a working group on biodiversity and coastal management, so called HELCOM habitat. And this working group through this existence during the last ten years proposed a number of recommendations which are very important for protecting biodiversity, for example establishment of so-called Baltic Sea Protected areas. There are sixty-two areas proposed for protection by HELCOM, and there is a special recommendation on this. Unfortunately, not all the countries really fulfill these recommendations. In other words, mostly they are not adopted by national laws, and there are also no plans for protection or management of these areas.

That is all what is in this paper. I would also like to add to yesterday's presentation and to this paper that we have some special local problems. I don't think there is time

to discuss them. Like presence of artificial radio-nucleis after the Chernobyl accident in 1986. There was a very interesting issue and also a very sad event because the whole Baltic Sea was contaminated. These radio-nucleis attached to particles they are deposited in the Baltic deep basins, mainly. Also there was an issue of sanitary condition of coastal waters and bathing waters which were in a very bad state in the 70s and 80s. For example, the area where this ship is visiting, in the 80s they were formally closed for bathing. Now we have 70% of beaches recovered with a good sanitary status only some beaches close to the Vistula River mouth, which is a big Baltic river, still bring quite a lot of pollutants, also deteriorating sanitary conditions. This part is left for improvement. There are also other sad issues like drainage of wetlands, like changing the coastline, like riverdamming. But these are as I said mostly local problems. Yesterday we covered large-scale problems. These are other issues discussed within HELCOM.