

The Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, the Helsinki Convention was signed in 1974 by the, then, seven Baltic Sea States and it entered into force in 1980. In 1992, the new Convention was signed by the present nine Baltic Sea States and by the European Economic Community. Stimulated by and through the joint cooperation in the framework of the Helsinki Commission the Contracting Parties have achieved many important results in their efforts to reduce the pollution of the Baltic Sea and to ensure the ecological restoration of the sea in the future. To speed up national measures and to increase the political will in the countries the meetings of the Helsinki Commission, and closely related conferences, have been arranged at ministerial level from time to time. There are still, however, a number of problems, which from the Baltic Sea point of view need to be solved as an urgent matter within the framework of the Helsinki Commission.

Even if the effectiveness of the HELCOM endeavours might be debated the fact is that the nucleus of the environmental protection regime within the Baltic Sea, which the Commission has created during the past twenty years, seems to be indisputable.

The main achievements and some aspects related to future prospects are described in this report and summarized shortly as follows.

To follow up the effects of the pollution in the marine environment of the Baltic Sea, a joint monitoring programme for the open Baltic Sea has been coordinated by the Commission since 1979. The open sea monitoring has been later extended to cover also monitoring of airborne pollution and radioactive substances. For the coastal waters there has been no harmonized monitoring programme. The countries, however, have agreed that national monitoring programmes in territorial waters should be established to supplement the joint monitoring programme in the open sea.

Based on the monitoring data supplemented with additional data from different research programmes overall evaluations of the state of the marine environment have been carried out several times. Some positive changes have been observed, e.g., decrease in the DDT and PCB concentrations in biota, decrease of HCH concentrations in water and the decrease in lead values in the marine environment in the southern Baltic. In some areas seal populations are recovering although they are still threatened by pollutants, especially the organochlorines, and the by-catch of young seals in fishing nets.

During the past years a lot of efforts have been made to improve the reliability of the collected monitoring data by arranging several intercalibration and intercomparison exercises. Even special training courses on phytoplankton identification have been arranged for personnel involved in the practical work.

The new Convention 1992 contains a new issue for the activities of the Commission. A work programme on nature conservation has been developed and at present experts are working on specific proposals concerning, e.g., protection of coastal regions and establishment of protected coastal and marine areas.

At its first meeting, held in November 1992 in Helsinki, Finland, HELCOM PITF finalised the Baltic Sea Joint Comprehensive Environmental Action Programme (JCP). The Programme has a projected lifetime of twenty years, 1993-2012, with estimated investment costs of some 18 billion ECU. The Programme's objective is to reduce emission in order to restore the Baltic Sea to a sound ecological balance. The Programme is split in six elements.

Measures to achieve the Programme's objective are mainly those described in

Programme element "Investment Activities". The other Programme elements

should be conceived chiefly as complementary and supportive, although some of

them may well in themselves have considerable effect in terms of reducing

emissions.

As it was clear that one of the major constraints would be the mobilisation of financial resources needed to implement the Programme a High Level Conference on Resource Mobilisation was held in Gdansk, Poland, in March 1993. With a view to properly organising the implementation of the Programme HELCOM PITF invited members and observer to take a lead party role for the Koordination of individual Programme elements which principally includes any means appropriate to help the implementation of a Programme element such as the organisation of working group meetings, seminars, etc. Meanwhile, lead party roles are established for each Programme element. The use of economic instrument was considered in an *ad hoc* HELCOM PITF working group which submitted recommendation to HELCOM 15.

In the first year of the Programme already quite a number of preventive and curative actions in the Baltic Sea catchment area are under way to reduce the pollution load reaching the Baltic Sea. Of the total sum of estimated investment costs for the 132 so-called "hot spots" of almost 10 billion ECU, slightly more than 25 % has been allocated or reserved, locally more than 2 billion ECU, from foreign sources almost 600 million ECU. It should be noted that 8 "hot spots" are not "hot spots" any longer. A study is planned to be carried out in 1994 to investigate the status of actions related to the "priority hot spots" of which 47 have been identified.

The successful implementation of the Programme will require long-term political commitment. Information about the environmental status of the Baltic Sea is, therefore, vital as well as a solid basis of public support. This is particularly important since the major part of the burden for funding the activities of the Programme will automatically rest on domestic financial resources and borne by the public either directly through user charges or possibly indirectly through increased costs for goods and services.

Future Plans

- to further the implementation of the Programme, in particular through organising and strengthening of lead party roles and mobilising additional funds.