



15 January 2017

Executive Summary

Contribution from the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM) to I of the report of the Secretary-General on oceans and the law of the sea, pursuant to General Assembly draft resolution A/71/L.26, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea"

The effects of climate change on oceans

In recent decades the Baltic Sea region has warmed up faster than the global average. The warming is expected to continue throughout the 21st century – this currently cannot be explained by anything else than increased greenhouse gas concentrations.

Overall, a decrease of 75% in snowfall and a sea ice decrease of around 50-80% are expected for the next 100 years in the region. A sea level rise comparable to the global rise is expected for the southern half of the Baltic Sea.

Balancing acts are necessary to decrease the effects of toxic pollutants when climate change puts an additional physiological pressure on the organisms

- Stricter measures recommended against widespread PBT substances, pesticides and pharmaceuticals as their use is likely to increase due to climate change.

Acidification requires attention; Better preparedness for vulnerability and higher risks; Develop and maintain marine monitoring and data assimilation; Apply a multiple-stressor and holistic approach; More research needed; Communicate uncertainties; Improve communication between science and policy; Knowledge on climate change and Baltic Sea impacts should be reviewed at regular intervals