Conference “Improved response operations for the reduction of oil spills impacts on Baltic Sea environment”

Response activities of HELCOM

Evija Smite
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HELCOM

- Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) - International cooperation since 1974 (new Convention signed in 1992)
- Main task: to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution
- 10 Contracting Parties (9 Baltic Sea Coastal States and the EU)
- Secretariat located in Helsinki, Finland
HELCOM’s achievements

- Harmonized monitoring programmes in the Baltic Sea States
- Reduced inputs of nutrients and hazardous substances (especially from point sources)
- Advanced measures in place to reduce environmental effects of shipping
- Proven preparedness to respond to pollution incidents
- Network of Baltic Sea Protected Areas
- Improving status of populations of:
  - white-tailed eagle
  - cormorant
  - Baltic wild salmon
  - seals (in northern areas of the Baltic)
HELCOM’s work on maritime safety

- Introduction of new routeing measures in the Baltic
- Phasing out the use of single-hull oil tankers
- Establishing of the Automatic Identification System
- Establishing of the Baltic Sea, except for the Russian waters, as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area
- Re-surveys of water depths -> routes coverage with Electronic Nautical Charts -> enhanced use of the Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems
- Detection system for single hull tankers banned carrying heavy grade oil
HELCOM Automatic Identification System

Real-time data display and retrieval:
2000 ships at any given moment, 3,500-5,000 a month

- Primary aim – to increase safety of navigation, but also other uses:
  - Response and search and rescue operations
  - Identification of illegal polluters
  - Enforcement of regulations
  - Environmental monitoring

- A number of AIS-based tools:
  HELCOM SeaTrack Web/AIS - an oil drift forecasting system integrated with information from the AIS
HELCOM work on preparedness and response

- HELCOM Response Group co-ordinates the work
- A number of HELCOM Recommendations covering:
  - response to spills of oil or hazardous substances at sea, from offshore units and oil terminals
  - requirements on emergency and response capacity
  - airborne surveillance
  - restricted use of dispersants
  - development and use of drift forecasting systems
  - Reporting procedures
  - Requesting and providing assistance
  - Command structure and communication during operation
  - Oil sampling
  - Co-operation on aerial surveillance
Existing emergency and response capacity

- Around 30 emergency tugs with bollard pull of 50 or more tonnes
- More than 48 sea-going response vessels, incl. 3 chartered by EMSA
- New vessels to be built in coming years
- Satellite and aerial surveillance
- Oil drift forecasting tools (HELCOM Seatrack Web)
Aerial surveillance in the Baltic

- Co-ordinated regular surveillance activities in the whole Baltic
- Efficiency - development and improvement of the existing remote sensing systems
- Satellite surveillance in co-operation with EMSA

- CEPCO and Super CEPCO Flights
- Annual reports to HELCOM for evaluation
Regular exercises

- National and bilateral operational exercises involving response units

- International operational exercises with participation of all Baltic Sea States (BALEX DELTA)
  - 2001 Denmark: 7 countries, 11 ships, 2 aircraft
  - 2002 Latvia: 6 countries, 18 ships, 2 aircraft
  - 2003 Finland: 5 countries, 16 ships
  - 2004 Germany: 6 countries, 11 ships, 1 aircraft
  - 2005 Sweden: 7 countries, 19 ships, 2 aircraft
  - 2006 Poland: 7 countries + EMSA, 23 ships, 3 aircraft
  - 2007 Estonia: 6 countries + EMSA, 17 ships, 1 helicopter
  - 2008 Russia: 6 countries, EMSA, 17 ships, 2 helicopters
  - 2009 Latvia: 5 countries + EMSA, 9 ships
  - 2010 Klaipeda: 7 countries + EMSA, 8 vessels

- Main objective - every Contracting Party should be able to command a major response operation
Maritime traffic

- 2000 ships at any given moment
- In 2009, vessels entered or left the Baltic Sea via Skaw 62,743 times - increase by 20% since 2006
- 21% of those ships were tankers
- Also heavy ship traffic through a Kiel Canal – 30,314 ships
- The strongest growth in shipment of oil - from the Gulf of Finland
Shipping accidents

In 2009:

- 105 shipping accidents
- Groundings (36%) and collisions (32%) are the most common
- Human factor is the main cause of accidents
- 5 accidents resulted in oil spills
Major accidental oil pollution

- 1990 “Volgoneft” 700-800 t. of waste oil
  - 5 countries; more than 20 ships
  - nearly all oil recovered at sea

- 2001 “Baltic Carrier” 2700 t. of oil
  - 3 countries
  - around 50% of oil recovered from the water

- 2003 “Fu Shan Hai” 1200 t. of fuel oil
  - 3 countries
  - around 1100 tonnes of oil recovered at sea
HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan

- Adopted on 15 November 2007 in Krakow, Poland
- Regional application of the **Ecosystem Approach**
- Regional programme of measures aimed at obtaining a healthy Baltic Sea
- A showcase for other regional marine programmes
HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan
Actions to implement “Response” component

- A new HELCOM Recommendation on Mutual Plan for Places of Refuge (31E/5) – to be able to grant the most safe shelter to a ship in need of assistance

- **BRISK** Ongoing BRISK Project (Sub-regional risk of spill of oil and hazardous substances in the Baltic Sea)

- A new HELCOM Recommendation setting the standards for planning of oiled wildlife response (31E/6)

- HELCOM procedures for international oil spill response operations, included in the Response Manual, have been amended to enable mutual assistance when dealing with major oiled wildlife incidents, and also in the near future – shoreline pollution accidents
Conclusions

• Cooperation on response to pollution from ships in the Baltic Sea well established - serves as a model also for other regional seas (e.g. the Black Sea and the North Sea)

• The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has given an additional political support and has strengthened the commitments already made by the Baltic Sea countries in the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, also in the response field

• HELCOM is contributing to the implementation of the Strategy – BRISK, intensified cooperation between offshore and shoreline authorities, mutual plan for places of refuge (Priority Area 14)
Thank you!

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