

CCB Baltic 08 Conference
Karjaa, Finland 24 May 2008
Summary of presentations

On Saturday May 24, 2008, around sixty participants gathered at Lärkkulla Folk High School situated in Karjaa in southern Finland, for the CCB Baltic 08 Conference. The topic of this years Conference was "*Climate change and the Baltic Sea - challenges for environmental NGOs*". Six speakers from Research Institutes and organisations in five different countries had been invited to talk about different effects of climate change on the Baltic Sea ecosystem as well as actions within the CCB priority areas that can be taken to combat Climate Change.

Joanna Norkko, Finnish Society for Nature and Environment, representing the local organisers, opened the Baltic 08 Conference. Joanna welcomed everybody to Karjaa and thereafter Gunnar Norén, Executive Secretary of CCB, said a few words about the importance of the topic of the Conference and gave the word to the moderator, Maria Staniszewska, from the Polish Ecological Club. After a short introduction she gave the floor to the first speaker.

Kai Myrberg, from the Finnish Institute of Marine Research, gave a presentation on "Climate Change and changes in abiotic factors". He mentioned different possible effects of Climate Change to the Baltic Sea, such as changes in water temperature, ice-conditions and sea level, also pointing out the physical features making the Baltic Sea extra vulnerable compared to other seas. Kai said that even if the evidence of human impact of CO₂ is obvious there are however still strong uncertainties when it comes to the specific effects. He pointed out a few main challenges for the future, such as decreasing the uncertainty of Climate Change forecasts in local scale, going from qualitative to quantitative estimates and estimating the influence of Climate Change to the ecosystem behaviour. Kai finished by recommending the book "Assessment of Climate Change for the Baltic Sea Basin", written by the BACC Author team who consists of more than 80 scientists from 13 countries.

The following speaker was Tina Elfwing, from Stockholm Marine Research Centre, talking about "Possible effects of climate change on the Baltic Sea ecosystem". She started by giving a picture of the different species in the Baltic Sea. Thereafter she pointed out possible effects of Climate Change such as increased precipitation, increased CO₂ in seawater and increased temperature, which she connected with their possible consequences for the ecosystem. Some examples were the predicted further reduced salinity, which in its turn controls the distribution of species, as well as eutrophication and its effects on different species in the Baltic Sea. One point coming up to discussion was whether or not the authorities realise the importance of monitoring programmes. Tina's answer to this was that there is definitely a need for more research within the topic of Climate Change and the Baltic Sea ecosystem, but what is more urgent is the monitoring part.

The next speaker to take the floor was Monica Verbeek, from the CCB Sisters Association Seas at Risk. This is a Brussels based environmental NGO focusing on the North East Atlantic. The name of Monica's presentation was "Carbon footprint of fisheries" and in focus were the direct impact of climate change on fish as well as the intensive fuel consumption of the fisheries industry, responsible for approximately 1,2 % of the global oil consumption.

Monica mentioned possible ways to reduce the carbon footprint of fisheries such as reducing the level of fishing, increasing the stock size so that the fishermen do not have to go so far to find the fish, as well as using more fuel efficient engines and to shift to low fuel (passive) fishing techniques. When it comes to actions at EU-level Monica pointed out opportunities within EU policies connected to tax rates and the environmentally harmful subsidies for fuel. She also mentioned the development of an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union, which is meant to facilitate an integrated approach between various policy institutions. This last point would be important since policies aiming at the reduction of carbon footprint of fisheries can, when carefully selected, also result in a reduction of environmental impact of fisheries on marine ecosystems and overfishing.

After this part, Dan Wilhelmsson, marine biologist from Stockholm University, gave his presentation on “Environmental effects of offshore wind power”. He mentioned that the impacts of offshore wind power differ during the construction phase respectively the operation phase of the power plant. During the 1-2 years long construction phase, there can be disturbances such as noise, sediment spills and turbidity. During the operation phase of more than 20 years there can be other kinds of noise and vibrations as well as electromagnetism. Dan also mentioned that the possible effects of offshore wind power are of course case specific and differ between birds, fish, invertebrates and algae. Finally Dan concluded that large research gaps still exist when it comes to the environmental effects of offshore wind power, but it is important to take precautions.

Henrik Butze-Ruhnenstjerne, from the Danish Society for Nature Conservation, then gave a presentation on “Climate Certification of Municipalities in Denmark”. Henrik explained how they way local authorities in Denmark have been thinking about and treated environmental issues during the years have changed, developed and adapted according to changes in the global arena. With the key words “Think Globally – Act Locally” this has lead to a development of so called “Climate Municipalities” in Denmark. The goal of these municipalities is to reduce CO2 emissions through different measures, such as improved insulation, green accounts, transport planning and public bicycles. Up to today this has been a success in Denmark and 15 % of the Danish municipalities have already signed the contracts.

The last speaker was Oleg Bodorov, from Green World in Russia, who gave a presentation on “ Nuclear Power as an unsustainable solution to Climate Change”. Oleg stated that we need a big amount of nuclear power plants to substitute fossil fuels. He meant that in order to prevent Climate Change it would be problematic, costly and environmentally harmful to build them on time and not least to find enough waste storage. This is why his final conclusion is that a sustainable solution to climate change can only be found within renewable energy sources such as for example geothermal and wind energy.

When all the speeches were over Gunnar thanked everybody for the interesting perspectives and discussions. He wrapped up the discussion with some reflections on Climate Change and the impact on the Baltic Sea Environment, connected to a raised surface water temperature, more annual Baltic basin, reduced sea surface salinity and high River Water temperatures. He mentioned the Baltic Seals as particularly vulnerable to the effects of Climate Change. Finally he said that CCB should follow and keep CCB network informed about Baltic environment impact of Climate Change. When speculating about whether or not CCB should change its priorities because of Climate Change, the conclusion is that the effects of human impact of

both eutrophication, overfishing and on Coastal ecosystems are all quicker than the effects of Climate Change, why this should not be a necessary action.

The main conclusion of the the Baltic 08 Conference is that there are still uncertainties when it comes to the specific impacts of Climate Change to the Baltic Sea ecosystem, and therefore a need for more research. However, there is no doubt that there are big impacts and therefore a huge variety of actions that can be taken, also as precautionary measures.