

**Observer report from the
31st Session of the International Baltic sea Fisheries Commission
(Poland)**

The 31st Session of the IBSFC was held from 5-7 September, 2005 in Visby, Sweden. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs of Sweden, Madam Ann Christin Nykvest welcomed the Delegates and Observers to the meeting.

She referred to the roots of the Commission, its performance over more than 30 years and stressed the need for further close cooperation on the protection and sustainable use of the living resources of the Baltic Sea in the years to come.

The situation in the Baltic Sea has changed remarkably by the accession of four Contracting Parties of the "Convention on Fishing and Conservation of the Living Resources in the Baltic Sea and the Belts" (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) to the European Community in 2004.

The European Community and the four accession countries have declared their withdrawal from the Convention in 2004 and 2005, respectively.

The withdrawal will become effective 31 December, 2005 - for Poland 31 December 2006. That means that the life span of IBSFC will be over soon - but all Contracting Parties declared their readiness to continue the constructive cooperation on the basis of an agreement to be reached between the European Community and the Russian Federation.

For 2006 the Commission agreed upon the TACs for herring, cod, sprat and salmon and the allocations for the European Community and the Russian Federation.

The fixing of the TACs was based on the scientific advice provided by ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea).

The Contracting Parties worked hard to reach an agreement on the TAC for the two cod stocks in 2006. Agreement was reached for both stocks:

western stock	28,400 t
eastern stock	49,220 t

The TAC for herring was set according to the four Management Areas first established for 2004:

Northern Area	91,600 t
Central Area	128,000 t
Gulf of Riga	40,000 t
Western Area	47,500 t

The sprat TAC was set at 468,000 t – somewhat lower than for 2005 (550,000 t)

Over the last years the status of the wild Baltic salmon in the Main Basin and the Gulf of Bothnia has improved remarkably. That's why the salmon TACs have been kept on the same levels as in 2005:

Main Basin and Gulf of Bothnia	460,000 individual fish
Gulf of Finland	17,000 individual fish

The Commission also considered the future relations of the Fishery Sector with the Baltic 21 initiative and the GEF Project (Global Environment Facility) for the Baltic Sea Region.

The meeting was characterised by an excellent level of genuine cooperation between the European Community and the Russian Federation.

The Commission thanked the staff of the Secretariat for many years of very effective work for the Commission and its members