

## Press Release

### International Conference to introduce Climate Change Scenarios in the Baltic Sea Region

**Göteborg, Helsinki, Geesthacht, 16 May 2006** - Leading scientist, politicians, journalists and interested stakeholders from the Baltic Sea countries will take part in the First International Conference on the Assessment of Climate Change for the Baltic Sea Basin on 22-23 May 2006 in Göteborg Sweden. The Conference, organised by Göteborg University, BALTEX and HELCOM, will provide an assessment of ongoing and possible future climate variations in the Baltic Sea basin.

The climate in the Baltic Sea basin has changed during the past century, and current research shows that the area will likely continue to get warmer. In the past century there has been a marked increase of temperature of more than 0.7°C, with consequences such as shorter ice seasons. This is larger than the global mean temperature increase of 0.5°C. No robust link to anthropogenic warming and the increased levels of greenhouse gases on regional scales has been established, although it is plausible that at least part of the recent warming in the Baltic Sea basin is related to the steadily increasing atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases. "Continuing analysis is needed to clarify the causes behind the increasing temperature," says Anders Omstedt, professor in Geosphere Dynamics at Göteborg University.

The observed changes in temperature in the past have been associated with consistent changes in terrestrial ecosystems, such as earlier spring phenological phases, northward species shifts and increased growth and vigour of vegetation. These trends are expected to continue into the future; induced species shifts may be slower than the warming which causes it.

Scenarios for the climate in the later part of the present century describe an ongoing general warming, increased winter precipitation almost everywhere and dryer summers in the southern parts. For the water body of the Baltic Sea, a tendency towards lower salinity could be expected, which is thought to have a major influence on the Baltic Sea fauna. The expected changes in precipitation (and thus river runoff) may have additional detrimental effects on the problem of eutrophication. The warming will be associated with earlier spring phenological phases, northward species shifts and increased growth and vigour of vegetation.

The assessment is a result of a recently established Assessment of Climate Change for the Baltic Sea Basin Project (The BACC Project). It integrates available knowledge of historical, current and expected future climate change. The unique feature of BACC is the combination of evidence on climate change and related impacts on marine, freshwater and terrestrial ecosystems in the Baltic Sea basin, which encompasses the entire water catchment with runoff into the Baltic Sea. It is the first systematic scientific effort for assessing climate change in a European region. More than 80 scientists from 12 countries have contributed on a voluntary basis. As such, the results have not been influenced by either political or special interests.

The BACC Project is a joint venture of the BALTEX (Baltic Sea Experiment) Program and HELCOM (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission) as an example of a dialogue between the scientific community and environmental policy makers. BALTEX is a continental-scale experiment within GEWEX (Global Energy and Water Cycle Experiment) and WCRP (World Climate Research Program).

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The first day of the Conference will be devoted to scientific discussions and the individual chapter lead authors will present the BACC results both as oral lectures and posters. The second day discussions will be dedicated to bridge science, policy and the general public and includes a panel discussion. The objective of the panel is to discuss issues of climate change related to the entire water catchment of the Baltic Sea; possible impacts of these changes on marine and terrestrial ecosystems, and on society; and means how to improve the dialogue between scientists, politicians and the public at large with regard to issues related to climate change. The panel will consist of leading climate researchers, politicians and journalists.

The Conference is open to the press.

**For details on the BACC Project and the Conference**, please visit:

BACC website <http://www.gkss.de/bacc>,  
also see the Conference announcement flyer  
[http://dvsun3.gkss.de/bacc/BACC\\_Conf2006\\_flyer.pdf](http://dvsun3.gkss.de/bacc/BACC_Conf2006_flyer.pdf),  
and program <http://dvsun3.gkss.de/bacc/ConferenceSchedule.html>

Information for journalists:

TV-footage is available at the BACC website.

**For information about BACC**, please visit: <http://www.gkss.de/bacc>

**For information about Göteborg University**, please visit <http://www.gu.se/english/>

**For information about BALTEX**, please visit <http://www.gkss.de/baltex>

**For information about HELCOM**, please visit <http://www.helcom.fi>

**For any additional information, please contact:**

Prof. Dr. Hans von Storch  
Chair of BACC  
Institute for Coastal Research  
GKSS Forschungszentrum Geesthacht GmbH  
Germany  
Phone: +49 171 212 2046  
E-mail: [storch@gkss.de](mailto:storch@gkss.de)

Prof. Dr. Anders Omstedt  
Earth Sciences Center-Oceanography  
Göteborg University, Sweden  
Phone: +46 31 773 2881  
E-mail: [anders.omstedt@gvc.gu.se](mailto:anders.omstedt@gvc.gu.se)

Dr. Markku Rummukainen  
Rossby Centre  
Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute,  
Norrköping, Sweden  
Phone: +46 11 495 8605  
E-mail: [markku.rummukainen@smhi.se](mailto:markku.rummukainen@smhi.se)

Camilla Carlsson, informatör,  
Fakultetskansliet för  
naturvetenskap, Göteborgs universitet  
Phone: +46 31-773 28 64  
Mobil: 0701-46 39 61  
E-mail: [camilla.carlsson@science.gu.se](mailto:camilla.carlsson@science.gu.se)

Dr. Torsten Fischer,  
Presse- und Öffentlichkeitsarbeit  
GKSS Forschungszentrum Geesthacht GmbH  
Germany  
Phone: +49 (0) 41 52 / 87 – 1677  
E-mail: [Torsten.Fischer@gkss.de](mailto:Torsten.Fischer@gkss.de)

Nikolay Vlasov,  
Information Secretary, HELCOM  
Phone: +358 (0)207 412 635  
E-mail: [nikolay.vlasov@helcom.fi](mailto:nikolay.vlasov@helcom.fi)