

Aide Memoire

Seventh meeting under the Collective Arrangement

Information on the Collective Arrangement is available on [OSPAR](#) and [NEAFC¹](#) websites.

Agenda Item 1 – Opening of the meeting and procedural issues

1.1. Janet Skarðsá (NEAFC President) and Ane-Marie Løvendahl Eskildsen (OSPAR Chair) welcomed the participants to the 7th meeting under the Collective Arrangement. As host, the President of NEAFC noted that the meeting would be building on the very productive discussions in the previous year. The meeting would focus on some concrete products such as progress on Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECM) and the related joint narrative on area based management submitted in draft to the meeting.

1.2. The meeting was attended by representatives of OSPAR and NEAFC Contracting Parties. The Secretariats of the two organisations were also present. Representatives participating as observers were from the Secretariats of: the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), the European Environment Agency (EEA), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), HELCOM, the International Council for Exploration of the Sea (ICES), the International Seabed Authority (ISA), the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation (NASCO) and the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Apologies were received from Germany, Greenland, The Netherlands, and the secretariats of: the Cartagena Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM), the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT), the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization (NAFO), the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission (NAMMCO), and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

1.3. A round of introductions included statements made by some Contracting Parties. The President responded on a point raised regarding the existing requirement on attendance in presence by Contracting Parties, that this issue would be revisited at the end of the meeting.

1.4. Ane-Marie Løvendahl Eskildsen (OSPAR) and Janet Skarðsá (NEAFC) were elected co-chairs of the meeting.

1.5. **The meeting agreed however that this formality would not need to be carried out at subsequent meetings and could be removed from the agenda in future. Instead, the assumption would be that the Chair or vice-Chair of OSPAR and the President or vice-President of NEAFC would co-chair on each occasion.**

1.6. Dominic Pattinson, OSPAR Executive Secretary, provided an introductory background on the Collective Arrangement (**Presentation '1_CollArr24_Introduction'**). More information on the Collective Arrangement can be found in this [information paper](#).

¹ www.ospar.org/about/international-cooperation/collective-arrangement, www.neafc.org/collective-arrangement

1.7. The agenda of the meeting was adopted as proposed (**Annex 1**) noting two items for Any Other Business.

Agenda Item 2 – Exchange of information regarding ongoing initiatives of relevance to the collective arrangement

Item 2.1 Update on initiatives by NEAFC and OSPAR of relevance to the collective arrangement.

2.1. The OSPAR Executive Secretary provided an update on recent developments under OSPAR (**Presentation '2.1_CollArr24_OSPAR Update'**). The presentation highlighted the key findings of OSPAR's Quality Status Report (QSR), a decadal comprehensive assessment of the status of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic, published in September 2023. Another area covered was the output of OSPAR's Arctic Outcomes Working Group which was reviewing the evidence for possible OSPAR measures and actions to protect the Arctic marine environment in OSPAR's maritime area for agreement at the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in 2025, for which other deliverables were also described. Finally, OSPAR'S process to look into the possibility of amending its convention was described, particularly with regards to offshore renewables, aquaculture and debris from rocket launches. The impacts of other activities on the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic, such as deep seabed mining, geoengineering and shipping, is also being discussed.

The NEAFC Secretary provided an oral update on relevant issues under NEAFC. This included extensions of bans on targeted fishing on basking shark, deep sea sharks, rays and Chimaera extended to 2027 and porbeagle extended to end 2024. He added that a restarted fishery on spurdog was being carefully monitored to ensure only a gradual increase in catch towards the advised total. No changes to the areas closed to bottom fishing under the recommendation to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME) had been advised. Further updates on the VME recommendation, OECM, climate change, and BBNJ were provided under the relevant items on the meeting agenda.

Item 2.2. Updates on national initiatives of relevance to the collective arrangement.

2.2. The United Kingdom explained that it was currently updating its regular assessment report of the UK marine environment for publication in 2024.

2.3. Norway explained that it was at the finishing state of an update to its integrated maritime plans which included reports on state, activities and new measures for sustainable use while protecting the environment. This would also be available in English. It was also currently developing legislation for area based protection outside territorial waters.

2.4. Spain introduced a document setting out two key developments that could be of interest to the Collective Arrangement [**Presentation '2.2_CollArr24_Spain Update'**]. The first was the development of an MPA at the El Cachucho underwater mountain which was being carried out under a participatory process. The second related to a project focused on reducing small cetacean bycatch in fisheries in the Bay of Biscay, including the use of exclusion grids in towed gear.

2.5. Ireland outlined that it was finalising its marine strategy, which included measures to achieve Good Environmental Status. It was also implementing a new law to achieve 30% coverage of MPAs and OECM in its waters. The management of stocks and species in international waters was being used as relevant experience for this work.

Item 2.3 Initiatives from other competent international organisations relevant to the collective arrangement.

2.6. ICES provided information about new roadmaps that were being developed to help provide science to support furthering advice, including on offshore renewable energy. ICES had been further developing its bycatch advice and revising the [ICES bycatch Roadmap](#). It noted that this work was being fast tracked and included elements on risk-based approaches and on protected, endangered, and threatened species (PETS).

2.7. FAO introduced its presentation on the GEF funded Global Oceans Programme Deep Sea Fisheries Project to the meeting (**Presentation '2.3_CollArr24_FAO Deep Seas Fisheries Project'**). It highlighted the complementarity to the Collective Arrangement discussions, for instance on the ecosystem approach and on deep sea sharks.

2.8. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) provided an update on their current work in the context of its exclusive competence to adopt policies regarding deep seabed mining. It was adopting a standardised approach to Regional Environmental Management Plans (REMP) and planned to apply to the ISA Council for the approval of the REMP for the Northern Mid-Atlantic ridge. It explained this area did not cover the MPA areas under the collective arrangement. It also detailed its work on developing binding standards on levels of acceptable level of harm including thresholds for turbidity, toxicity noise etc associated with the activities in the Area.

2.9. ASCOBANS reported that it had drafted cetacean sensitive planning guidelines for adoption by its meeting in September. It also noted that the Convention on Migratory Species had adopted a resolution on deep seabed mining which would be published soon and is available in draft [here](#).

2.10. The IWC explained it was working with the FAO on bycatch, it also described the global whale entanglement response network which included providing training on dealing with such entanglement. It was also looking at climate change impacts and mitigation in relation to whales.

2.11. The meeting was advised that the next Global Dialogue under the Sustainable Ocean Initiative would be held in Korea from 11 to 14 June 2024. The CBD SBSTTA meeting will be held on 13-18 May 2024 in Nairobi and include updates to the CBD marine programme of work to account for any new areas that have emerged through the Global Biodiversity Framework, as well as new modalities for the EBSA process. The CBD COP 16 will be held on 21 October – 1 November 2024 in Colombia.

Item 2.4 Developments on the expansion of the Collective Arrangement to other competent organisations.

2.12. The meeting noted that there were no updates on any competent organisations joining the collective arrangement. In discussion it was noted that, notwithstanding the original aim of other organisations joining the collective arrangement, other ways of NEAFC and OSPAR engaging with other organisations operating in the ABNJ/high seas should be explored. A Contracting Party added that the risks and appetite for co-development of measures should also be explored in the context of the BBNJ.

2.13. Discussion continued under Agenda item 6.

Item 2.5 Update on ecosystem-based management under OSPAR and NEAFC

2.14. The OSPAR Secretariat described a task on ecosystem-based management under its 2030 Strategy (**Presentation '2.5_CollArr24_OSPAR EBM Update'**). This task has two objectives: to assess cooperation between OSPAR and other international organisations and; to identify practical options and specific steps that could be taken by OSPAR Contracting Parties individually or collectively to further implement EBM. An update would be provided to the meeting in 2025.

2.15. NEAFC Secretary explained that (**Presentation '2.5_CollArr24_EBFM-ICES'**) the key development in NEAFC on ecosystem-based fisheries management (EBFM/EAFM) related to the development of organisational objectives, of which ecosystem/biodiversity objectives would be an important part. ICES had advised that in developing such objectives their measurability would be an important element, therefore NEAFC had a current advice request to ICES to advise on three alternative approaches to assessing the ecosystem in relation to fisheries management.

2.16. ICES confirmed the details of its planned approach to the request for advice on ecosystem objectives from NEAFC, with a planned delivery of October 2024.

2.17. **In conclusion, it was agreed that the item on ecosystem-based management would be a standalone item at the next meeting under the Collective Arrangement.**

Agenda Item 3 – Areas notified to the Collective Arrangement

Item 3.1 OSPAR update on its programme on Marine Protected Areas

3.1 The OSPAR Secretariat described its newly updated North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin MPA (NACES MPA) which had been adopted by a Decision at the 2023 OSPAR Commission (present (**Presentation '3.1_CollArr23_OSPAR_NACES-MPA'**)). The was an extension of an earlier bird-focused water-column MPA to cover the seabed and additional biodiversity/habitats.

3.2 In discussion, the following points were noted:

- a. OSPAR explained that the MPA was only binding on its own parties, but other organisations were informed so that they could take it into account in relevant considerations. It clarified that not all the biodiversity described under the MPA were listed as OSPAR threatened and declining species and habitats. It further explained that current measures under the MPA included guidance on best practice on scientific research, undertaking EIA on human activities etc. But at this stage other measures were not identified and would need to be considered with the relevant competent authorities. A Contracting Party added that, in terms of the programme of measures, actions were put in place “to the extent necessary” which implicitly allowed for sustainable use.
- b. It was noted that NEAFC already had a measure in place in the NACES area in terms of a restriction on bottom fishing. A Contracting Party explained that NEAFC would consider the idea of putting any further protection in place by requesting advice from ICES to see if there was an issue in relation to the objectives of the MPA that needed action. It suggested that NEAFC may consider a more general process to examine the OSPAR MPAs to see if any response was required.
- c. The Meeting noted the importance of presentation and communication when institutional cultures and understanding of what constituted measures between the sectors differed. This also applied within national administrations and would be an important consideration as the partners in the Collective Arrangement approached other competent authorities.

Item 3.2 NEAFC update on its VMEs and fisheries closure areas.

3.3 The NEAFC Secretary provided an update on NEAFC’s area based measures to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME) (document **CollArr 24/03/01**). While ICES advice had required no changes to closed areas in 2024, two more minor amendments to the Recommendation had been adopted. These were a) a technical amendment to align an existing bottom fishing area to the limit of the Russian Federation’s EEZ, and b) a small extension to an existing fishing area in the Rockall Bank region. This extension did not

affect any areas closed to bottom fishing. The Secretary further described the 5 yearly process to review the effectiveness of the VME recommendation in achieving its objectives. This was due in 2024 and would cover both scientific and enforcement issues.

3.4 **In conclusion**, the meeting noted:

- a. the useful updates on implementation of area-based management by NEAFC and OSPAR,
- b. an interesting initiative for possible discussions within NEAFC to responding to OSPAR MPA designations.

Agenda Item 4 – Scientific information and environmental assessment

Item 4.1 Information on new scientific information and monitoring on the marine environment of human activities, with a focus on bycatch

4.2 The OSPAR Secretariat informed the meeting about its early draft recommendation on bycatch under its Regional Action Plan on Marine Birds (**Presentation '4.1_CollArr24_OSPAR_by-catch'**). This was due for consideration at OSPAR's Biodiversity Committee (BDC) in March 2024.

4.3 The NEAFC Secretary updated the meeting on the ongoing work under NEAFC and ICES to better understand the scale of bird bycatch in NEAFC fisheries, which was generally been assumed to be low. The paucity of data remained a real challenge. ICES had now produced a 3 step plan to respond to NEAFC's 2021 request for advice. This included a pilot study to understand key risk areas, a focused data call and a long term dedicated monitoring programme.

4.4 In discussion, the following views were noted:

- a. The importance of drafting that was seen to respect the competence of fisheries organisations was underlined by some Contracting Parties. Others nevertheless added that a constructive approach meant that there was scope to work closely together on shared objectives while accepting boundaries of competences. One suggestion was to set up a technical group from NEAFC and OSPAR that could delve into the details and report back to the collective arrangement.
- b. ICES noted that it was developing advice on sampling of PET species for the European Union which could help bycatch sampling more generally. **ICES would advise when this advice was published.**
- c. Contracting Parties were encouraged to work bilaterally within their national administrations to ensure the competence issues were addressed in the process of finalising the draft recommendation on bycatch at BDC. The OSPAR Secretariat was also alerted to earlier discussions in OSPAR, as outlined in OSPAR Agreement 2013/13, which could help guide drafting to avoid issues arising on competences.

4.5 **In conclusion, the meeting encouraged Contracting Parties to consult nationally on the draft OSPAR recommendation on bycatch. The OSPAR Secretariat would also consider the comments raised during the meeting related to competence.**

Item 4.2 OSPAR and NEAFC cooperation on generating better knowledge on deep sea elasmobranchs.

4.6 The OSPAR Secretariat presented an update of the planned workshop to gather and collate scientific and expert information and data on deep sea elasmobranchs, look into distribution modelling, as well as

potential areas of importance for these species. It was still gathering experts for the workshop and welcomed any nominations from NEAFC and other attendees at the meeting.

4.7 The NEAFC Secretary explained that data on shark bycatch remained a major challenge with poor reporting. ICCAT had also passed on information that it had no bycatch data on the deep sea elasmobranch species that NEAFC listed under its bans of targeted fishing.

4.8 The FAO deep sea project explained that it had a work strand on the impacts of deep sea fisheries on deepwater sharks (**Presentation '4.2_CollArr24_FAO Deepwater Sharks'**). This had already collected and examined data from the partner RFMOs which had been highly variable. It would investigate the challenges and obstacles to effective reporting.

4.9 The Meeting noted the FAO project on Deep Sea Fisheries, which provided some good opportunities for cooperation on the work on shark bycatch planned by OSPAR.

Item 4.3 Possible updates on developments related to Environmental or Strategic Impact Assessments.

4.10 The OSPAR Secretariat explained that OSPAR looked into the possibility of establishing a mechanism to provide that where OSPAR Contracting Parties are authorising human activities under their jurisdiction or control that may conflict with the conservation objectives of OSPAR MPAs in the ABNJ, these activities are subjected to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). No commitment to establish a more formal and binding mechanism beyond what is in the OSPAR MPA Recommendations has been made, but this could be reconsidered in the run up to 2025. Nevertheless, OSPAR Parties would be invited to share information related to any human activities planned in the MPAs in ABNJ (**Presentation '4.3_CollArr24_OSPAR EIA Mechanism Update'**).

4.11 In discussion, the following points were made:

- a. A Contracting Party offered its view that OSPAR would need to find its place under the BBNJ as the “pre-COP” meetings progressed. FAO explained it had a specific element of its project on cross sectoral cooperation, one aspect of which could be on coordination on EIA.
- b. NEAFC indicated it would be interested to see the draft OSPAR EIA Agreement once it was available.**

Item 4.5 Data management to support regional collaboration.

4.12 The OSPAR Secretariat briefly described to the meeting the data sources now available following the publication of the QSR. The NEAFC Secretariat informed the meeting that it had been in contact with ICCAT which had explained it did not hold any data on the deep sea elasmobranchs of interest to NEAFC and OSPAR. The NEAFC Secretariat said that it would be in touch with OSPAR to get advice on how best to present OECM data to the CBD World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) data repository.

Agenda item 5 - Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM).

Item 5.1 Update on developments on OECM.

5.1 The OSPAR Secretariat outlined progress at OSPAR on OECM, including reporting under the latest draft OSPAR MPA Status report as well as the development of OSPAR criteria for identification of OECM (a task led by Ireland; see **presentation '5.1_CollArr24_OSPAR_OECM_task'**). Ireland intends to convene an OECM workshop in summer 2024, to which the FAO indicated its interest in attending. Expressions of interest in participating in the OSPAR OECM workshop should be sent to the OSPAR Secretariat.

5.2 The NEAFC Secretariat outlined progress at NEAFC on identification and reporting of OECM based on its measures to protect Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VME) (document **CollArr 24/05/01**). An OECM based on areas closed to bottom fishing to protect VME had been approved by NEAFC for reporting to the CBD. A further OECM, based on areas restricted to bottom fishing shallower than 1400 meters, was awaiting further development, subject to scientific advice from ICES on its associated biodiversity attributes. The NEAFC Annual Meeting (2023) had agreed for the report of the OECM to be accompanied by the joint narrative with OSPAR on area-based measures when finalised (see next item).

5.3 In discussion, the following points were made:

- a. Only a miniscule number of fishing activities went deeper than the vast majority which were shallower than 1400 m. NEAFC wanted to avoid simply reporting all its restricted areas given this would set a poor example in overstating the benefits of measures. A Contracting Party noted that the restricted areas were not based on presence of VMEs. Another Party added that the areas identified were those that already were in place, potentially other measures could be identified in the future with new biodiversity objectives,
- b. A Contracting Party made clear its desire that reporting the OECM with the joint narrative would be a first step in more collaboration on an ecosystem-based approach. Another Party added that exchange of data was an easy win on this issue.

Item 5.2 Update on joint narrative on area based management.

5.4 The Secretaries of OSPAR and NEAFC introduced document **CollArr 24/05/02** which described the development of the draft joint narrative between OSPAR and NEAFC on overlaps in area-based management. This narrative had been agreed at the last meeting as way of highlighting how the organisations' measures contributed to shared objectives on protection of the marine environment, increasing their visibility and speaking to a global audience, including the CBD.

5.5 The Secretaries described the aims, structure and content of the draft joint narrative (document **CollArr 24/05/02 Add1**) and invited Contracting Parties to provide amendments and comments to finalise the document. Parties were also invited to discuss any plans for future use of the joint narrative once finalised.

5.6 In discussion, the following points were made:

- a. In general, the draft joint narrative was welcomed as a step forward in describing the joint work of the two organisations. Nevertheless, the length and detail of the document may need addressing. One way of doing this could be to move text around to create an introductory summary with the detail pushed to the following text or to an annex.
- b. The document needed to be useful to both organisations, so care had to be taken to balance the sections (respecting the fact that in some respects activities and approaches did in fact differ).
- c. It was agreed that a story needed to be told on the 3D interactions in the marine environment being of a different order than that in terrestrial cases. Nevertheless, the use of 'volumetric' and a strict contrast with a 2D approach was not quite working and another drafting was required to describe the complementarity between the measures. It was proposed that some of the messaging could be signalling to CBD (including SBSTTA) that a reductive 2D measurement of the quantity of area based management did not capture the whole story of the quality of measures in the marine environment, nevertheless this message should not be seen as undermining the 30% target.
- d. In a point in addition to the text, a Contracting Party suggested a joint workshop could help ICES in providing the data on biodiversity for the VME restricted area OECM.

- e. Observer organisations noted that usefulness of the document in explaining the process and where other IGOs could engage with such measures.

5.7 In conclusion, the following **points were agreed**:

- a. The joint narrative was considered a helpful document. It should be tidied up as set out in the comments and amendments received and the discussion above. The narrative should be reorganised to make its scope and purpose clear, balancing the text but bearing in mind the different organisational approaches and reflecting the complexity of working in a 3D marine environment, and the added value of working together.
- b. The OSPAR and NEAFC Secretariats will revise the joint narrative document, as above, and send the new version to the Contracting Party delegates at the Collective Arrangement for final comments. The Secretariats will then finalise the joint narrative in consultation with the NEAFC President and OSPAR Chair as well as Chairs of the OECM processes in NEAFC and OSPAR.**
- c. The final version would then be sent to OSPAR and NEAFC Heads of Delegation for adoption by each organisation for its own use (e.g. by written procedure).**

Agenda Item 6 - Implications of the Internationally Legally Binding Instrument on BBNJ to the Collective Arrangement model of cooperation and coordination.

Item 6.1 Update on developments in NEAFC/OSPAR.

2.18. The Secretariats presented document **CollArr 24/06/01** on the implications of the international legally binding Instrument on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ). This invited any updates from Contracting Parties and an exchange of views on the implications of the agreement for the Collective Arrangement model of cooperation and coordination and its engagement with the BBNJ. The meeting was also invited to consider how to engage with, or expand such cooperation to, other relevant competent organisations.

2.19. In discussion, the following views were noted:

- a. It was noted that the Collective Arrangement was a unique collaboration given the role of ICES as a scientific advisor to both organisations. The FAO agreed that it was a useful arrangement in its view to highlight to other RFMOs.
- b. A Contracting Party suggested that the new instrument was clear in its respect for competences and therefore there was no need to await further clarity from the future Conference of Parties (COP) before engaging on the issues. Its view was that the Collective Arrangement already demonstrated the willingness to work together across the sectors. Another Contracting Party was of the view that the new instrument would enable measures to go ahead under the COP, not only where there was no existing competence, but also where there was no engagement from existing competent organisations.
- c. Another Contracting Party agreed that, given the overlap in convention areas the Collective Arrangement was a very useful process, but for other organisations with global remits a different perspective might be required. Another Contracting Party added that communication of the position was a sensitive issue and should not give the impression that the BBNJ mechanisms were considered unnecessary in the North-East Atlantic.

- d. It was noted that it may be useful to revisit the text of the Collective Arrangement agreement, irrespective of the possible need to do so in light of the BBNJ.
- e. The view of ISA Secretariat was that the BBNJ did not upend existing competences, nevertheless it was interested in the Collective Arrangement as a practical means of transparent communication of information in a timely manner.

2.20. In conclusion, the following **points were agreed**:

- a. **the importance of the Collective Arrangement and the significant role it could play in helping to implement the BBNJ,**
- b. **the text of the Collective Arrangement agreement should be revisited to bring it up to date,**
- c. **the Collective Arrangement should explore ways to bring in other organisations into the arrangement, or cooperation and collaboration with it, in some other way than formal partners,**
- d. **that the BBNJ was a sensitive issue, and the relation to the Collective Arrangement should be handled carefully in terms of presentation to the outside world.**

Agenda item 7 - Climate Change implications for work under the collective arrangement

Item 7.1 Update on developments in NEAFC/OSPAR.

7.1 OSPAR informed the meeting about its developments related to climate change. (presentation '7.1_CollArr24_OSPAR WG COCOA Update'). The Secretariat detailed the findings of the QSR 2023 on warming and ocean acidification, the relevant elements of the 2023 North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) as well as the recent working group set up within OSPAR to look into climate change and ocean acidification and its planned work programme. OSPAR was aiming to mitigate, increase resilience, and facilitate adaptation to the impacts of climate change through its various measures.

7.2 NEAFC explained that it had adopted a non-binding resolution on climate change at the last Annual Meeting (document **CollArr 24/07/01**). This included tasks for information sharing under PECMAS as well as an aim to reduce carbon impacts of NEAFC meetings.

7.3 In discussion it was noted:

- a. that OSPAR was attempting to bridge the gap between ocean and climate fora by identifying individuals to collaborate with and obtaining observership at the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Convention.
- b. NEAFC was engaging with the issue, but given the timescales for management of fisheries, the current long-term climate change predictions offered in ICES advice did not offer sufficient confidence levels to inform shorter term management decisions.

7.4 The Meeting welcomed the updates and encouraged continued discussion on this topic in future years.

Agenda Item 8 - Any other business

Item 8.1 Discussion on observers.

8.1 The NEAFC Secretary presented document **CollArr 24/08/01** which included a letter from Pew Charitable Trusts requesting observership at the meetings under the collective arrangement.

8.2 In discussion the following points were made:

- a. In general, there was positive support for observers attending the meeting. This would be in the usual format of statements and information documents.

- b. Other considerations were the numbers of observers that could be allowed (respecting space limitations), clarifying whether there could be a role in leading working groups, the need for agreed procedures on allowing observers to attend and rules on behaviour such as sharing information etc.
- c. Several Contracting Parties, while emphasising the need for transparency, also expressed caution, for instance in allowing access only meeting by meeting and the need for certain agenda items to be closed if necessary.

8.3 In conclusion it was agreed to:

- a. **advise the respective organisation's Heads of Delegation that the meetings under the Collective Arrangement should be open to observers (by 2025),**
- b. **the secretariats should look to develop [draft] rules of procedure for the participation of observers at the Collective Arrangement meetings (merging of OSPAR and NEAFC rules of procedures). The draft rules of procedure would be finalised by Collective Arrangement Parties in written procedure before being offered for adoption by OSPAR and NEAFC.**

Item 8.1 Hybrid format for future meetings

8.4 Following earlier discussion under agenda item 1, the meeting reconsidered the current practice of only allowing Contracting Party delegates to attend in person (IGO representatives being allowed to attend virtually if needed).

8.5 In discussion the following points were made:

- a. Some Contracting Parties noted the importance of face-to-face attendance to ensure delegates from both organisations got to know each other and could interact more effectively.
- b. On the other hand, a contrasting view was that national experts were needed to support delegations, thus hybrid was a necessity to reduce travel and time dedicated to the meeting.
- c. It was considered NGOs should follow the same attendance mode as Contracting Parties, but barriers to attendance for IGOs should be as low as possible.

8.6 In conclusion it was agreed:

- a. **That both hybrid and face-to-face options had benefits and disbenefits.**
- b. **For future meetings Contracting Parties planning to attend would continue to need to send at least one delegate in person. However, if there was a delegate present in person, then further members of that delegation would be able to attend virtually in observer function only (not intervening). The same rule would be applied to NGO observers.**
- c. **IGO observers would continue to be encouraged to attend in person, but if unable to do so, they would be able to attend virtually with the full ability to speak/intervene in the proceedings.**
- d. **This above practice would be trialled at the next meeting and the decision revisited as necessary.**

Agenda Item 9 - Conclusion and future meeting

Item 9.1 Conclusions from the meeting.

9.1 The Chairs thanked the participants from OSPAR, NEAFC and the IGOs for a highly productive exchange of views including on respective developments in area based management and on climate change. They noted in particular the work to be continued on the joint narrative and the future considerations on the implications of the BBNJ. The meeting had also progressed on issues related to observers and format. The

Chairs thanked the NEAFC Secretariat for hosting the 7th meeting under the Collective Arrangement.

Item 9.2. Arrangements for the 8th meeting under the collective arrangement.

9.2 It was agreed to hold the 8th meeting in February 2025. The Secretariats would liaise with Belgium with a view to holding the 8th meeting in Brussels.

9.3 Portugal kindly offered to host the 9th meeting in 2026, subject to developments.

Item 9.2. Process for developing the aide memoire of the meeting.

9.4 The meeting noted that the NEAFC Secretariat, with support from the OSPAR Secretariat, would develop the *Aide Memoire*, which would be circulated for information as soon as possible.

Annex 1



Draft agenda Seventh meeting under the collective arrangement

Start of the meeting: 21 February 2024 (13:00)
Close of the meeting: 22 February 2024 (16:00)
Venue: NEAFC Secretariat, London, UK

Information on the collective arrangement is available on [OSPAR](#) and [NEAFC²](#) websites.

Agenda Item 1 – Opening of the meeting and procedural issues

- 1.8. Opening of the meeting by Ane-Marie Løvendahl Eskildsen (OSPAR) and Janet Skarðsá (NEAFC).
- 1.9. Introduction of participants (Tour de Table).
- 1.10. Election of the Chairs for the meeting.
- 1.11. Adoption of the agenda.

Agenda Item 2 – Exchange of information regarding ongoing initiatives of relevance to the collective arrangement

- 2.1. Update on initiatives by NEAFC and OSPAR of relevance to the collective arrangement.
- 2.2. Updates on national initiatives of relevance to the collective arrangement.
- 2.3. Initiatives from other competent international organisations relevant to the collective arrangement.
- 2.4. Developments on the expansion of the collective arrangement to other competent organisations [and alternative approaches to gain their inclusion in the process].
- 2.5. Update on ecosystem-based management under OSPAR and NEAFC.

Agenda Item 3 – Areas notified to the collective arrangement.

- 3.1. OSPAR update on its programme on Marine Protected Areas.
- 3.2. NEAFC update on its VMEs and fisheries closure areas.

² www.ospar.org/about/international-cooperation/collective-arrangement, www.neafc.org/collective-arrangement.

Agenda Item 4 – Scientific information and environmental assessment

- 4.1 Information on new scientific information and monitoring on the marine environment of human activities, with a focus on bycatch.
- 4.2 Update on OSPAR and NEAFC cooperation on generating better knowledge on deep sea elasmobranchs.
- 4.3 Possible updates on developments related to Environmental or Strategic Impact Assessments.
- 4.4 Data management to support regional collaboration.

Agenda item 5 [New] - Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECM).

- 5.1 Update on developments on OECM.
- 5.2 Update on joint narrative on area-based management.

Agenda Item 6 [New] – Implications of the International Legally Binding Instrument on BBNJ relevant to the collective arrangement.

- 6.1. Update on developments in NEAFC/OSPAR.

Agenda item 7 [New] - Climate Change implications for work under the collective arrangement.

- 7.1 Update on developments in NEAFC/OSPAR.

Agenda Item 8 - Any other business

- 5.1 Discussion on observers.
- 5.2 Participants may propose other issues to be discussed.

Agenda Item 9 - Conclusion and future meeting

- 9.1 Conclusions from the meeting.
- 9.2 Arrangements for the 8th meeting under the collective arrangement.
- 9.3 Process for developing the *aide memoire* of the meeting.