

**OSPAR MM 2021 - Oral statement by Oceana (EN)**

“Dear ministers, OSPAR delegates,

*Thank you for offering Oceana the opportunity to address this meeting remotely. Sadly I could not join you in the beautiful city of Cascais. But I hope that having the Atlantic as the backdrop of this meeting will help you remember that the ocean is our life support system.*

*But for the ocean to provide effective solutions to the rapidly accelerating ecological crisis and the climate emergency, marine ecosystems must be healthy, productive and abundant. And they are not. The latest OSPAR assessment shows that despite some progress, most OSPAR targets have not been met. The MPA network in the North-East Atlantic is not yet ecologically coherent, and is far from being well-managed. Bottom-fishing is a major threat to benthic habitats, particularly in coastal areas. And the amount of plastic pollution both floating and on the seafloor is not decreasing.*

*The 2030 OSPAR Strategy is our last chance to seriously tackle marine pollution and destructive fishing impacts in the North-East Atlantic. We need more ambition in reducing single-use plastics entering the ocean, and to rapidly and drastically mitigate climate change –by keeping fossil fuels in the ground and also, crucially, by safeguarding ocean life and the seabed as natural carbon stores and essential elements of the carbon and climate systems.*

*In addition, Oceana strongly supports the ambition of the 30 by 30 target for Marine Protected Areas, but this must result in real biodiversity protection, with destructive fishing banned in all sites. We do not have time for “paper parks” anymore. On the contrary, we need full protection of at the very least 10% of the ocean protection by 2030. Yet a minority of OSPAR Contracting Parties blocked the adoption of this target, opposing science and harming the credibility of this Convention.*

*Dear ministers: As the global negotiations on biodiversity proceed, the world will be looking to you for leadership and ambition. You represent the governments of some of the most developed and prosperous countries in the world. You have the power to not only sign up to ambitious commitments, but also to take real action, now, to address the ecological breakdown we are facing.*

*We count on you, OSPAR Ministers, to put the North-East Atlantic at the forefront of global ocean protection.*

*Thank you.”*