

Offshore Oil and Gas Industry

1. Objectives

1.1 The OSPAR Commission's strategic objective with regard to offshore oil and gas activities is to prevent and eliminate pollution and take the necessary measures to protect the OSPAR maritime area against the adverse effects of offshore activities⁹ by setting environmental goals and improving management mechanisms, so as to safeguard human health and to conserve marine ecosystems and, when practicable, restore marine areas which have been adversely affected.

1.2 The objectives of the other OSPAR thematic strategies apply in so far as they relate to offshore activities.

1.3 The Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Strategy will be implemented progressively, through appropriate actions and measures, with the target:

- a. to achieve, by 2020, a reduction of oil in produced water discharged into the sea to a level which will adequately ensure that each of those discharges will present no harm to the marine environment;
- b. to have phased out, by 1 January 2017, the discharge of offshore chemicals that are, or which contain substances, identified as candidates for substitution, except for those chemicals where, despite considerable efforts, it can be demonstrated that this is not feasible due to technical or safety reasons (OSPAR Recommendation 2006/3).

1.4 The Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Strategy also covers activities to store CO₂ streams in geological formations with the objective to ensure that CO₂ streams are retained permanently in those formations and will not lead to significant adverse consequences for the marine environment, human health and other legitimate uses of the maritime area (OSPAR Decision 2007/2).

2. Guiding principles

2.1 When making assessments and adopting programmes and measures in relation to offshore oil and gas activities, the Contracting Parties will be guided by the general principles described in section 3 of Part I. In addition, assessments made and programmes and measures adopted to achieve the objective and implement this strategy will be in accordance with:

- a. the relevant provisions set out in Annex III to the OSPAR Convention. Consequently this will ensure that, in setting priorities and in assessing the nature and extent of the programmes and measures and their time scales, the criteria given in Appendix 2 to the OSPAR Convention are used;
- b. the relevant provisions of Annex V to the OSPAR Convention which will ensure the application of an integrated Ecosystem Approach;
- c. the waste management hierarchy of avoidance, reduction, re-use, recycling, recovery, and residue disposal.

3. Main strategic directions

3.1 To achieve its objectives and in accordance with the findings of the Quality Status Report 2010, the OSPAR Commission will focus, in the period up to 2020, on actions to identify, prioritise, monitor and control (*i.e.* to prevent and/or reduce and/or eliminate) the emissions, discharges and losses of substances which reach or could reach the marine environment and which cause, or are likely to cause, pollution. In addition,

⁹ Defined in the OSPAR Convention as "activities carried out in the maritime area for the purpose of the exploration, appraisal or exploitation of liquid and gaseous hydrocarbons".

the OSPAR Commission will keep under review the need for actions to prevent other potential adverse effects from offshore activities on the ecosystems and biological diversity of the maritime area. The OSPAR Commission also recognises the need to pay particular attention to the decommissioning of redundant oil and gas installations as these activities increase.

3.2 To this end, the OSPAR Commission will focus on the following main strategic directions:

- a. carry out effective regional, coordinated information collection, environmental monitoring and assessment to evaluate the extent of pollution and other adverse effects of offshore oil and gas activities in all Regions of the OSPAR maritime area;
- b. assess the extent to which existing programmes and measures meet, or will meet, the objectives of the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Strategy and the achieving or maintaining of good environmental status under the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- c. where necessary, revise existing measures and/or develop and adopt new measures, taking climate change impacts into account;
- d. continue efforts to reduce discharges of harmful substances, including oil, by developing and applying a harmonised method of assessing environmental risk (risk based approach) relating to the management of produced water, and phase out discharges of hazardous substances;
- e. with a view to progressively develop Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) for environmental issues, promote the sharing of information and experience between Contracting Parties, non-governmental organisations and relevant research and development forums;
- f. assess the relevance for OSPAR work, including cooperation with the Bonn Agreement, of significant acute pollution events;
- g. continue to promote the use and implementation by the offshore oil and gas industry of environmental management mechanisms, including elements for auditing and reporting, which are designed to achieve both continuous improvement in environmental performance and to fulfil the objective of this strategy.

4. Timeframe and implementation

4.1 The Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Strategy will be implemented progressively and, in so far as they apply, following on and consistent with the commitments made in the other OSPAR thematic strategies. The strategy will be implemented in line with the OSPAR Commission's commitment to an Ecosystem Approach and detailed in the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme and the periodic Programmes of Work, which will establish priorities, assign tasks, and set deadlines.

4.2 The OSPAR Commission will keep under review and, where necessary, develop programmes and measures in respect of all phases of offshore activities, in accordance with the provisions of the OSPAR Convention and the findings in the QSR 2010, taking into account the development of programmes and measures (e.g. REACH) introduced by other international organisations. To this end, the OSPAR Commission will:

- a. continue the annual collection of data on use and discharges of offshore chemicals, emissions to air, spills, and discharges of oil and radioactive substances;
- b. by 2011, develop and implement a harmonised method of assessing environmental risk (risk based approach) relating to the management of produced water discharged from offshore installations;

- c. by 2011, encourage Contracting Parties to report on their reviews of their existing frameworks, investigate whether there are specific environmental issues relating to drilling activities in extreme conditions, taking into account external reviews, and, if required, develop appropriate measures;
- d. by 2011, review the phasing out of the discharge in the OSPAR maritime area of offshore chemicals that are, or which contain added substances, listed in the OSPAR List of Chemicals for Priority Action (OSPAR Recommendation 2005/2);
- e. continue efforts to phase out discharges of hazardous substances by implementing OSPAR Decision 2000/2 (as amended) on a Harmonised Mandatory Control System for the Use and Reduction of the Discharge of Offshore Chemicals and its related measures, including their further review, as necessary, to harmonise with the relevant requirements of the REACH Regulation;
- f. by 2012, review the disposal of naturally occurring radioactive material in the form of low specific activity scales and sludges and, where appropriate, develop management measures to reduce the discharges of radioactive substances from offshore oil and gas activities;
- g. continue efforts to improve tools for environmental monitoring, data collection and assessment of the effects of discharges and emissions from offshore installations, including effects on ecosystems, in particular on threatened and/or declining species and habitats;
- h. further assess the impact of underwater noise from the offshore oil and gas industry in light of EU criteria and methodological standards for good environmental status and, as appropriate, develop guidance on best practice for its mitigation;
- i. assess the suitability of existing measures to manage oil and gas activities in Region I and, where necessary, offer to contribute to the work on offshore oil and gas activities taking place under the Arctic Council, specifically under the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group (PAME);
- j. by 2012, investigate whether there are specific environmental issues relating to ageing installations and infrastructure and, if required, develop appropriate measures;
- k. in 2013, review and, if appropriate, amend the categories of disused offshore installations where derogations of OSPAR Decision 98/3 on the Disposal of Disused Offshore Installations may be considered;
- l. by 2014, reassess the possibilities of releases of oil and chemicals from any disturbance of cuttings piles and their potential impacts on the marine environment;
- m. continue monitoring the development of Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) activities, including Contracting Parties' permits and approvals for CCS projects, to ensure that appropriate measures are in place.

5. Interrelation with other international institutions

5.1 Contracting Parties which participate in other forums will, if appropriate, endeavour to ensure that programmes and measures relevant to this strategy, which are developed within those other forums (e.g. the European Community, the Bonn Agreement, the London Convention and its Protocol, the Helsinki Commission, the Arctic Council and other relevant regional organisations), are compatible with any relevant programmes and measures adopted by the OSPAR Commission.