



Welcome from Mr John Clorley, Defra

As I reflected back on last year's meeting cycle, one thing that struck me was that although enthusiasm amongst Contracting Parties for delivering the OSPAR agenda remains, institutional tensions and questions of legal interpretation rise up the agendas the nearer we come to agreeing actions. This, I feel, is not surprising, and rather than indicating that OSPAR cannot deliver effective action for the conservation of biodiversity, it is more a reflection on the fact that decisions taken by OSPAR are highly regarded and important.

To non-Government partners, the technical, sometimes tedious, often circular, discussions about text can be seen as a way for Contracting Parties to block action. However, it is a reflection that those representing the Contracting Parties know that, in order for action to be undertaken, these recommendations or agreements need to be robust to face possible challenges within and outside their Governments when they return home.

The extended discussions about the species and habitats recommendations recently agreed by OSPAR are a good example. No Contracting Party disputed the fact that, for real improvements to be made to the conservation of these species and habitats, damaging fishery activities would need to be managed. However, this must be agreed in a way that is consistent with the framework of OSPAR and with national and other international mechanisms for delivering this management. What is required now is that having reached agreement all Parties responsible for fisheries management, invest a similar amount of effort to take forward the necessary measures.

So, to the challenges ahead: Undoubtedly, the focus ahead for the EU members of OSPAR is the delivery of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). OSPAR had already set the foundations for much of this work on the regional implementation of the Directive. Work undertaken to develop Ecological Quality Objectives laid the foundation for many of the common biodiversity indicators. This work needs to continue and be enhanced. We need to ensure that the development of the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme is closely aligned with the MSFD requirements and that the work to deliver the OSPAR Interim Assessment planned for 2017 complements and assists the work of EU Member States (EUMS).

However, while EUMS are naturally focussed on the delivery of MSFD, OSPAR is more than EUMS waters. Indeed most of the OSPAR area lies outside the EUMS waters. Here, again, the work of OSPAR remains relevant. Over the coming years negotiators in the United Nations (UN) in New York will be turning their attention to the development of a new implementing agreement for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. OSPAR has demonstrated that a regional "bottom up" approach to the identification of High Seas Marine Protected Areas is viable, and working with relevant competent authorities, real conservation measures can be delivered. It is important that this operative and successful model of high seas work is not lost in future negotiations within the UN process.



Mr John Clorley

Also in this issue

Welcome from Mr John Clorley

Recommendations - Species and Habitats

IMPAC3

Environment and Fish

OSPAR/Abidjan Convention MoU

JPI Oceans

Nikkon Foundation visit

Leo Henriquez's retirement

BEAWARE



Recommendations agreed for adoption to protect species and habitats

In 2008, OSPAR agreed to protect 42 species and 16 habitats under threat or in decline in the North-East Atlantic. The Contracting Parties agreed to develop Recommendations for actions that could be taken either individually or collectively to improve the state of these species and habitats. By the end of 2013 such actions and measures had been adopted for just over half of the features on the list. The most recent, adopted in December 2013, include some of our most iconic species, the blue whale and two species of sea turtle that come to the North-East Atlantic to feed. Other species are perhaps less well-known but equally remarkable, like the Ocean Quahog – a deep sea clam that has been known to live for as long as five hundred years.



©Ecomare

The Recommendations also cover a series of habitats, including littoral chalk communities – one of the best examples of which are the white cliffs of Dover. The threats that these species and habitats face range widely with the many uses of the sea – from local scale physical damage to their environment, to plastic debris finding its way from land into the sea. Plastic bags and other marine litter can be a significant threat to several of the species, such as the leatherback and loggerhead turtles. The Recommendations cover a range of actions, such as identifying and protecting areas that have particular importance, taking measures to reduce pressures from specific human activities, or conducting scientific research to increase our understanding of these species. The work continues with another 16 Recommendations under consideration in 2014.

Every four years there the International Marine Protected Areas Congress is convened, bringing together a community of people who study, work with, live off, manage, and govern the world's marine protected areas. Attendees work at all scales from the individual site to understanding the global perspective. In October 2013, France hosted the third in this series of meetings – IMPAC3.

The first part of IMPAC3 was a technical congress held in Marseilles. 1500 participants from 87 countries participated in an exhausting 5-day programme, which aimed to explore latest science, management, Governance, partnerships and engagement of industry, with the final day dedicated to looking at regional approaches for MPAs.

OSPAR was well-represented, with many Contracting Parties contributing to workshops and dialogue sessions. The OSPAR Secretariat joined forces with the MAIA and PANACHE projects - projects within the OSPAR maritime that are building networks of MPA managers - to host an information booth in the IMPAC exhibition hall. This proved a great way to increase the visibility of MPA work in the North East Atlantic, creating opportunities for regional exchange, as well as providing a hub for the North-East Atlantic networks.

IMPAC resulted in six main conclusions, including an emphasis on the necessity of regional approaches for devising solutions, particularly with respect to governance. These messages were communicated to a special high-level meeting of Ministers and high-level officials in Ajaccio, immediately following the Congress. This was the first time an IMPAC meeting has created a mechanism for the communication of the findings of these meetings, one that should be replicated, to help maintain urgency and momentum

The formal conclusions of IMPAC 3 and the Ajaccio high level event: the Ajaccio Declaration and ministerial message from Ajaccio, as well as interviews, documents and images can be accessed at <http://www.impact3.org>.



The OSPAR/MAIA/PANACHE booth at IMPAC 3

Environment and Fish

OSPAR has been working for many years alongside an organisation with many of the same Contracting Parties and covering much of the same geographical area in the High Seas, beyond national jurisdiction. That organisation is the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC), with its responsibility for long-term conservation and optimum utilisation of fishery resources.

In the oceans, commercial fish stocks and the rest of the ecosystem are indivisible and interact continuously, but this is often not the case in the thinking of administrations and sectoral interests operating in the sea. These divisions may well be inevitable given the economic and governance realities. However, OSPAR and NEAFC have been active in trying to overcome some of these divisions and cooperate with each other, while at the same time respecting their geographical and sectoral competences.

One development is the Collective Arrangement on cooperation and coordination regarding the management of selected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This arrangement sets out a framework to enable organisations to share information and cooperate with respect to their objectives in the marine areas in which they each implement the management actions within their given mandates. Over 2013, OSPAR and NEAFC have made good progress on a common draft and we hope to agree a final draft soon. OSPAR and NEAFC hope that in the future all other relevant bodies with competence in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the North-East Atlantic will sign up to this initiative.

Another area OSPAR and NEAFC have cooperated well on is developing and reviewing the scientific case to describe areas in the North-East Atlantic that meet the criteria set by out by the Convention on Biological Diversity for Ecologically and Biologically Significant Areas. By funding ICES to carry out an expert review, OSPAR and NEAFC found a way to come to mutual decisions on the scientific cases for these areas, despite their different organisational objectives and structures. This success in cooperation between OSPAR and NEAFC, has yet to bear fruit in terms of actual submissions, due to further national considerations related to the continental shelf. However, the work underlines the importance of getting sectoral organisations involved in such a process in order to ensure buy-in to and productive use of the final results.

MoU between the OSPAR Commission and the Abidjan Convention

OSPAR Commission and the Abidjan Convention recently signed a MoU between their Secretariats.

Both organisations have similar goals in the protection and conservation of the marine environment, including marine ecosystems and biological diversity in their respective areas, namely the North-East Atlantic for OSPAR and the Atlantic Coast of West, Central and Southern Africa for the Abidjan Convention. The agreement helps to fulfil both conventions' obligations cooperate with other relevant competent regional organisations.

The Secretariats' cooperation will include exchange of knowledge and experience, and consultation on particular on issues of mutual interest. Cooperation will also include observership at each other's meetings and the potential for joint meetings and activities.



At this early stage we are exploring which are the areas most fruitful to work on together. Given the intense new oil exploration activity in the Abidjan Convention area, OSPAR's experience under its Offshore Industry Committee may be helpful. Work under the Bonn Agreement, which shares its Secretariat staff with OSPAR, may also be useful. An example of potentially relevant work is a recent (EU co-funded) project to assess the risks to the environment of oil and other hazardous spills in the Celtic and North Seas from accidents involving ships (and offshore platforms).

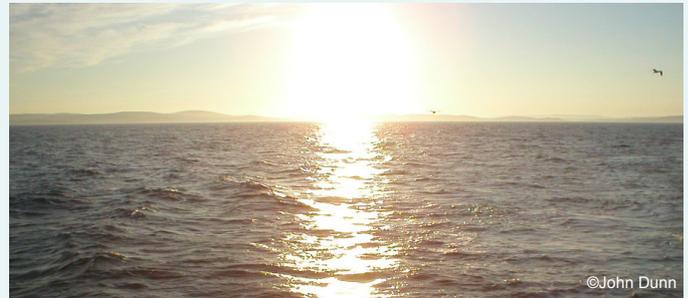
Joint Programme Initiative on Oceans

JPI Oceans – Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans Sustainable use of marine resources is a ‘grand societal challenge’ for which many European countries have decided, in the form of an EU ‘joint programming initiative’, to increase the value of relevant national and EU R&D and infrastructure investments through a combined effort of joint planning, implementing and evaluating national research programmes. 19 countries participate in the JPI Oceans (www.jpi-oceans.eu) covering all European sea basins. A Strategic Advisory Board assists the Management Board in elaborating, and preparing a Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA). Gert Verreet from the OSPAR Secretariat was, in a personal capacity, elected to participate in the Strategic Advisory Board and serves as one of its two Vice-chairs. Gert aims to make this liaison function useful for OSPAR work on its Science Agenda.



Nikon Foundation visit

Since 2011, the OSPAR Secretariat has been holding informal meetings with Fellows of the ITLOS-Nippon Foundation, who are participating in the capacity building programme organised by the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS). In 2013, fourteen junior and mid-level government officials from all over the world visited the Secretariat. As part of their training on international environmental law, they had the opportunity to exchange views on various ITLOS and OSPAR-related matters. These gatherings provide the Secretariat with an excellent opportunity to establish and maintain valuable contacts.



An ageing installation...Leo Henriquez's retirement

During its meeting in March 2013 the Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) took bold steps forwards formulating a new policy concerning ageing offshore installations in the treaty area. As is the custom in OIC, rules have to be discussed when dealing with ageing installations that pose risks to the environment. One of these installations, better known as Leo Henriquez, had announced during the meeting his intentions of retiring and decisions had to be made on methods of disposal (onshore or offshore). Leo Henriquez started his career in the Netherlands Antilles and attended the first meetings of the “Group of Oil Producers”, an OSPAR predecessor, in 1985. Leo grew to be a well-known participant of OIC and a person with unparalleled international experience in all aspects of the offshore Industry. As the convenor of the Expert Assessment Panel of OIC, Leo had the difficult duty of keeping OIC aligned with its strategy but he possibly is even better known for his post meeting opinions on matters as “produced water cocktails” and his beloved island of Aruba.

It is with regret that OIC adopted a first and only time decision on Leo. It was decided that despite the hazards of onshore disposal, no dumping at sea was advised. OIC concluded that Leo be brought ashore as a whole in Aruba and that he should enjoy future projects whether they were related to the Offshore Industry or the shade of a palm tree.

OSPAR thanks Leo for his 28 years of service and wishes him well in the future!



BEAWARE

The BE-AWARE project, undertaken by the Bonn Agreement, held its final conference in December 2013. The aim of the two-year project was to assess the risk of oil and hazardous and noxious substances pollution from accidents, such as ship-ship collisions, groundings, collisions with fixed objects (e.g. with oil installations and wind farms) and spills from oil installations directly. After 2 years the project has for the first time provided a clear idea of the risk of accidents and likelihood of spills right across the Greater North Sea and its approaches, both now and in 2020. This is an important step in determining where response capacity and risk reducing measures need to be developed for the future. The project was part funded by the EU Civil Protection Financial Instrument.

BE AWARE



Bonn Agreement
Accord de Bonn

A second phase, BE-AWARE II, is now underway. This will model oil spills and combine this with information on the vulnerability of the environment and economy of the region to oil pollution. This will allow the impact of spills to be identified for different response and risk reduction scenarios, allowing the development of risk management conclusions for the greater North Sea and its sub-regions.

Further information on BE-AWARE, including the project partners and results can be found at beaware.bonnagreement.org.

OSPAR Commission
Victoria House
37-63 Southampton Row
London WC1B 4DA
United Kingdom
www.ospar.org