



OSPAR
COMMISSION

*Protecting and conserving the
North-East Atlantic and its resources*

Annual Report

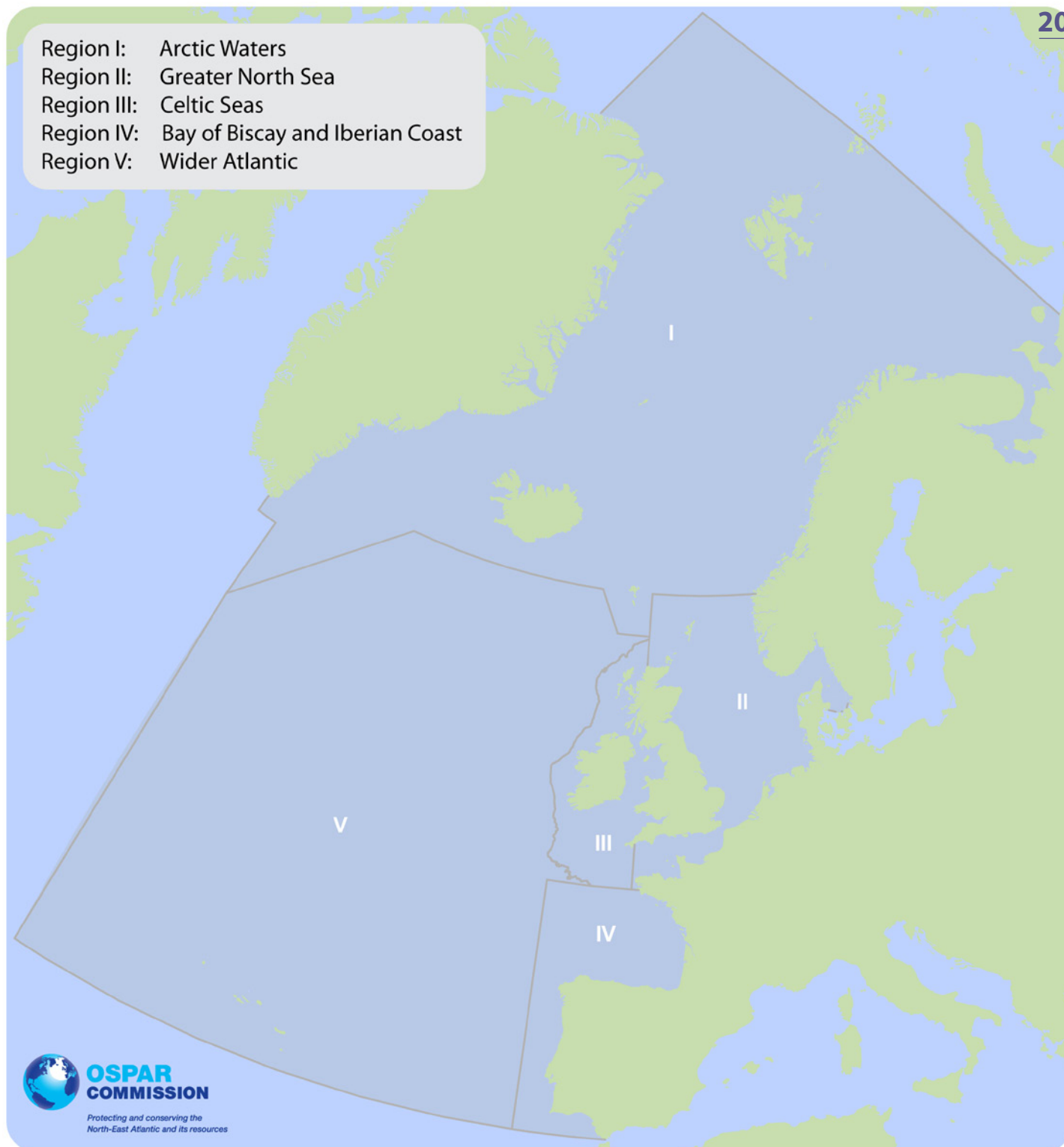
2017-2018



OSPAR *Maritime Area*

- Region I: Arctic Waters
- Region II: Greater North Sea
- Region III: Celtic Seas
- Region IV: Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast
- Region V: Wider Atlantic

2017-18



**OSPAR
COMMISSION**

Protecting and conserving the
North-East Atlantic and its resources

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OSPAR Achievements 2017-18

From our new Executive Secretary Susana Salvador



Welcome to the latest review of OSPAR's activities.

This review of OSPAR's activities in 2017-2018 reflects an ambitious programme of work under the OSPAR Ministers' North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) 2010-2020 and the way in which OSPAR continues to take forward activities to support Contracting Parties' national, regional and global ambitions with regard to the protection and conservation of the marine environment.

In 2017, much of the effort has been directed to the launching of the Intermediate Assessment (IA) 2017 of the state of the North-East Atlantic and in 2018 important finalisation work including a 'lessons learnt' process has been developed.

Substantial discussions were devoted to OSPAR future goals and targets, in particular on a new OSPAR Strategy for the period after 2020 and the assessment of progress of OSPAR's work against the main objectives and thematic goals of the North-East Atlantic Strategy 2010-2020. In 2018 OSPAR thematic Committees have provided important initial reviews for assessing progress against specific objectives and for assessing the effectiveness of adopted measures. Mapping thematic work against UN Sustainable Development Goals has been considered a relevant contribution to the definition of future OSPAR objectives and to the preparation for the next Quality Status Report in 2023.

Following previous discussions on the need to improve OSPAR's Governance, important steps have been taken - including a very constructive workshop addressing the vision and common purpose of OSPAR towards enhancing its performance and internal governance.

Alongside this important internal work OSPAR continued to strongly engage with other international fora, such as the Arctic Council and the Cartagena Convention, but also with other Regional Sea Conventions and Regional Fisheries Organisations, culminating with the 4th meeting of the Collective Arrangement in May 2018 which was attended by a varied range of participants and affirmed itself as a successful dialogue platform for consultation and information sharing.

I am very pleased to provide this 2017/18 review as my first as Executive Secretary. I will continue to engage and do my best endeavours to an enhanced OSPAR Commission and North-East Atlantic marine environment.

OSPAR Achievements 2017-18

From our outgoing Chair Laura Piriz

2017-2018 was an intensive period which saw European Regional Seas Conventions working in tandem with the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive on reporting allowing EU Member States that are also OSPAR Contracting Parties to use IA 2017 in their national reporting. While OSPAR focused a lot of effort on the production of assessments in 2017, it did not stop its engagement with the global agenda. For instance, OSPAR supported its contracting parties to engage with the Caribbean Environmental Program and the Abidjan Convention on the implementation of the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), with focus on marine litter and marine biodiversity.

OSPAR's Network of MPAs continues growing and comprises currently 465 MPAs, with a total surface area of 858,890 km² or 6.3 % of the OSPAR Maritime Area. The assessment made in 2017 showed however, that birds are "in trouble". During 2016-2017 steps were discussed to support migratory birds and OSPAR is developing a proposal for a marine protected area (MPA) in the Evlanov seamout, in an area beyond national jurisdiction. OSPAR is seeking views on the site nomination in an inclusive manner to gather as much information as possible to inform a decision on the designation of the proposed MPA and any recommendations on its future management.

The cooperation with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, and in particular NEAFC, is entering an operative phase and is currently focusing on the protection of sharks.

Reports on discharges, spills and emissions from offshore installations and on discharges of radioactive substances from the non-nuclear sector have been produced and provide rich information. These, and other OSPAR publications, are useful to evaluate the effectiveness of the work against OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy for the period 2010-2020 and to give direction to the future strategy whose preliminary structure is already in place.

This chairmanship period has reached its end and this is my final review as Chair of OSPAR. These days, when climate change mirrors in recurrent extreme events that hit people and nature all round the world, I can only be thankful to everyone including experts, managers, non-governmental organisations, industry, governments and heads of delegations committed to the implementation of the OSPAR convention. It has been highly enjoyable and very instructive to work with you all.

I take this opportunity to wish OSPAR Heads of Delegations, the OSPAR Secretariat and the new Chair, Mr Richard Cronin (Ireland), all success in their important endeavours for the marine environment.



Data

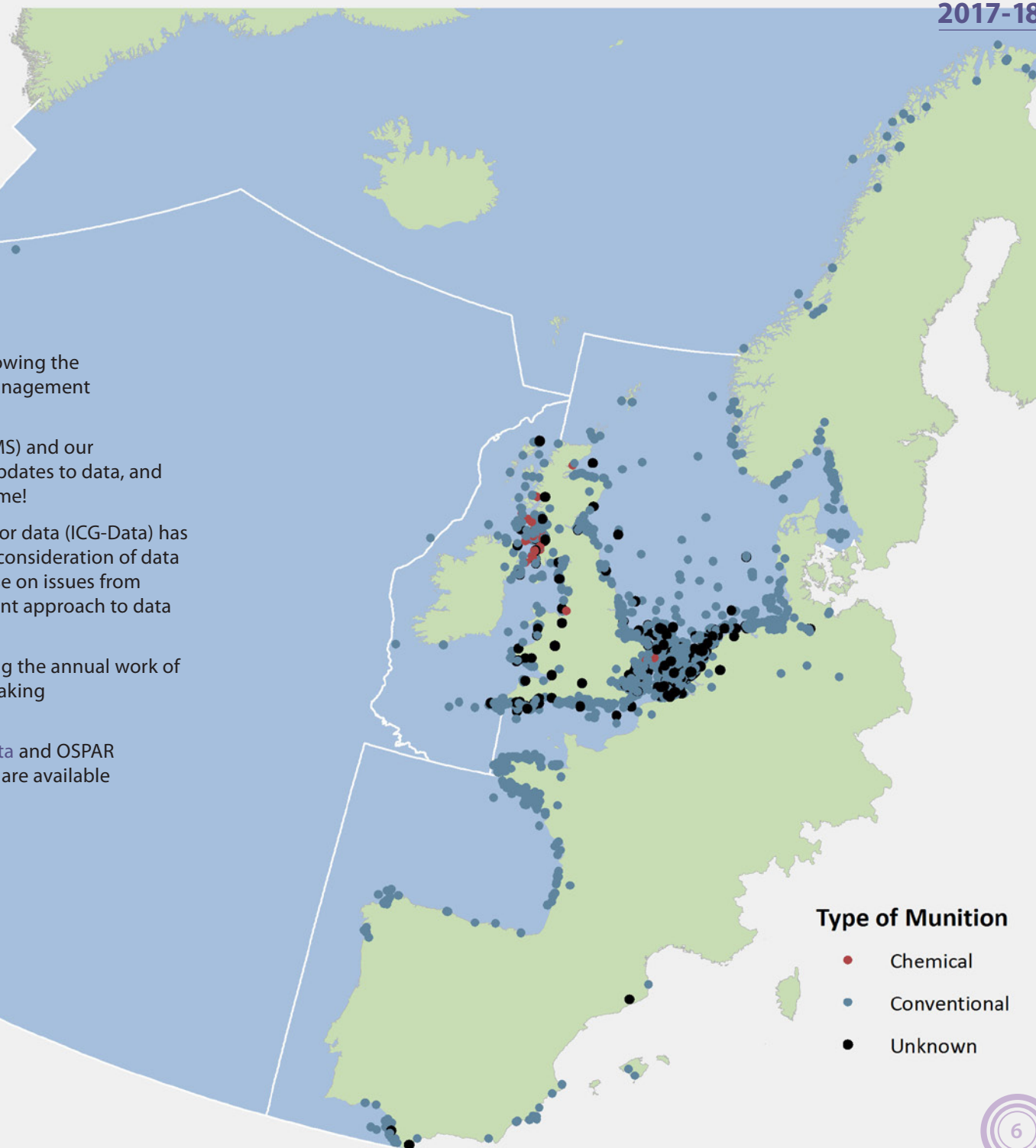
Data management at OSPAR continues to hold pace following the agreement of the new OSPAR Data and Information Management Strategy last year.

The development of a key function of our data portal (ODIMS) and our assessment portal (OAP) which will allow for recording of updates to data, and management of change is taking shape; more on this to come!

The formation of an Intersessional Correspondence Group for data (ICG-Data) has been signed-off. This will give a strategic, central forum for consideration of data and information activities within OSPAR. ICG-Data will advise on issues from committees and groups with a view to developing a coherent approach to data management activities.

More data is always being added to the data portal following the annual work of committees. The addition of new data increases the map making opportunities! <https://odims.ospar.org/maps/new>

As always, OSPAR data are accessible via www.ospar.org/data and OSPAR assessments (including the Intermediate Assessment 2017) are available via www.ospar.org/assessments.



Biological Diversity

OSPAR's Biodiversity Committee (BDC) continued its work towards the fulfilment of the current North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES)'s thematic Biodiversity and Ecosystem Strategy. The meeting initiated an evaluation on progress towards achieving the goal of halting further loss of biodiversity by 2020.

The OSPAR biodiversity common indicators form a large part of the evidence base for evaluating progress against the overall goal of halting loss of biodiversity and "the coordinated development of monitoring and assessment of marine biodiversity and ecosystem functioning" objective of the strategy. BDC agreed on new method descriptions for indicator-based assessments and also considered the prioritisation of further indicator work and how this related to the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive needs.

The OSPAR Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network now comprises a total of 465 MPAs protecting 6.3 % of the OSPAR Maritime Area, after 18 new MPAs were nominated to the

network by UK and Norway in 2017. BDC also considered a new proposal for the establishment of an MPA in the high seas and agreed to continue work on the proposal in the coming year. Work is also ongoing to evaluate progress against the objectives in the NEAES thematic strategy of "establishing a coherent and effective network of marine protected areas", including by assessing whether the MPA network is ecologically coherent and whether the MPAs are well managed.

BDC reflected on how well OSPAR is achieving the objectives of the strategy in "defining a concrete roadmap for the protection of threatened and declining species and habitats". The Roadmap for the implementation of collective actions was adopted by OSPAR Commission in 2017. Progress has been made intersessionally by the development of concrete steps in implementing the specific actions that aim to improve the status of threatened and/or declining species and habitats. BDC initiated planning for carrying out status assessments for all the listed species and habitats in coming years to evaluate if OSPAR measures are having the intended effect.

BDC was chaired by Jeroen Vis of the Netherlands

Roadmap *for Protection of Species and Habitats*

In 2010 OSPAR Ministers committed to halt the decline of species and habitats with the strategic objective to prevent further loss by 2020, in particular to restore threatened and/or declining species and habitats by establishing measures to protect them from pressures caused by human activities. These include threatened and/or declining wide range of species from birds such as the black-legged kittiwake to blue whales and diverse habitats from deep sea hydrothermal vents to coastal oyster beds.

For each of the habitats and species on the list, OSPAR has developed background documents and Recommendations on furthering their protection and conservation in the relevant regions of the OSPAR Maritime Area. The Roadmap covers the implementation of the collective actions from the 50 OSPAR Recommendations that have now been adopted by the OSPAR Commission, covering all but 2 of the listed species.



The Roadmap for implementation of the Recommendations is a central part of the adaptive management cycle for improving the status of threatened and/or declining species and habitats, which also includes implementation reporting, evaluation of the effectiveness of measures, and status assessments for the species and habitats. The roadmap will be implemented from 2017-2025 and will provide a pragmatic way to implement the actions in the Recommendations, as well as timeline for their implementation.

As acknowledged in the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy, not all the

actions to improve the status of threatened and/or declining species and habitats are within the remit of the OSPAR Commission. Therefore, OSPAR works with the relevant competent authorities, such as North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, to raise these issues to their attention.

The Roadmap will allow OSPAR to focus its efforts in the coming years contributing to the commitment to halt the decline in marine species and habitats and ensure OSPAR's vision of a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic ocean, used sustainably, is realised.

Environmental Impact of Human Activities

In 2017/2018 the work of the Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA) focused on several issues, including the review and renewal of OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy. Other key issues for EIHA were the development of new indicators on marine litter and the impact of impulsive noise, deep-sea mining, the development of monitoring programmes for ambient noise and the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

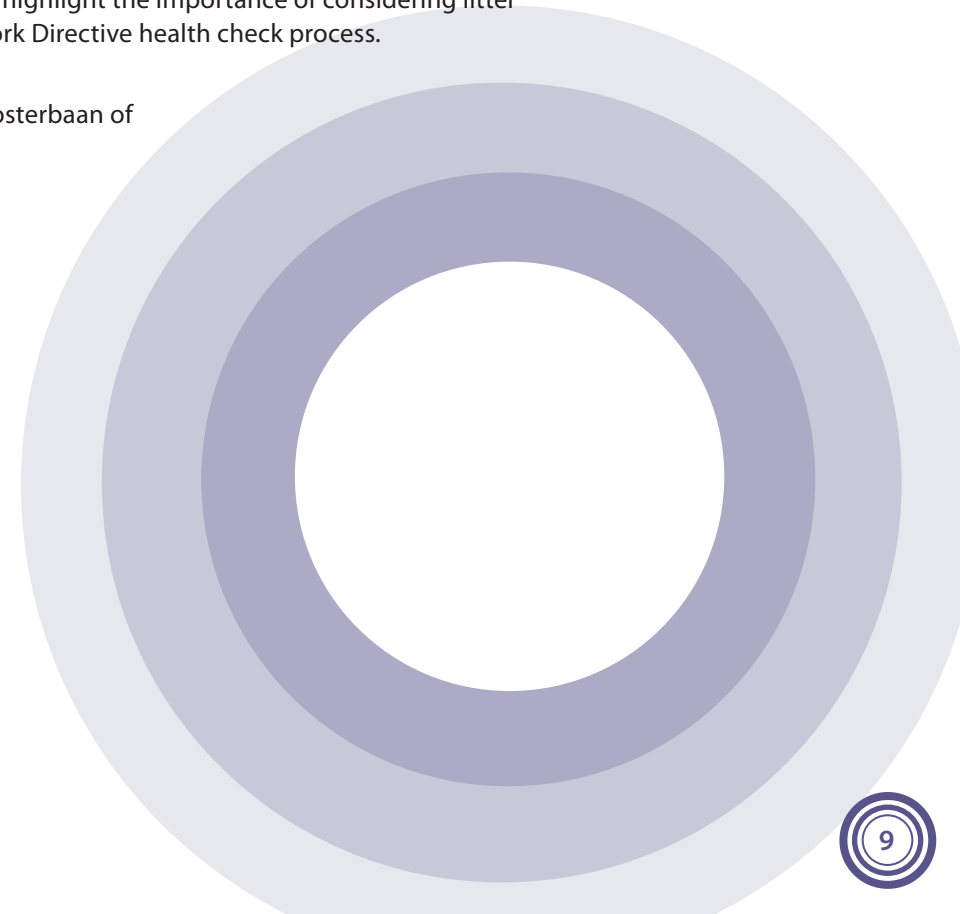
Development work has been undertaken to establish an OSPAR indicator on microplastics in sediments, which builds on existing monitoring for contaminants. The technical specifications have now been agreed and the work will continue over the next year to finalise the monitoring and assessment guidelines. Work has also been on-going on a candidate indicator on the impact of impulsive noise to assess whether we are reaching OSPAR's aim to endeavour to keep the introduction of energy, including underwater noise, at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment in the OSPAR Maritime Area. EIHA also welcomed the development of the JOMOPANS project, which will establish ambient noise monitoring in the North Sea in line with the OSPAR Ambient Noise Monitoring Strategy. OSPAR's role in the management of deep-sea mining within the North-East Atlantic was reviewed by the Committee, taking into consideration the role of the International Seabed Authority and the on-going work to develop an environmental management plan for the mid-Atlantic Ridge.

The implementation of the Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Marine Litter gathered pace with the appointment of a Project Coordinator. Development focused on actions in relation to port reception facilities, waste from fisheries, environmental education for fishermen, pre-production plastic pellets and action on single use plastic items. Measures are currently being developed to address these issues and will be considered for adoption at OSPAR 2019. A key action has also been to ensure synergies with the EU Plastics Strategy, which was published in January and will result in action on several topics in the RAP. This has already been the case on the revision of the EU Port Reception Directive where OSPAR actively contributed to the on-going review. It was also agreed that Contracting Parties would liaise with freshwater colleagues to highlight the importance of considering litter in the EU Water Framework Directive health check process.

EIHA is chaired by Lex Oosterbaan of The Netherlands.



Pre-production
plastic pellets
@madicattt



Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication

The Hazardous substances and eutrophication committee (HASEC) devoted significant time and effort to the review and renewal of OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy.

HASEC reviewed its progress against its two thematic strategies, eutrophication and hazardous substances for 2010-2020 and proposed new objectives for 2020-2030.

HASEC will take on a new responsibility for progressing ocean acidification work in OSPAR. The first step will be to develop an ocean acidification indicator for OSPAR's QSR 2023, led by a small group of HASEC experts.

Cooperation and collaboration with external bodies continued to be important in HASEC's work. For example, working with AMAP¹ on methods and a process for including AMAP's Arctic Waters' data in the QSR, and more widely to support global initiatives such as the Minamata Convention. The contaminants experts and ICES are building a new web-application for the online contaminant assessment tool, which will be finalised in 2018/19.

There have been significant new developments in the functionality and information available in the tool (currently available at <http://dome.ices.dk/osparmime/main.html>).

HASEC experts work with EMEP² and EMEP's atmospheric nitrogen deposition modelling was been adapted to make it relevant for the whole OSPAR Maritime Area. These modelled atmospheric deposition products greatly facilitate OSPAR's monitoring and assessment work, as well as assessment for the Water Framework Directive and MSFD.

The eutrophication experts are working towards harmonisation of the eutrophication common indicators, OSPAR's Common Procedure for the identification of eutrophication, and the EU's Commission Decision criteria. There is a joint plan of work already underway that will aim to streamline these three processes and to automate the assessment of eutrophication as far as possible.

The outgoing Chair of HASEC is Stephen Malcolm (United Kingdom). From 2018 HASEC will be chaired by Sweden's Philip Axe.

¹ Arctic Council's Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme

² Co-operative Programme for Monitoring and Evaluation of Long-Range Transmission of Air Pollutants in Europe

Offshore Oil *and* Gas Industry

The Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) reviewed OSPAR Decision 98/3 on Disposal of Disused Offshore Installations and agreed that the derogation categories in Annex I should remain unchanged. The review took account of experience gained in relation to the development and execution of decommissioning programmes and feedback received from statutory nature conservation bodies, academic institutions and other independent bodies.

OIC agreed to remove Boric Acid, sodium salt and sodium borate from the PLONOR list to ensure consistency for all borates under the OSPAR Harmonised Mandatory Control System. OIC has been progressing its work on the use and discharge of plastic materials contained in offshore chemicals and has identified this as an area of priority for future work. Additionally, OIC has been progressing on its commitments under OSPAR's Assessment and Monitoring

Programme on the assessment of the impacts of discharges of oil and chemicals in produced water on the marine environment; assessment of the impacts of decommissioned pipelines on the marine environment and on other users of the sea; and assessment of the impacts of disturbance of cuttings piles related to decommissioning activities.

OSPAR measures agreed under OIC will be the basis for a joint workshop between OSPAR, the Abidjan Convention and the IMO's London Convention on the implementation of the Abidjan Convention Offshore protocol.

OIC reviewed the Committees progress towards achieving the objectives of 2010 – 2020 thematic strategy in preparation for the new 2020 – 2030 strategy.

OIC is chaired by Saravanan Marappan of the United Kingdom.

OSPAR *and* the Arctic



OSPAR continued its contribution to the work of Arctic Council Working Groups after being granted observership at the 10th Arctic Council Ministerial meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska in May, 2017.

It is important for OSPAR to engage with the Arctic Council as OSPAR Region I is in the Arctic marine area and constitutes approximately 40% of the OSPAR Maritime Area.

The OSPAR Secretariat shared the work of OSPAR with the Arctic Council Working Group “Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment” (PAME) and Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR) Working Group. Representatives from the two Arctic Council Working Groups have been to the OSPAR Offshore Industry Committee and Radioactive Substance Committee to give presentations and share their work. Through strengthened cooperation with PAME, OSPAR has become an active co-lead with Norway, Sweden, Iceland and Aleut International Association (AIA) on a project on marine litter, including microplastics in the Arctic, whose aim is to evaluate the scope of marine litter in the Arctic; its effects on the marine environment; and contribute to the prevention and/or reduction of marine litter pollution and its impact on marine organisms, habitats, public health and safety, while reducing its associated socioeconomic costs.

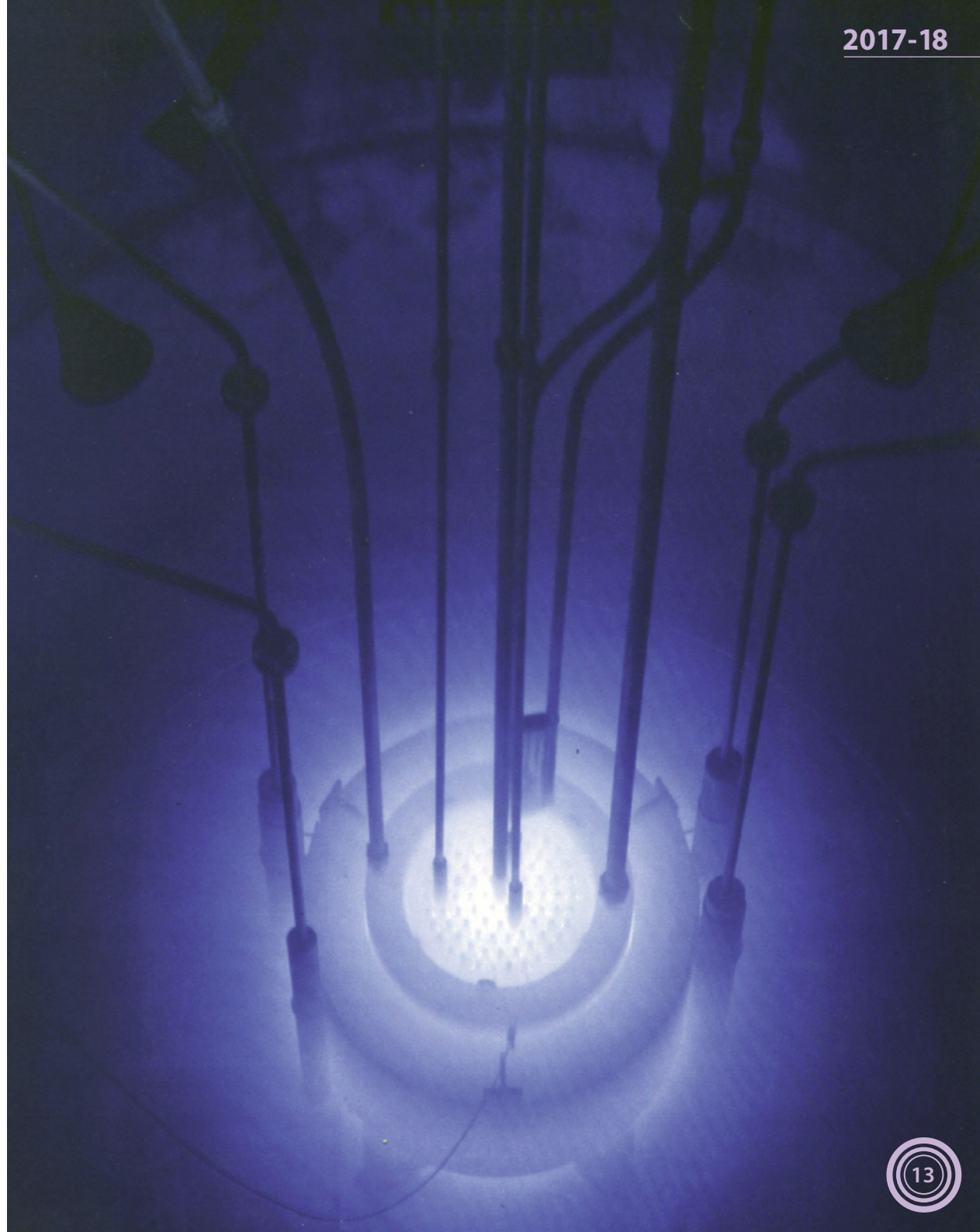
To share the important work of OSPAR, the Secretariat has also become co-lead on the development of a report on the state of the knowledge report on underwater noise, together with Canada and WWF. The aim is to assess impacts of underwater noise on the Arctic marine ecosystem, including the identification of knowledge gaps.

For OSPAR it is important to complement the Arctic Council Working Groups with the work of the OSPAR's Committees by sharing information, data, Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practices for the protection of the Arctic marine environment.

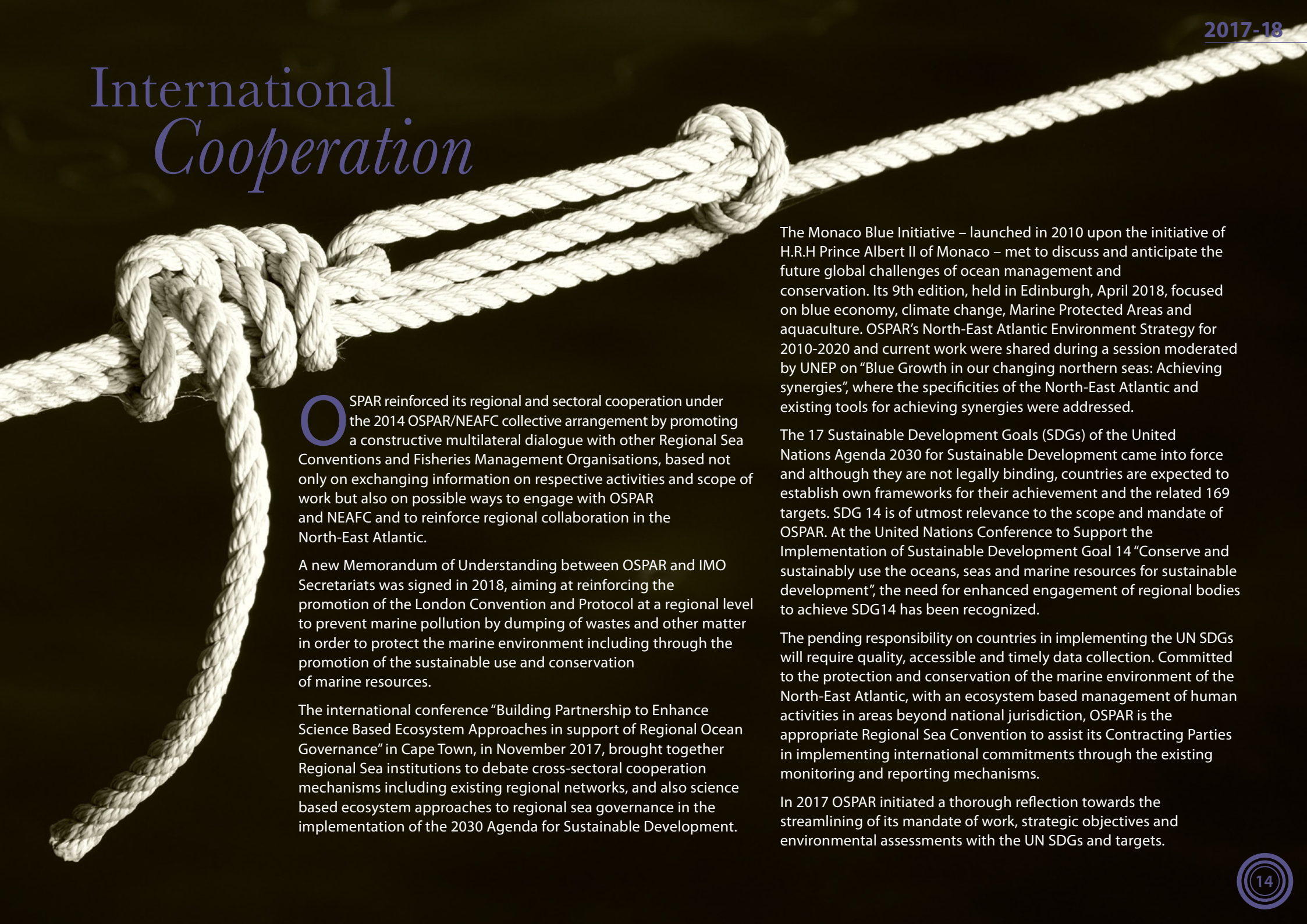
Radioactive Substances

The Radioactive Substance Committee (RSC) focused on the work of its Intersessional Correspondence Groups, which contribute to the Committee's obligations under the OSPAR Radioactive Substances Strategy. RSC agreed in principle a methodology for assessing additional concentrations in the marine environment above historic levels as well as further developing its work on modelling of additional concentrations of naturally occurring radionuclides in seawater from discharges of produced water resulting from offshore oil and gas activities. RSC agreed to amend PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on applying Best Available Techniques to minimise and, as appropriate, eliminate any pollution caused by radioactive discharges from all nuclear industries, including research reactors and reprocessing plants, into the marine environment, in order to make the Recommendation fit for purpose.

RSC is chaired by Justin Gwynn from Norway.



International *Cooperation*



OSPAR reinforced its regional and sectoral cooperation under the 2014 OSPAR/NEAFC collective arrangement by promoting a constructive multilateral dialogue with other Regional Sea Conventions and Fisheries Management Organisations, based not only on exchanging information on respective activities and scope of work but also on possible ways to engage with OSPAR and NEAFC and to reinforce regional collaboration in the North-East Atlantic.

A new Memorandum of Understanding between OSPAR and IMO Secretariats was signed in 2018, aiming at reinforcing the promotion of the London Convention and Protocol at a regional level to prevent marine pollution by dumping of wastes and other matter in order to protect the marine environment including through the promotion of the sustainable use and conservation of marine resources.

The international conference “Building Partnership to Enhance Science Based Ecosystem Approaches in support of Regional Ocean Governance” in Cape Town, in November 2017, brought together Regional Sea institutions to debate cross-sectoral cooperation mechanisms including existing regional networks, and also science based ecosystem approaches to regional sea governance in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The Monaco Blue Initiative – launched in 2010 upon the initiative of H.R.H Prince Albert II of Monaco – met to discuss and anticipate the future global challenges of ocean management and conservation. Its 9th edition, held in Edinburgh, April 2018, focused on blue economy, climate change, Marine Protected Areas and aquaculture. OSPAR’s North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy for 2010-2020 and current work were shared during a session moderated by UNEP on “Blue Growth in our changing northern seas: Achieving synergies”, where the specificities of the North-East Atlantic and existing tools for achieving synergies were addressed.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development came into force and although they are not legally binding, countries are expected to establish own frameworks for their achievement and the related 169 targets. SDG 14 is of utmost relevance to the scope and mandate of OSPAR. At the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”, the need for enhanced engagement of regional bodies to achieve SDG14 has been recognized.

The pending responsibility on countries in implementing the UN SDGs will require quality, accessible and timely data collection. Committed to the protection and conservation of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic, with an ecosystem based management of human activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction, OSPAR is the appropriate Regional Sea Convention to assist its Contracting Parties in implementing international commitments through the existing monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

In 2017 OSPAR initiated a thorough reflection towards the streamlining of its mandate of work, strategic objectives and environmental assessments with the UN SDGs and targets.

Cooperation *with the* Cartagena Convention on SDG Goal 14 Oceans (#OceanAction17198)



The Atlantic Ocean joins both the Caribbean and North-East Atlantic via the currents that circulate in the Atlantic while some species migrate long distances between our respective coasts. In addition to OSPAR and the Caribbean Environment Programme (CEP) sharing common Contracting Parties, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals offer for both Conventions a strong opportunity to explore ways in which they can assist each other in reaching their similar objectives on the protection of their shared marine environment.

The Cartagena Convention and the OSPAR Commission registered a voluntary commitment at the UN's Ocean Conference, June 2017, on the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. The commitment explores opportunities for cooperation between the Secretariats. The Secretariats have discussed the respective mandates and work programmes of the two Conventions and identified opportunities for sharing experiences and lessons learnt, towards developing more formal and enhanced cooperation, including potential future joint projects.

Possible subjects for cooperation have been identified in the field of marine biodiversity, marine litter and nutrients. The Netherlands and, more recently Sweden, kindly made available funding to support identified activities in 2018 in line with the voluntary commitment. Based on this funding the Secretariats have developed an 'OSPAR-CEP 2018 Cooperation Project' focusing on marine litter and Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

For MPAs the project activities and foreseen deliverables include;

- further development and refinement of the Caribbean database for MPAs;
- exchanges on how to promote the value of MPAs being part of a regional network;
- development of a project proposal for longer term collaboration on MPA management capacity building.

For marine litter the project activities and foreseen deliverables include;

- development of the technical specifications of a beach litter database in the Caribbean;
- workshop on best practices and harmonising marine litter monitoring approaches;
- further work on microplastics, including on the impact of microplastics in fish.

The two conventions aim to use this first project to deepen cooperation and continue efforts to work jointly to in relation to achieving SDG Goal 14.



OSPAR Chairs

OSPAR elected Richard Cronin (Ireland) as Chair. Sesselja Bjarnadóttir (Iceland) and John Clorley (United Kingdom) were elected as Vice-Chairs.

Laura Piriz (Sweden) stood down as Chair as did Vice-Chair Michael Kyramarios. OSPAR would like to thank them for their hard work and dedication and wish them all in the best in their future endeavours.

OSPAR Publications

Annual Report 2017/2018	Reduction of Atmospheric Nitrogen Deposition to OSPAR Convention Waters Achievable by Implementing Gothenburg Protocol/EU-NEC Directive
Biodiversity Committee	Preparation of the routine products for OSPAR by MSC-W of EMEP
Revised Background Document for Nucella lapillus (Dogwhelk)	
Assessment Sheet on the Status of the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas in 2017	Offshore Industry Committee
Environmental Impact of Human Activities	OSPAR report on discharges, spills and emissions from offshore oil and gas installations in 2016
Offshore renewable energy developments 2017*	Draft assessment of the discharges, spills and emissions from offshore oil & gas operations on the United Kingdom Continental Shelf 2012-2016
Encounters with chemical and conventional munitions 2016*	Draft assessment of the discharges, spills and emissions from offshore oil & gas operations on the Norwegian Continental Shelf 2012-2016
Fishing for Litter 2016*	Radioactive Substances Committee
Dredged material, waste and other matter deposited at sea in 2016*	Annual report on liquid discharges from nuclear installations in 2016
Background document on RAP-ML Action 58: Education Programmes for Fishermen	Annual report on discharges of Radionuclides from the Non-nuclear Sectors
Overview assessment of OSPAR Recommendation 2010/5 on assessments of environmental impacts in relation to threatened and/or declining species and habitats	Dutch report on the implementation of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive discharges to the OSPAR Commission on the application of Best Available Technology in nuclear facilities
*online only (www.ospar.org/data)	United Kingdom report on the implementation of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive discharges to the OSPAR Commission on the application of Best Available Technology in nuclear facilities
Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee	Swedish report on the implementation of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive discharges to the OSPAR Commission on the application of Best Available Technology in nuclear facilities
CEMP Rollover assessment (CEMP)	
Comprehensive Atmospheric Monitoring Programme (CAMP) –2015 data report	
Comprehensive Study on Riverine Inputs and Direct Discharges (RID) – 2015 data report	



OSPAR's vision is of a healthy and diverse North East Atlantic ecosystem, used sustainably

The 1992 OSPAR Convention is the current instrument guiding international cooperation on the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic.

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