

Annual Report 2008/09



OSPAR
COMMISSION

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





Baiona, Spain. MASH 2008 meeting ©David Johnson

From the Chairman

The OSPAR Commission is at the forefront of regional marine environmental protection. I have been pleased to take over as Chairman at this important time.

Over the past year I have realised the breadth and complexity of work now covered by OSPAR. As explained in this Report, the Quality Status Report (QSR) 2010 will bring this information together in a concise summary document. The QSR 2010 will serve as a benchmark for large scale regional reporting of this nature. It will also give clear direction to OSPAR ministers in terms of where further action is needed based on future outlook scenarios.

2008/09 has been a year to reflect on ocean governance progress and future challenges. The European Commission's Marine Strategy Framework Directive has come into force. The experience and capacity of OSPAR must be fully utilised to facilitate the effective implementation of the Directive. Deadlines set within other European legislation must be met and the Integrated Maritime Policy has established priorities for maritime spatial planning and socio-economic evaluation of maritime activities within a sustainable development framework. States are gearing up for major global climate discussions in Copenhagen. In advance of the Convention on Biological Diversity's International Year for Biodiversity in 2010 have we done enough to halt biodiversity decline?

I am impressed that the spirit of co-operation and consensus remains strong and effective within OSPAR. Key individuals from Contracting Parties contribute their expertise, energy and enthusiasm to drive forward new ideas, supported by an able Secretariat. I also think that OSPAR is fortunate to have significant important input from industry representatives and environmental non-governmental organisations. I have enjoyed my first year as Chairman and foresee constructive and productive times ahead, in particular for the preparation of the important ministerial meeting to be held in Bergen in September 2010.

Atle Fretheim,
Chairman



Mr Atle Fretheim is a lawyer and currently Deputy Director General in the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment. He has a wealth of experience in both the public and private sectors, and at national and international levels.



From the Executive Secretary

The role of European Regional Seas Conventions has been under the spotlight during negotiations to finalise the EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). It is now clear that OSPAR, together with the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM), the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP-MAP) and the Black Sea Commission will have an important task to help Member States and countries of the European Economic Area (EEA) implement the Directive. The timetable for the MSFD will therefore in future call the tune for many OSPAR activities and, during 2008/09, OSPAR's strategic 'think tank' (ICG-Bergen) has drawn up an MSFD road map, to help avoid duplication and provide direction for such implementation.

With multiple pressures placing ever higher burdens on our ocean resources it might seem to some that Governments are 'fiddling while Rome burns' (heedless and irresponsible behaviour in the midst of a crisis). However, scientific evidence to properly inform policy decisions must be systematically gathered, correctly interpreted, and 'translated' into language that can be clearly understood by all. Furthermore, conclusions on complex issues should be presented together with a confidence rating. This is the task OSPAR has concentrated on during 2008/09 to finalise the QSR 2010 and its suite of assessments.

During the coming year the QSR will be peer reviewed, subjected to a much wider e-consultation and further scrutinised prior to publication. Areas of significant progress against the OSPAR Strategies are already apparent. But so are geographical areas where we still know too little and emerging concerns where further work is needed.

OSPAR has continued to work towards the protection of biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ). There is no quick fix and cooperation with other competent authorities is essential. OSPAR has been active throughout the year building trust between relevant organisations and further developing mutual understanding. This Report provides an update on the success achieved in 2007/08.

OSPAR work has also fed into global efforts being coordinated by the United Nations General Assembly and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Thank you to everyone working hard to secure OSPAR's vision of a healthy and diverse North-East Atlantic ecosystem. In particular my colleagues within the Secretariat have worked tirelessly on 'pieces of the jigsaw' that underpin the big picture. As ever it is a collective effort that provides the impetus and assurance needed to ensure that OSPAR continues to make a difference.

Professor David Johnson,
Executive Secretary



Professor David Johnson is a geographer and ecologist. He has an international track record in coastal and ocean management including academic research, publications, consultancy and advocacy. He has been Executive Secretary since 2006.

The OSPAR Commission adopted six strategies that govern its work, aimed at bringing the North-East Atlantic to a healthy and sustainable condition. Progress on each of the strategies during 2008/09 is set out below.



Patella©JGoncalves



©Stiofán Creaven, Galway, Ireland



Wild pink salmon infected with sea lice ©Alex Morton/Marine Photobank



©John Dunn

Biodiversity Strategy

Aims to protect and conserve the ecosystems and the biological diversity of the maritime area which are, or could be, affected as a result of human activities. It also aims to restore, where practicable, marine areas which have been adversely affected.

The implementation of the Strategy has a two-fold approach: (1) protecting identified species and habitats and establishing marine protected areas (MPA); (2) consideration of the impact of a set of identified human activities.

This year OSPAR made further progress on the establishment of its Network of Marine Protected Areas, including the designation of the El Cachucho MPA in Spain (also known as the Le Danois Bank), an extensive area in the deep-sea, several additional sites in the German Exclusive Economic Zone and important offshore MPAs in the United Kingdom waters such as the Darwin Mounds. OSPAR underpinned its List of threatened and/or declining species and habitats with comprehensive Background Documents, including proposals for protective measures. OSPAR extended the relevance of its Guidance for good practice to establishing and managing

MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction. This also serves as a basis for communicating with stakeholders on these issues.

Major achievements have been the preparation of a further suite of assessments of human activities, including an Overview and Assessment of the impacts of anthropogenic underwater sound in the marine environment, Assessment of the environmental impacts of the dumping of waste and, together with UNEP, an Assessment of Marine Litter in the North-East Atlantic.

Another milestone was a joint Workshop on Maritime Spatial Planning on 2-3 July 2009 in San Miguel (Portugal) organised by the European Commission in cooperation with OSPAR and the University of the Azores.

Further ongoing work focused on the assessment of cumulative effects of human activities, economic and social, analysis of the use of the maritime area and guidance on ballast water management.

Monitoring and Assessment Strategy

The Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP) underpins the implementation of the five OSPAR thematic Strategies and provides the framework for evaluating progress, assessing the overall quality status of the marine environment and identifying priorities for renewed or new action. In this way the OSPAR framework acts to provide management measures consistent with an ecosystem approach.

The Environmental Assessment and Monitoring Committee (ASMO) is responsible for the management of the JAMP. In 2008/2009, ASMO worked on the preparation of the Quality Status Report (QSR) 2010, a comprehensive assessment of the status of the OSPAR maritime area and of the progress OSPAR has made towards the objectives of its Strategies, drawing on 10 years of OSPAR monitoring and assessment work. The QSR is intended to direct future policies for the protection and conservation of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic and will be launched at the OSPAR 2010 Ministerial Meeting.

Hazardous Substances Strategy

Seeks to prevent pollution of the maritime area by continuously reducing discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances, with the ultimate aim of achieving concentrations in the marine environment near background values for naturally occurring substances and close to zero for man-made synthetic substances. Its timeframe requires the OSPAR Commission to implement the Strategy progressively by making every endeavour to move towards the target of the cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances by 2020.

To implement this strategy, the Hazardous Substances Committee (HSC) completed the screening of the OSPAR List of Substances of Possible Concern identifying substances to which commitments in the Hazardous Substances Strategy apply, and made arrangements for further information collection for a number of substances in order to clarify the need for further attention. HSC assessed progress in implementation of measures related to the vinyl chloride industry and revised the background documents on the following chemicals for priority action: certain Brominated Flame Retardants, Nonylphenol/Nonylphenoethoxylates, Short Chain Chlorinated Paraffins, Lead, and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons.

Radioactive Substances Strategy

Aims to prevent pollution of the maritime area from ionising radiation through progressive and substantial reductions of discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances, with the ultimate aim of concentrations in the environment near background values for naturally occurring radioactive substances and close to zero for artificial radioactive substances.

In achieving this objective, the following issues should, *inter alia*, be taken into account: legitimate uses of the sea, technical feasibility and radiological impacts on man and biota.

This year, the Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) concluded the 3rd Periodic Evaluation of Progress towards the Objective of the Radioactive Substances Strategy, an overall assessment of radionuclides in the OSPAR Maritime Area. In addition to the assessment of annual data on discharges from the nuclear sector, for the first time, an assessment was produced for the non-nuclear sector. RSC also initiated work to improve the monitoring programme for concentrations of radioactive substances in the marine environment, including making the data collected available to the public via a database and website of the International Atomic Energy Agency.





Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Strategy

Sets the objective of preventing and eliminating pollution and taking the necessary measures to protect the maritime area against the adverse effects of offshore activities so as to safeguard human health, conserve marine ecosystems and, when practicable, restore marine areas which have been adversely affected.

To implement the Strategy, the Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) considered implications of the EU REACH Regulation for its work and concluded that whenever possible, OSPAR should seek harmonisation with the REACH requirements. A group was established to take the work on harmonisation forward, in cooperation with the European Chemicals Agency.

OIC assessed the possible release of oil and chemicals from any disturbance of old cutting piles and concluded that the information available to date suggests that disturbance of cutting piles does not appear to lead to increased impacts on the marine environment, and therefore there was no need for any OSPAR action.

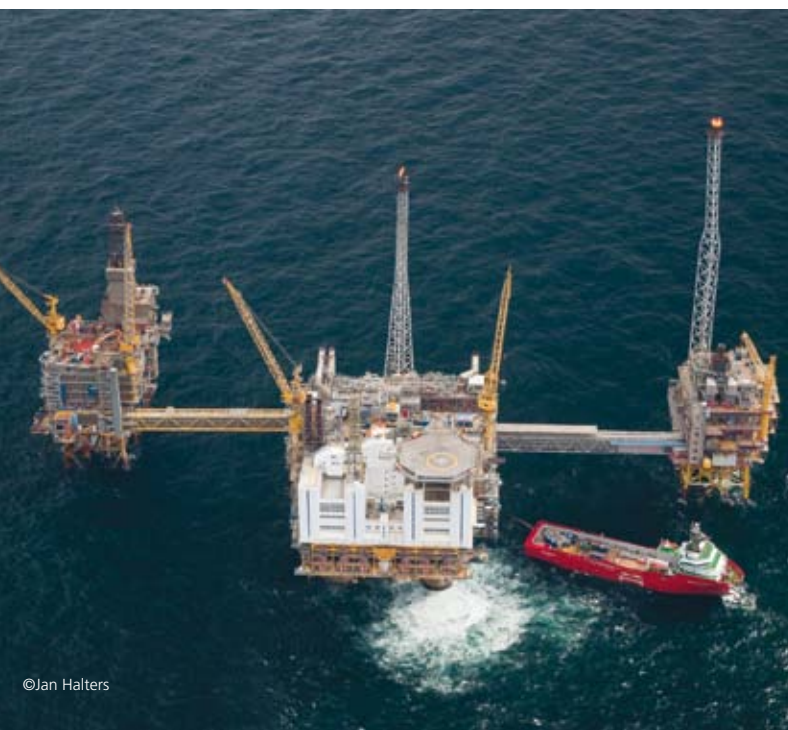
OIC has also initiated work to develop a holistic approach to the management of oil and chemicals in produced water from offshore installations.

Eutrophication Strategy

Aims to combat eutrophication in order to achieve and maintain a healthy marine environment where eutrophication does not occur.

For the purpose of the Strategy, eutrophication is defined as the anthropogenic enrichment of water by nutrients causing an accelerated growth of algae and higher forms of plant life to produce an undesirable disturbance to the balance of organisms present in the water and to the quality of the water concerned.

In 2008/09, the Eutrophication Committee (EUC) reviewed its past work on nutrients and agreed a programme to determine the specific nutrient reductions needed to eliminate remaining eutrophication problem areas and to link up source, input and environmental monitoring and data collection to inform future targeted actions. OSPAR's ongoing modelling activities relating to the water transport of nutrients will be an important element in this work. EUC initiated work to incorporate climate change into its monitoring and assessment of eutrophication. EUC also continued work to explore possibilities of a coordinated approach of OSPAR countries to the use of novel observation platforms (e.g. automated buoys, remote sensing) to complement and strengthen the current monitoring framework.



2012 Marine Targets Seminar

This important Seminar, held in Brest on 9-11 December 2008, during the French EU Presidency, featured twin themes of the European Marine Strategy and issues in the High Seas. 'Good Environmental Status' as set out in the Directive was examined by working groups under various aspects. For example the session on Productive Seas, Commercially Exploited Species (GES Descriptor 3) was informed by presentations suggesting a changing paradigm for fisheries. The High Seas sessions examined the current position of international talks: use and activity (fisheries, navigation, bio-prospecting, deep-sea mining), mapping biodiversity (inventories, models, hotspots) and mapping ecosystems (key ecologically significant patterns).

OSPAR contributions during the Seminar confirmed that these themes will also be central to the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in Bergen in September 2010.

During 2008/09 the strategic planning group within OSPAR has been developing issues for 2010 drafted at the Haslemere Workshop in May 2008. OSPAR 2009 also supported plans by Norway to host the annual meeting of the Global Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans at the same time as OSPAR 2010, providing the opportunity to introduce a global dimension at the Ministerial Meeting.

Compiling the QSR 2010

As a flagship product for OSPAR the QSR 2010 has required its own management group (MAQ) taking executive decisions on the shape, balance and presentation of the report. During 2008/09 MAQ was chaired by Professor Colin Moffat (UK). Within the QSR 2010 comparisons are made with conclusions of the QSR 2000. In addition the QSR 2010 is intended to provide a significant contribution to the Initial Assessments that EC Member states need to prepare under the EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) in 2012. It has been drafted in a style that can be understood by policy makers, balances messages for the whole OSPAR Maritime Area and the five OSPAR Regions, and develops an outlook for the future. Detailed technical editing has been undertaken by Dr Kees Kramer.

The QSR 2000 comprised an overview document and five regional summaries. An innovation for the QSR 2010, to be launched in Bergen at the 2010 ministerial meeting, will be a web-based version of the report. Thus instead of regional summaries it will be possible for readers needing regional and/or national specific information to 'drill down' into individual assessments, to access additional case studies or examples, and to find links to related information and initiatives.

As a contribution to the QSR 2010 an OSPAR Workshop, hosted by the Netherlands in Utrecht, from 9-13 February 2009, tried out a new method for ecosystem assessment. The Workshop prepared a series of assessments of the status of key species groups (fish, seals, cetaceans, seabirds) and habitat types at the OSPAR regional scale. It benefited from a wide geographical spread of expertise drawn from across the OSPAR area providing in-depth specialist knowledge on the ecosystem components covered and human activity/pressures.



2012 Marine Target Seminar with permission from Mr Oliver Musard, France



Complex assessments

The QSR 2010 is underpinned by a comprehensive and carefully assembled body of evidence, outputs of the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP). This 10-year effort integrates data submitted by Contracting Parties, which is then aggregated and evaluated by expert assessment panels before being considered and approved by the Committees. Most new topics require a Background Assessment. More established monitoring programmes require some form of Periodic Evaluation or Overview Assessment. Assessments bringing information together are weakened by data gaps or data uncertainties, impacting upon the degree of confidence with which conclusions can be drawn. For this reason OSPAR spends considerable time and effort ensuring that data submissions are accurate, complete, and in a common format.

During 2008/09 several major overall assessments have been finalised. These have presented particular challenges, requiring workshops, innovative thinking and consensus building.

Cumulative impacts

The aim of one of the assessments was to prepare a trend analysis of all the different human activities and their cumulative impact on the marine environment. It was prepared in a series of expert workshops and delivered a comprehensive overview of trends of human activities in the different OSPAR Regions. It also identified the main pressures of the different activities and reviewed pilot studies from the Netherlands and Norway.

Despite all efforts by OSPAR Contracting Parties and promising national pilot studies, a common understanding of cumulative effects assessments is elusive. The majority of the work in OSPAR to date has focused on the pressures from individual activities to generate conclusions on how that activity affects the quality status of the OSPAR Maritime Area.

Tackling emerging issues

The OSPAR Convention requires Contracting Parties to apply Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) including, where appropriate, clean technology, in their efforts to prevent and eliminate marine pollution. If the reduction of inputs resulting from the use of BAT and BEP does not lead to acceptable results, additional measures have to be applied. OSPAR has pioneered this concept internationally and adopted a large number of Recommendations on BAT and BEP, mainly for various land-based industries, but also for offshore oil and gas activities.

BAT and BEP for a particular source will change with time. Following the publication of Reference Documents on BAT (BREFs) under the EC IPPC Directive, OSPAR has stopped the systematic review of BAT for those OSPAR measures that are covered by BREFs.

The 'mechanism' favoured by OSPAR to work on emerging issues is to constitute an intersessional correspondence group (ICG). These ICGs effectively work to determine an understanding of the issue concerned and to consider BAT and BEP. ICGs are led by a nominated Contracting Party: they comprise as many Parties as are interested in the topic, and are guided by terms of reference and a specific remit within the annual work programme agreed by the Commission.

During 2008/09 the majority of significant emerging issues addressed fell within the Biodiversity Strategy. The ICG-MPA deals with the further development of the OSPAR network of Marine Protected Areas and the complex selection process and scientific questions associated with determining protected areas in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. The activities related to litter, noise and maritime spatial planning have each had their own ICGs. Specific ICGs for the other OSPAR Strategies include the Informal Group of Dynamec Experts, charged by HSC with advising on selection and prioritisation of chemicals; OIC has charged the ICG-RBA with developing a risk-based approach to produced water; RSC has established the ICG-Stats which considers statistical methodologies for radioactive substances. Cross cutting ICGs also consider biological assessment and monitoring, the implications of the Community legislation concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) and of cumulative effects of human activities. In this way, ICGs have further developed important topics that will feature in 2010 in Bergen.



Good Environmental Status: Criteria and Methodologies

Early in 2009 the European Commission set out Community-level work of marine experts and stakeholders on the implementation of the MSFD. The European Commission also established the MSFD Article 25 Regulatory Committee. Task Groups, each of which includes an OSPAR Observer, have been established to develop criteria and methodological standards for Good Environmental Status (GES) descriptors. In this way OSPAR work and associated expertise will play a significant role in addressing the regional requirements of the MSFD.

OSPAR GES Observers to Task Groups of experts

Mr Tim Packeiser	<i>Biodiversity</i>
Ms Laurence Miossec	<i>Non-indigenous species</i>
Mr Kjellrun Hiis Hauge	<i>Fish/Shellfish</i>
Mr Peter Heslenfeld	<i>Food webs</i>
Mr Ulrich Claussen	<i>Eutrophication</i>
Ms Lisette Enserink	<i>Sea floor</i>
Mr Patrick Roose	<i>Contaminants</i>
Mr Anders Bignert	<i>Food quality</i>
Mr Sami Hassani	<i>Energy/noise</i>
Ms Carly Brooks	<i>Marine litter</i>

In support of this OSPAR produced (and distributed at the Marine Targets 2012 Seminar) a summary of the objectives and tools that have been developed over many years to define and indicate progress towards GES in the North-East Atlantic. Tools include OSPAR Guidance, OSPAR Criteria, OSPAR Ecological Quality Objectives (EcoQOs), and OSPAR Priority Lists, as well as the OSPAR Common Procedure for eutrophication and the Co-ordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP). It was also acknowledged that OSPAR has actively supported the European Marine Monitoring and Assessment (EMMA) process in stock-taking and comparison of monitoring and assessment frameworks across European seas and in developing pan-European indicators for the marine environment.

Tools for targets and indicators:

Common Procedure for the assessment of the eutrophication status of the OSPAR maritime area (agreement 2005-3)

Eutrophication Monitoring Programme as part of the CEMP (agreement 2005-4)

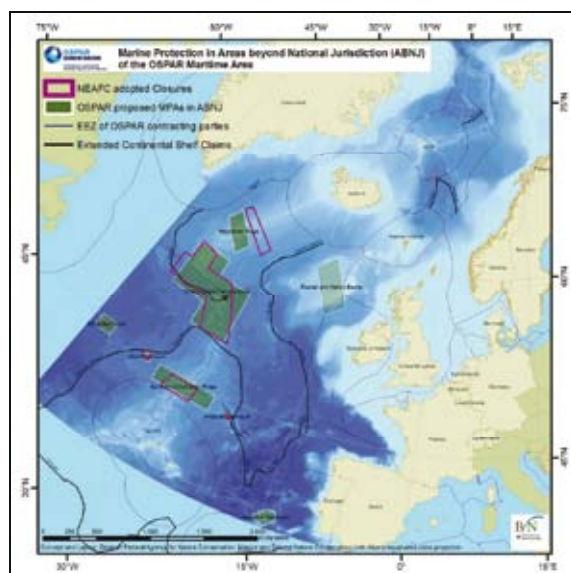
CEMP Monitoring Manual:
<http://www.ospar.org>

Protection of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)

The establishment of a part or the whole of the Charlie Gibbs Fracture Zone (CGFZ), a complex central area of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, as a component of the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas is a key target for the OSPAR Commission Ministerial Meeting in September 2010.

OSPAR 2009 endorsed the Conservation Objectives for the CGFZ MPA as set out in the latest nomination proforma but noted that further work was needed to determine management measures for the area (following which the nomination proforma will need to be revised). OSPAR 2009 also agreed that six other areas should be approved, in principle, as potential MPAs in ABNJ as potential components of the OSPAR network of MPAs (subject to specific study reservations). Closures to bottom fisheries agreed by NEAFC in April 2009 were welcomed by OSPAR Contracting Parties. However, recent submissions to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf by Iceland and Portugal represented a development that prompted detailed discussion between Contracting Parties regarding opportunities and options for taking forward ongoing OSPAR work in areas subject to such submissions.

It is very clear that this groundbreaking work by OSPAR has to be taken forward in collaboration with other competent authorities. An opportunity for further dialogue with key players (e.g. NEAFC, the International Seabed Authority and the International Maritime Organisation) is planned in spring 2010 as an opportunity to focus on prospective management measures including their implementation and enforcement.



Arctic dimension

The OSPAR Maritime Area and the NEAFC Regulatory Area currently represent the only multilateral conventions with Arctic responsibility (covering the European part of the Arctic). Currently an intense debate concerning Arctic governance is linked to the predicted growth of human activities in the Arctic as a result of climate change and calls for stronger environmental protection. Potential oil and gas resources could lead to increasing offshore activities in OSPAR Region I and efforts to secure these resources could entail competing interests in the wider Arctic Ocean.

In November 2008, the European Commission circulated a Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council – The European Union and the Arctic region (COM(2008) 763 final). This document sets out EU interests and proposes action for EU Member States and institutions around three main policy objectives – protecting and preserving the Arctic in unison with its population; promoting sustainable use of resources; and contributing to enhanced Arctic multilateral governance. Concerns linked to climate change, screening and monitoring of chemicals, marine mammals, research into future anthropogenic impacts, hydrocarbon exploration, fisheries resources and Arctic tourism relate closely to OSPAR assessments and work programmes.

Informed by presentations about the work of the Arctic Council, by Ms Irene Bauer of the Norwegian Ministry of Environment, and Arctic governance, by Professor Paul Berkman of the University of Cambridge UK, OSPAR 2009 agreed to seek closer cooperation with the Arctic Council. The impacts of climate change and ocean acidification, with a link to the Arctic, will be an important element of the 2010 Ministerial Meeting.

Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)

‘The European Commission’s “Roadmap for Maritime Spatial Planning: Achieving common principles in the EU” (COM(2008) 791 final), which was adopted on 25 November 2008, underpins what will become another important collaborative process for OSPAR. The Roadmap sets out 10 key principles intended to form the basis for a common approach towards MSP in the EU and will link closely with achieving Good Environmental Status under the MSFD as well as achieving efficiency gains for stakeholders.

Immediately after OSPAR 2009, OSPAR Contracting Parties made a significant contribution to the ‘Azores Workshop’, one of a series of events exploring the key principles of the Roadmap. In 2009 OSPAR published an ‘Overview of National Spatial Planning and Control Systems Relevant to the OSPAR Maritime Area’ (Publication No. 444/2009), highlighting the importance of tailor-made solutions as well as retaining a distinction between national competence and common approaches. Whilst Contracting Parties such as Germany and the Netherlands have more advanced national systems of MSP, Norway has adopted an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) approach to her seas and has now completed IMPs for the Barents Sea and the Norwegian Sea. OSPAR has an opportunity to be a platform for transboundary cooperation. The Azores Workshop concluded that MSP can generate political awareness. Furthermore, it is critical to consider benefits; interpretations of the key principles will vary; stakeholder engagement is vital; and ultimately any spatial plan has to be enforceable. The need for MSP will be reflected in the QSR 2010.



Iceland@Audrey Baconnais-Rosez

‘MSP should be based on the specificities of individual marine regions or sub-regions. It is a process that consists of data collection, stakeholder consultation and the participatory development of a plan, the subsequent stages of implementation, enforcement, evaluation and revision’.
European Commission, 2008.

Communications, the Media and Public Engagement

OSPAR Communications Strategy

Implementation of the Communications Strategy 2008-2010 began this year. Major steps taken were: the launch of the new website and the new OSPAR brand, but also more frequent press releases and interactions with the media. The OSPAR Committees and Working Groups were also more involved in the preparation of communication materials.

Since OSPAR 2008, 4 press releases have been issued. They covered the following issues:

MoU with NEAFC: *Fisheries and Environment bodies join forces to strengthen protection of the North-East Atlantic*

Joint OSPAR/HELCOM Voluntary guidelines for the shipping industry: *Winning the war on invasive species*

Addition to the network of OSPAR MPAs in the Spanish EEZ: *Hello El Cachucho*

Marine litter: *International marine litter experts agree a way forward to develop a Marine Litter Index*

The first issue of the E-newsletter, released in January 2009, introduced OSPAR's new chairman, Mr Atle Fretheim, presented the steps involved in preparation of the QSR 2010 and the progress made on the Areas Beyond National Jurisdictions issue.

Over the last twelve months, the Secretariat has been contacted by many journalists covering marine issues and OSPAR has also been regularly mentioned in articles published on the internet. This has been an opportunity to raise OSPAR's profile.

OSPAR has also worked with UNEP on the publication of factsheets. The first one, published this year, dealt with marine litter. The goal of these factsheets is to reflect good practice within OSPAR and by OSPAR Contracting Parties, both promoting the work of the Commission and also assisting the family of Regional Seas Partnerships with ideas and practical solutions.

Finally OSPAR prepared and agreed the QSR 2010 Communication Plan. This Plan is designed to enable OSPAR to manage and focus the QSR 2010 communication process in line with headline messages. The pre-publicity process has started using a specific area on the OSPAR website, and by including the QSR as part of external presentations.



Organisation

Contracting Parties

The work under the OSPAR Convention is managed by the OSPAR Commission, made up of 16 Contracting Parties. These are: Belgium, Denmark, the European Community (represented by the European Commission), Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Observers

The OSPAR Commission may, by unanimous vote of the Contracting Parties, admit as an observer, any State which is not a Contracting Party to the Convention and any international governmental or non-governmental organisations, whose activities are related to the Convention. These observers are entitled to participate in meetings of the Commission, its main committees and its working groups. Observer organisations provide valuable expertise, draw attention to specific issues and facilitate networking with stakeholders. Full details of all these observers can be found on the OSPAR website.

The Agreement for Cooperation in Dealing with the Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances 1983 (the Bonn Agreement) and the OSPAR Commission are formally observers at each other's meetings. This extends to the Bonn Agreement's Working Group on Operational, Technical and Scientific Questions Concerning Counter Pollution Activities (OTSOPA). Since all Bonn Agreement Contracting Parties are OSPAR Contracting Parties and since the two organisations share a common secretariat, there has always been close cooperation.

OSPAR Secretariat

A professional Secretariat of 12 staff is based in London. During the year Dr Joe Jarrah and Dr Carolyn Symon shared a fixed-term part-time Deputy Secretary appointment to support production of the QSR 2010.

Committee Chairs

Vice-Chairmen of the OSPAR Commission

Mrs Teresa Vinhas and Ms Els de Wit were elected Vice-Chairmen to assist Mr Fretheim.

The following individuals chaired OSPAR Strategy Committees and Working Groups during the period 2008/09

Assessment and Monitoring Committee (ASMO)

Professor Colin Moffat (United Kingdom)

Biodiversity Committee (BDC)

Dr Chris Vivian (United Kingdom)

Eutrophication Committee (EUC)

Mr Gert Verreet (European Commission)

Hazardous Substances Committee (HSC)

Ms Ana García González (Spain)

Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Committee (OIC)

Mr Kevin O'Carroll (United Kingdom)

Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC)

Mr Leif Moberg (Sweden)

Working Group on Inputs to the Marine Environment (INPUT)

Mr Jon L. Fuglestad (Norway)

Working Group on Monitoring (MON)

Dr Ian M Davies (United Kingdom)

Working Group on Concentrations, Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (SIME)

Mr Martin Mørk Larsen (Denmark)

Management Group for the Quality Status Report 2010 (MAQ)

Professor Colin Moffat (United Kingdom)

Working Group on Marine Protected Areas, Species and Habitats (MASH)

Mr Olivier Laroussinie (France)

Working Group on the Environmental Impact of Human Activities (EIHA)

Mr Ralf Wasserthal (Germany)

Informal Group of DYNAMEC Experts (IGE)

Mr Loek Knijff (The Netherlands)

North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors (NSN)

Captain Jeremy Smart (United Kingdom)

Internships

During 2008/09 OSPAR has hosted two student internships, both from Kings College London, undertaking relevant professional placements on projects related to current work programmes. Ms Jennie Reeves worked on a range of issues including microbiological contamination and Ms Helen Ellwood researched area-based management techniques used in fisheries management and biodiversity conservation.



Year in brief

The development of the QSR 2010 and its supporting assessments was a major component of OSPAR'S work during 2008/09, but some month by month milestones are listed below.

September 2008: Mr Knut Kroepelien (Norway) hands over chairmanship to Mr Atle Fretheim (Norway). NEAFC and the OSPAR Commission announce plans to promote mutual cooperation towards the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in the North-East Atlantic. Successful re-launch of the OSPAR website. OSPAR kicks off its strategic planning for the future, including looking into coordinated actions needed to implement the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

October 2008: Spain reports on the selection and establishment of the El Cachucho Marine Protected Area, an essential fish habitat in the Spanish EEZ in the Cantabrian Sea. El Cachucho becomes the latest addition to the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas.

December 2008: OSPAR presents its extensive experience on criteria and methodologies for Good Environmental Status of the North-East Atlantic to the French Seminar "2012 Marine Targets: European Marine Strategy and Issues in the High Seas" in Brest. International marine litter experts continue to work on developing a Marine Litter Index.

January 2009: Launch of OSPAR's first e-newsletter to provide additional updated information on specific topics twice a year. The Radioactive Substances Committee recognises the potential impact of discharges of radioactive substances from the offshore oil and gas and medical sectors.

February 2009: Publication of the assessment of marine litter in the North-East Atlantic, prepared with KIMO International, coincides with the production of a leaflet compiled by UNEP and OSPAR to raise awareness about the vast and growing threat caused by marine litter.

March 2009: Harmonisation of the OSPAR Harmonised Mandatory Control System for offshore chemicals with the REACH Regulation is underway. OIC has started work on a risk based approach for the management of produced water. The OSPAR target of a 15% reduction in the total amount of oil in produced water discharges is exceeded. The problem of transboundary nutrient transport receives further consideration.

April 2009: OSPAR participates in the kick-off meeting for HERMIONE, a major European deep-sea science research project examining human impacts on ecosystems at critical sites on deep-ocean margins.

May 2009: OSPAR approves the joint OSPAR/ HELCOM Guidance for Ballast Water Exchange and IMO is informed accordingly.

June 2009: OSPAR recognises specific pressures on the Arctic and agrees to seek closer cooperation with the Arctic Council. Conservation objectives for the proposed Charlie Gibbs Fracture Zone MPA are approved. A programme for further political and legal work on the establishment of the CGFZ-MPA is agreed.



Reports adopted by OSPAR 2009 for publication

Below are assessments adopted in the framework of the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme. These assessments and other reports adopted by OSPAR 2009 can be found on the publications page of the OSPAR website.

JAMP Assessments on:

Biodiversity

- the summary assessment of sand and gravel extraction in the OSPAR maritime area;
- the construction or placement of artificial reefs;
- the impact of coastal defence structures;
- the impact of dumped conventional and chemical munitions;
- the impacts of mariculture;
- the impacts of shipping on the marine environment;
- the environmental impacts of cables;
- the environmental impact of dumping of wastes at sea;
- the overview of the impacts of anthropogenic underwater sound in the marine environment;

Hazardous substances

- the status and trend of marine chemical pollution;

Offshore oil and gas

- the extent and impact of offshore oil and gas industry and of exploration for oil and gas and placement of structure for the exploitation of oil and gas as well as maps of offshore oil and gas installations
- the possible effects of releases of oil and chemicals from any disturbance of cutting piles

Radioactive substances

- the statistical techniques applicable to the OSPAR Radioactive Substances Strategy;
- 3rd Periodic Evaluation of progress towards the objectives of the OSPAR Radioactive Substances Strategy.



The 1992 OSPAR Convention is the current instrument guiding international cooperation on the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. It combined and up-dated the 1972 Oslo Convention on dumping waste at sea and the 1974 Paris Convention on land-based sources of marine pollution.

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North-East Atlantic used sustainably



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