



**OSPAR
COMMISSION**

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



From the Chairman and Executive Secretary

The year has been dominated by finalisation and production of the Quality Status Report (QSR) 2010, development of the new Strategy and working structure, and proposals for new and revised OSPAR measures. In particular OSPAR 2010 agreed measures to protect habitats and species, including the world's first network of marine protected areas in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), and further measures to manage the environmental impact of certain human activities. This report provides more detail on specific achievements of the Ministerial Meeting.

During the year OSPAR experts have made significant contributions to the development of advice on criteria and methodologies for Good Environmental Status Descriptors within the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Task Group reports have drawn on work developed and validated by OSPAR over many years, such as Ecological Quality Objectives developed for the North Sea and the OSPAR Common Procedure for assessing eutrophication. Additionally, pioneering work by OSPAR, for example in the fields of underwater noise assessment and marine litter monitoring, has contributed substantially and provided a point of departure for work on indicators and targets. In future a Co-ordination Group within OSPAR will, amongst other tasks, monitor integration between key themes and delivery of the ecosystem approach, and provide a forum to take forward appropriate collective implementation of the MSFD.

In a year when so many initiatives have come to fruition, additional meetings of the Assessment and Monitoring Committee, the strategic intersessional group (ICG-Bergen), a Working Group on the Charlie Gibbs Marine Protected Area, Jurists and Linguists and Heads of Delegation have

taken place to prepare materials that are fit for purpose to break new ground and to take OSPAR forward. At the same time every effort has been made to maintain the momentum of internal and external communications needed to keep stakeholders informed of progress.

A core strength of OSPAR is assessment and monitoring, particularly of hazardous substances. This continues to be driven through dedicated expert Working Groups. Inputs are evaluated on the basis of the Comprehensive Atmospheric Monitoring Programme (CAMP) and the Comprehensive Study of Riverine Inputs and Direct Discharges (RID). Monitoring concentrations, trends and effects of substances in the marine environment is achieved on the basis of the Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP). Reports for 2008 were agreed this year. Such reports provide the building blocks for periodic holistic assessments.

The latest holistic assessment, the QSR 2010, which was peer reviewed by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), identifies clear signs of improvement in the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic as a result of OSPAR's efforts. However, halting biodiversity loss together with addressing the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification are identified as major environmental challenges for the future. In a presentation to the Oceans Day side event of COP15 in Copenhagen, co-hosted by the Global Forum and the European Environment Agency, OSPAR highlighted the need to develop policies that mitigate climate change and ocean acidification and, where possible, facilitate adaptation. The North-East Atlantic has been described as a 'bell-weather' for sea surface temperature change, relative sea-level rise and reduced Arctic sea ice extent. Ranges of warm

water plankton and some fish species are shifting northward. Ocean acidification is a far more rapid process than earlier predictions suggested. A check on progress towards ratification of the measures to allow carbon sequestration and storage in suitable geological formations in the sub-seabed within the OSPAR Maritime Area, agreed in 2007, suggests the measures are likely to come into force in 2011.

OSPAR continues to strive to establish and maintain an agreed scientific basis to evaluate environmental quality against established strategic targets. For eutrophication, further modelling is taking place to improve quantification of nutrient sources and pathways and to complement monitoring. Selection and prioritisation of hazardous substances continues to be a core activity with attention to specific issues, such as consideration this year of the losses of mercury from the chlor-alkali industry.

For those strands of work linked strongly to industry groups, such as offshore oil and gas and the nuclear industry, in addition to monitoring discharges, emissions, losses and concentrations of key substances in order to keep track of progress towards the reductions OSPAR is committed to, Contracting Parties have started to consider the merits of a more risk-based approach (for example, with respect to oil and heavy metals in produced water). Another significant topic at OSPAR 2010 was prevention of significant oil pollution from offshore drilling activities in extreme conditions, following concern over the Deepwater Horizon accident in the Gulf of Mexico. Ministers adopted a Recommendation to review existing frameworks, take extra care to apply all relevant learning and report on on-going activity.

Rising to the challenge of identifying biodiversity to be protected (both what and where) OSPAR technical experts have actively developed ideas for biodiversity assessment and monitoring. In October 2009 a Workshop held in Paris explored actions and measures in relation to OSPAR's List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats. This work inspired measures agreed by Ministers. At the same time the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) has received considerable attention. The addition of the six MPAs in ABNJ represents a significant step towards the 2003 joint OSPAR/HELCOM commitment to establish a coherent network of well-managed MPAs by 2010 but still falls short of that ambition. A Workshop held in Madeira in March 2010 brought together other competent authorities to consider a possible collective arrangement for joint action in ABNJ.

In 2009/2010, OSPAR has also been closely involved in following the development of the MSDF, in encouraging knowledge transfer with the Bonn Agreement, seeking more scientific advice from ICES, and working with other Regional Seas Conventions. OSPAR continues to have an influential role at a global level. The intersessional period of 2010/2011 marks a watershed for OSPAR, a point where hard work and investment by delegations, guided by the experience of capable chairs and contributions from key members of the Secretariat have built a solid foundation from which to continue to protect the environment of the North-East Atlantic for the decades to come.

Mr Atle Fretheim

Chairman

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.



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 wishes Mr Atle Fretheim well as he hands over the chairmanship to Mr Victor Escobar (Spain). Mr Richard Moxon (UK) was elected vice-chairman.

In the context of the preparation of the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting 2010, each Committee reviewed its Strategy, the theme of the Joint Assessment Monitoring Programme (JAMP) relevant to its work and the applicability of OSPAR measures related to its activities.

Biodiversity

OSPAR has successfully contributed to the International Year of Biodiversity through major achievements in the establishment of its network of marine protected areas and the protection of species and habitats.

In a pioneering step, OSPAR Ministers have protected a network of six unique and ecologically sensitive sites in the Wider Atlantic (OSPAR Region V) as marine protected areas (MPAs) in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ). Together these areas constitute the world's first network of MPAs in ABNJ. In recognition of this achievement WWF International awarded the OSPAR Commission the Gift to the Earth accolade. The OSPAR MPAs in ABNJ received global recognition during the Conference of the Parties (COP 10) of the Convention on Biological Diversity in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan.

In addition to MPAs in ABNJ, important areas within Contracting Parties' waters have been added to the OSPAR network of MPAs. Amongst these, is a vast area in the waters around the Arctic Svalbard Archipelago and Bear Island, a transboundary MPA jointly managed by Sweden and Norway (Koster-Väderö and Ytre Hvaler MPAs) as well as several sites in Denmark, Ireland and the Netherlands. The entire network now covers an area of 433 000 km² or 3.1% of the OSPAR Maritime Area (see page 10).

Another milestone was the adoption of a series of Recommendations aimed at the protection of species and habitats on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats, including the common skate, different shark species, cold water coral reefs (*Lophelia pertusa*), coral gardens, deep sea sponges, sea pens, burrowing megafauna and the orange roughy (see page 12). A Recommendation on strengthening Environmental Impact Assessment procedures in relation to listed species and habitats was also adopted.

The adoption of Recommendations on an OSPAR framework for reporting encounters with conventional and chemical munitions in the OSPAR Maritime Area and on the reduction of marine litter through the implementation of fishing for litter initiatives have been important achievements this year. Additional work has been focused on the development of a regional economic and

social analysis as required by the MSFD, a marine spatial planning consultation procedure and voluntary guidance on ballast water exchange by vessels operating between the Mediterranean Sea, the North-East Atlantic and/or the Baltic Sea (in cooperation with the Barcelona Convention and HELCOM).

Assessing and managing the environmental impact of human activities has involved routine reports in the context of authorised dumping together with further consideration of chemical weapons and munitions, sand and gravel extraction, dredged material and fish waste. OSPAR continues to monitor and evaluate the potential impact of a wide range of human pressures including underwater noise, offshore energy generation, cables, transportation and artificial reefs. Expert groups have considered cumulative impacts, transboundary aspects of marine spatial planning and marine litter.



Biodiversity Strategy

Seeks 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 under the Biodiversity Committee (BDC) has a two-fold approach: (1) protecting identified species and habitats and establishing marine protected areas (MPA); (2) consideration of the environmental impacts of a set of identified human activities.

Monitoring and Assessment

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.

The 2003 Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme has been directed to deliver in 2010 a holistic assessment of the quality status of the North-East Atlantic. In support of this, the JAMP set out a series of products relating to monitoring and assessment tools, data and information collection, and the preparation of thematic assessments.

Hazardous Substances

Aims 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 the year 2020.



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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.

Hazardous Substances Strategy

In 2009/10, the Hazardous Substances Committee (HSC) examined existing requests for deselection of substances from the List of Chemicals for Priority Action and reviewed the substances in Section A of the List of Substances of Possible Concern. HSC also assessed progress in implementing OSPAR measures on controlling the dispersal of mercury from crematoria, the aluminium industry, the vinyl chloride sector and integrated crop management. HSC also examined the review statement for the Background Documents on trichlorobenzenes and cadmium.



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Radioactive Substances

In 2009/10 the Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) recorded the lowest levels of total alpha and total beta for selected radionuclides since OSPAR monitoring started in the early 1990s. This progress is measured against an agreed baseline. There are no similar reductions for tritium because abatement techniques have yet to be developed. RSC also updated the Monitoring Programme for Concentrations of Radioactive Substances in the Marine Environment and endorsed a series of measures related to data management and quality assurance of discharge and concentration data. Progress continued on the development of a method for dealing with exceptional discharges and arrangements for further cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency regarding the development of standards for radiological protection of the environment were agreed.



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Radioactive Substances Strategy

Seeks 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 achieving concentrations in the environment near background values for naturally occurring radioactive substances and close to zero for artificial radioactive substances. Its timeframe requires that by 2020 the OSPAR Commission will ensure that discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances are reduced to levels where the additional concentrations in the marine environment above historic levels, resulting from such discharges, emissions and losses, are close to zero.



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Offshore Oil and Gas Industry

This year major progress was made in harmonising OSPAR measures on the use of chemicals offshore with relevant EU legislation (REACH). To this end OSPAR Ministers adopted revised Recommendations on a Harmonised Offshore Chemical Notification Format (HOCNF) and on a Pre-Screening Scheme for Offshore Chemicals.

Further progress was made on the development of a holistic risk based approach to the management of produced water discharged from offshore installations, including the adoption of a roadmap setting out steps for the development of a draft Recommendation for consideration at the next meeting of the Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Committee in 2011.

Following concerns over the Deepwater Horizon accident in the Gulf of Mexico and with a view to reducing the risks of drilling complex oil exploration wells in deep water, OSPAR Ministers also adopted a Recommendation on the prevention of significant oil pollution from offshore drilling activities by initiating a process to assess the need for additional OSPAR action.

Eutrophication

In 2009/10, the Eutrophication Committee (EUC) continued its work to help 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. In this context, EUC considered results of the most recent modelling workshop on transboundary nutrient transport and made arrangements for the modelling work to be taken forward, including in support of future eutrophication assessments. EUC also launched a revision process for its thematic assessment framework, the Common Procedure for the assessment of the eutrophication status of the OSPAR maritime area. A revised Common Procedure is scheduled for adoption by OSPAR 2013, to provide Contracting Parties with the basis for the next eutrophication assessment. The work on the assessment framework will support a review of the OSPAR Eutrophication Monitoring Programme in the coming years and coordination by Contracting Parties of the determination of characteristics, indicators and targets for good environmental status under the MSFD.



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.

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.

QSR 2010 – evaluating a decade of monitoring and assessment

Based on the collective efforts of Contracting Parties under the 2003 JAMP, one of the main tasks accomplished by ASMO in 2009/2010 was to finalise and adopt the Quality Status Report (QSR) 2010. Launched at the 2010 OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in Bergen, the QSR 2010 is a major achievement in bringing together our current knowledge on trends in pressures and impacts and the quality status of the North-East Atlantic and its Regions and in directing future policies for the protection and conservation of the marine environment. It has been developed and shaped through a complex process involving the many experts from OSPAR governments and observer organisations who contributed through OSPAR Committees and Working Groups. The peer review by a group of international scientists, facilitated by the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES), and the e-consultation on the QSR 2010 have both helped to critically review the evidence gathered and conclusions drawn.

Set within the context of socio-economic, physical and biological features of the North-East Atlantic and a changing ocean climate, the QSR 2010 draws regional conclusions on the implementation of the OSPAR Strategies for eutrophication, hazardous substances, offshore oil and gas industry, radioactive substances and biodiversity and ecosystems, encompassing maritime activities and nature conservation.

The QSR 2010 shows that there are clear signs of improvement in the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. Inputs and contamination levels of some pollutants have dropped and some adverse effects are lessening. But the loss of biodiversity has not yet been halted, with fishing and other human activities needing careful management. Climate change and ocean acidification present major environmental challenges over the long term.

The QSR 2010 also shows that gaps in knowledge remain and need to be addressed. This includes overarching ecosystem assessments to support the ecosystem approach to the management of human activities, which are still a major challenge. The assessment process of the QSR 2010, including tested ecological quality objectives and the trial of new approaches to ecosystem assessment, provides inspiration and impetus for OSPAR's continued work to extend the development and application of ecosystem assessment methodologies and to develop an integrated monitoring and assessment programme based around an improved and comprehensive set of indicators that describe a clean, healthy and biologically diverse sea.

A renewed Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme

Lessons learnt from the QSR 2010 assessment process were one building block for the development by ASMO in 2009/2010 of a renewed Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme. The renewed JAMP is limited to the period 2010-2014, when it will be reviewed in light of developments in the EU on the MSFD. The JAMP 2010-2014 is directed to supporting the activities of Contracting Parties in respect of the MSFD and will establish by 2014 relevant monitoring programmes. The main objectives of the JAMP 2010-2014 relate to continued implementation and development of existing and new OSPAR monitoring programmes, the development of tools for delivery of integrated regional environmental assessments, and the preparation of integrated assessments of the implementation of OSPAR Strategies and their effectiveness.

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The QSR 2010 is not just a summary report. It is a whole package of assessment reports generated under the JAMP over the past years which provide the scientific evidence and basis for the overview. In its electronic version, presented as a fully developed website, available both online and as an offline DVD version, the QSR 2010 invites the reader to explore expanded information such as additional case studies and more detailed assessment results, background to methodologies used and data sources. It is possible to follow the assessment process from the monitoring station to the regional statement of quality status. -> <http://qsr2010.ospar.org>



Hard copies of the QSR 2010 summary report and of the DVD with the electronic offline version can be ordered from the OSPAR Secretariat, tel: +44 (0)20 7430 5200, e: secretariat@ospar.org

The OSPAR network of MPAs in the high seas

At the 2003 OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in Bremen, Ministers of OSPAR Contracting Parties made a commitment to create a network of marine protected areas (MPAs). Their aim was for an ecologically coherent network of well-managed MPAs to be established by 2010. Good progress had been made toward establishing this network in coastal seas, with each national administration declaring MPAs within waters under its jurisdiction. However it has become clear that extra steps in international cooperation are needed to extend the network to protect the 38% of seas within the OSPAR maritime area that are beyond the limits of national sovereignty. Since 2005, the OSPAR's Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Protected Areas convened by Germany has undertaken a rigorous analysis of ocean life and ecosystems of the OSPAR high seas. It has explored the region for candidate sites for MPAs, prioritising places of great ecological value that are highly vulnerable to the impacts of human activities. From this process six areas of outstanding significance have been established as MPAs including diverse habitats and species.

The Charlie-Gibbs South Marine Protected Area (145 420 km²) and the Milne Seamount Complex Marine Protected Area (21 000 km²) were both established with the goal of protecting and conserving the biodiversity and ecosystems of the seabed and the superjacent waters.

The Altair Seamount High Seas Marine Protected Area (4 409 km²), the Antialtair Seamount High Seas Marine Protected Area (2 208 km²), the Josephine Seamount High Seas Marine Protected Area (19 370 km²) and the Mid-Atlantic Ridge North of the Azores High Seas Marine Protected Area (93 568 km²) were established with the goal of protecting and conserving the biodiversity and ecosystems of the water superjacent to the sites, in coordination with, and complementary to, protective measures taken by the Portuguese Republic for the seabed. The seabed of these sites is included in a submission by Portugal to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and Portugal has this year established these sites as MPAs under its national jurisdiction.

Recommendations have been adopted on the management of these areas. They give key directions to achieve collaboratively the conservation objectives, including raising awareness, building and sharing information, promoting marine science and identifying monitoring mechanisms, managing new developments and engaging third parties.

Description of the MPAs

The Charlie-Gibbs South Marine Protected Area straddles a link in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and encompasses a meander in the sub-polar front, an oceanographic boundary between cool northern and warm southern waters. This front is highly productive and attracts rich wildlife, including whales, dolphins and birds. The seabed hosts seamount, slope and abyssal plain habitats.

The Mid-Atlantic Ridge North of the Azores High Seas Marine Protected Area spans a section of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge south of the Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone. It supports significant populations of deep water sharks, sponge gardens and seamount corals, among diverse other life.

The Milne Seamount Complex Marine Protected Area, the Altair Seamount High Seas Marine Protected Area and the Antialtair Seamount High Seas Marine Protected Area are isolated and potentially near-pristine examples of oceanic seamounts. Although little-explored, they are likely to contain unique species, as well as sustain important concentrations of a wide range of fish and corals.

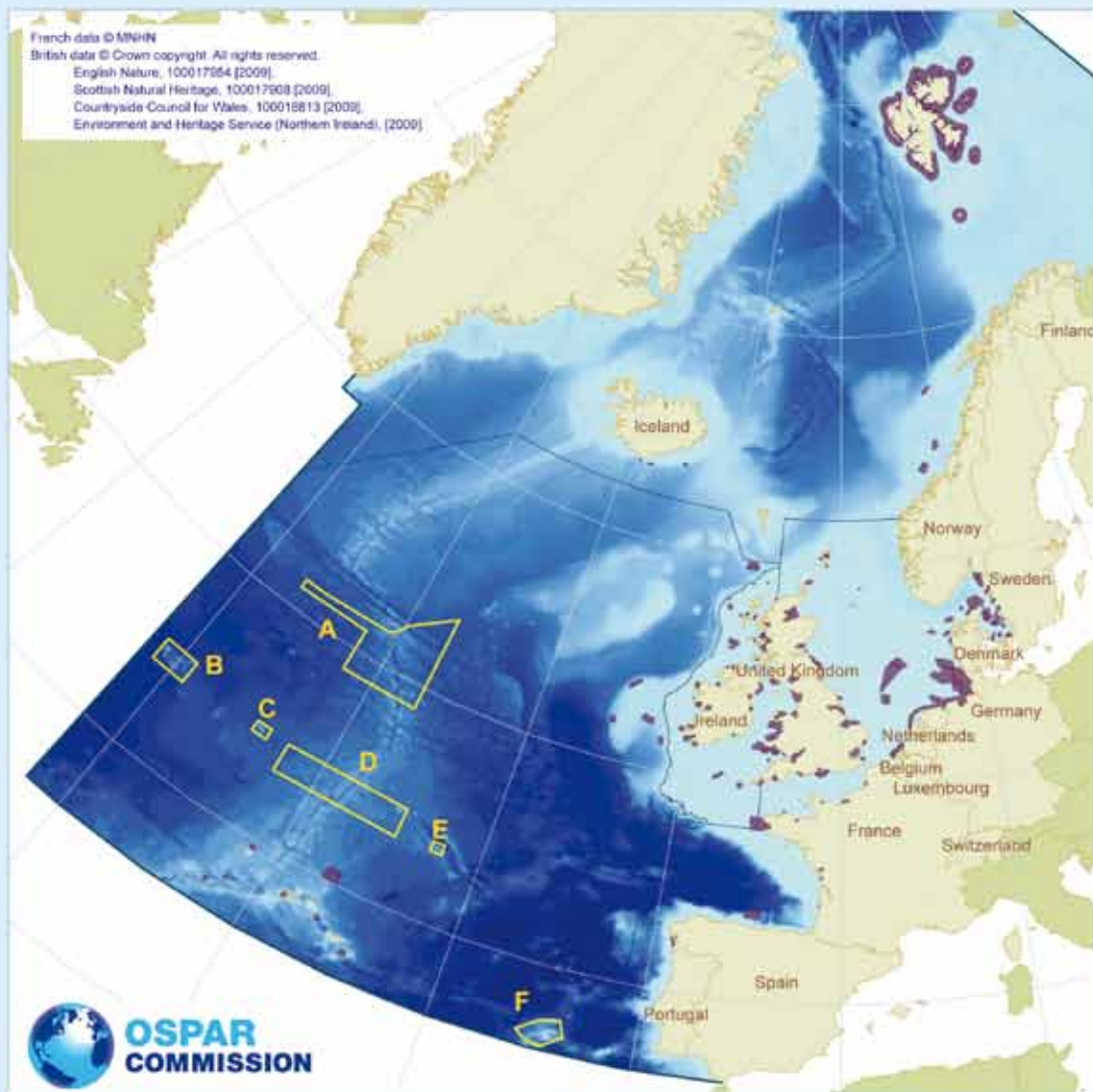
The Josephine Seamount High Seas Marine Protected Area is at the continental margin of Africa and rises close to the surface. It supports several unique species and rich sea fan habitats inhabited by a wide diversity of deepwater and warm temperate fish and invertebrates. It is a staging post for migratory species like turtles and tuna and currently is especially vulnerable to impact.



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 OSPAR Marine Protected Areas - national designations (as of 1st May 2010)

 OSPAR Marine Protected Areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction agreed by OSPAR 2010

- A Charlie-Gibbs South MPA
- B Milne Seamount Complex MPA
- C Altair Seamount High Seas MPA
- D Mid-Atlantic Ridge North of the Azores High Seas MPA
- E Antialtair Seamount High Seas MPA
- F Josephine Seamount High Seas MPA



Species in need of protection

There is general agreement that marine biodiversity globally is facing unprecedented threats due to pressures from human activities. OSPAR 2010 established the first formal OSPAR measures for species on the OSPAR List addressing the protection of a set of long-lived, slow-growing fish species which have been impacted by fishing. OSPAR recognises the competence of fisheries management authorities to deal with questions on the management of fisheries affecting these species. The measures agreed have been designed to support the management of fisheries by these bodies.

ANGEL SHARK (*Squatina squatina*) is a flat-bodied bottom-dwelling shark formerly a common and important demersal predator over large areas of coastal and outer shelf seas in the North-East Atlantic. It is highly vulnerable to by-catch in benthic trawls, set nets and bottom longlines which operate over most of its range. Its abundance has declined dramatically over the past 50 years to the point where it has been declared extinct in the North Sea and is now extremely uncommon throughout most of the remainder of its range.

COMMON SKATE SPECIES COMPLEX. Common Skates can grow to over 2m in length. This very large size makes them vulnerable to capture by bottom fisheries. Formerly one of the most common and commercially important skates fished in shelf waters of the North-East Atlantic, it is now very rare in most of the OSPAR maritime area. Recent genetic research indicates that common skates comprise two large threatened species. The implications of this are that common skate species may be even more depleted than formerly thought.

BASKING SHARK (*Cetorhinus maximus*). The plankton-feeding basking shark is the world's second largest fish, reaching 12 metres in length. Basking sharks are observed most frequently in the pelagic waters around the British Isles and northern France, but much is unknown about their populations and migration patterns. Historical fisheries caused large declines in numbers and recovery has been slow. Targeted fisheries on basking sharks are now banned, but the main remaining threat is from accidental by-catch.

WHITE SKATE (*Rostroraja alba*) is a large skate formerly found in waters on the continental shelf and upper continental slope around the British Isles, France and the Iberian peninsula. It is vulnerable to capture by bottom fishing and has declined severely over the past 50 to 100 years around the British Isles, in the Irish Sea, and the Bay of Biscay and is observed only rarely.

ORANGE ROUGHY (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*) is a relatively large deep-sea fish found along the continental slope down to 1 800m depth, which commonly lives for more than 100 years. Populations tend to aggregate around seamounts and canyons. This makes them very vulnerable to targeted fishing and populations have been depleted over the last 25 years within the OSPAR maritime area and elsewhere.

OSPAR and the protection of deep-sea biodiversity

The deep seas are among the least explored areas on Earth. In the OSPAR maritime area, these deep waters extend from within the Exclusive Economic Zones of OSPAR Contracting Parties out into the extensive areas beyond national jurisdiction. Some of those habitats occurring in waters deeper than 200m are known, on account of their delicate structures, to be particularly vulnerable to impacts from human activities, including physical damage and increases in turbidity. These habitats host highly diverse biological communities, which can be relatively rare in the vast expanse of the deep sea. The high cost of seabed exploration in these areas means that the character of the habitats is still only being revealed, there is therefore a need for a precautionary approach to the protection of the features that are known.

LOPHELIA PERTUSA reefs are hard slow-growing cold-water coral reefs, which provide a haven for rich biodiversity. They occur mainly at depths from 200m to 2 000m and have been found on the continental slope, on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, on isolated seamounts and in shallower waters in the Norwegian fjords and off the Swedish west coast.

CORAL GARDENS are dense "garden-like" aggregations dominated by soft non-reef forming cold-water corals that host biological communities with a high diversity. They can form on a wide range of soft and hard seabed substrata where hydrographic conditions are favourable, with different species occurring on different types of seabed. Coral gardens have been identified to occur at a wide range of depths, from the fjords of Norway to the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and isolated deep-sea seamounts and banks.

DEEP-SEA SPONGE AGGREGATIONS occur along the continental slope of the North-East Atlantic generally at depths from 250m to 1 300m in areas that are washed by deep-ocean currents. They have also been reported in surveys of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and associated seamounts down to 3 000m depth. Different assemblages of sponge species are characteristic of the far north and south of the OSPAR maritime area.

International Seabed Authority (ISA)

A Memorandum of Understanding between OSPAR and the ISA agreed at OSPAR 2010 is an exciting addition to arrangements already in place with the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the International Maritime Organisation. The ISA has exclusive responsibility for the regulation of deep seabed mining in areas beyond natural jurisdiction.

Bringing together relevant competent authorities

Over the past three years the OSPAR Commission has sought to formalise working arrangements with other international organisations. A longstanding Agreement of Cooperation between OSPAR and the International Maritime Organisation has facilitated exchange between the two organisations and development of regional actions such as voluntary D1 Ballast Water Exchange Guidance. In 2008 and 2010 respectively, NEAFC and the International Seabed Authority (the Authority) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the OSPAR Commission. All competent authorities concerned are bound by the international legal framework for regulating activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction provided by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

In 2009 the OSPAR Commission agreed on the terms of reference for an informal meeting with stakeholders to be held as part of the roadmap for further work on the then proposed OSPAR MPA in the Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone. This informal meeting with stakeholders was hosted by Portugal in Funchal (Madeira) from 23 – 25 March 2010. Given that the management of human activities in the High Seas of the North-East Atlantic falls under the competences of a number of international organisations and Conventions, and in order to move from a sectoral to an integrated ecosystem-based approach, the meeting concluded that a 'collaborative arrangement' for areas identified by individual competent authorities was needed. This was on the understanding that the scientific evidence confirming the value and vulnerability of the biodiversity within these areas was accepted by all.

The meeting developed a draft 'collaborative arrangement' between competent authorities seeking to encourage mutual notification, consultation and cooperation that included:

- a. generic management measures;
- b. specific management measures in relation to specific areas proposed by OSPAR; and
- c. a set of draft Joint Principles of competent authorities on the management of human activities in selected areas in ABNJ within the OSPAR Maritime Area.

It was agreed that the draft principles were enshrined in existing international maritime and environmental legislation, including UNCLOS; the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic ("OSPAR Convention"); the Convention on the Future Multilateral Cooperation in North-East Atlantic Fisheries ("NEAFC Convention"); the FAO Code of Conduct for responsible fisheries; the Regulations on Prospecting and Exploration for Polymetallic Nodules in the Area ("Mining Code"); and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto ("MARPOL"). Relevant EU legislation and policies also include these principles, particularly the Marine Strategy Framework Directive and the Common Fisheries Policy, thus providing the context to more specific management measures.

The informal meeting further emphasised the importance of ensuring information exchange on this envisaged cooperation within the administrations of OSPAR Contracting Parties, and the need to promote consistent positions of OSPAR Contracting Parties within the different competent authorities. It was also made clear that such an arrangement was not intended as a legal instrument. The 2010 meeting of the OSPAR Commission agreed to further explore these ideas.



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OSPAR 2010: Reaching out to a global audience

The Ministerial Meeting in Bergen was a crucial opportunity to re-tune core objectives and re-position OSPAR as a platform for regional implementation of the MSFD. By adopting the new Strategy and Working Structure, Ministers endorsed the insight, innovation and rationale developed by ICG-Bergen. In this way OSPAR stays relevant, commits to working further towards goals set originally in 1998 and can continue to add value. To establish the tone of voice and creativity needed in the ministerial segment the Commission decided to develop a bespoke website for the meeting, to invite OSPAR 'witnesses' and to incorporate a global dimension.

Squizmix

For the purpose of informing, raising awareness and stimulating OSPAR audiences, the Australian company SQUZMIX (meaning "take a look") was contracted to develop and implement a web-based multimedia promotional services in the lead-up to the Ministerial Meeting of the OSPAR Commission.

SQUZMIX also provides web live services, that were used during the Coast to Coast conference 2010 in Adelaide, Australia. During the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting, David Johnson and Colin Moffat had an opportunity to give presentations on OSPAR's work and the QSR2010 to the conference using these services.

OSPAR witnesses

Three charismatic and influential personalities took part in the OSPAR Commission's Ministerial Meeting. Their work, skill and experience has drawn them into direct contact with the changing environmental status of the North-East Atlantic – its physical perspectives, people, and unique biodiversity. The OSPAR witnesses interacted with the Ministers and helped us capture the public's imagination. Alongside Jostein Gaarder, the author of *Sophie's World*, and Maud Fontenoy, first woman to row the North Atlantic from west to east, Lewis Pugh who undertook the first swim across the North Pole, joined the adventure.

Lewis Pugh addressed the meeting after the opening statement of Erik Solheim, Norwegian Minister of

Environment and International Development. Based on his personal experience of achieving a swim in the North Pole, and in a lake immediately below Mount Everest, he invited the Ministers to take a "tactical radical shift" to tackle emerging threats to the marine environment such as global warming.

Jostein Gaarder demonstrated during his address how important the duty of protecting our environment is for future generations. As a philosopher he sought to explore the challenges of sustainable development and considered ocean governance as a matter of political will.

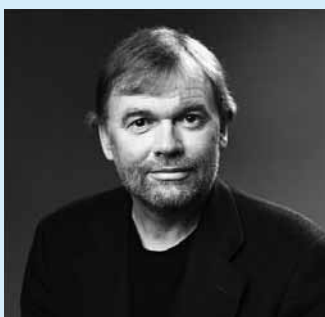
Finally, Maud Fontenoy explained that protecting the oceans provides solutions for our future and it is crucial to inform the younger generation about the wealth of our seas. She has experienced firsthand the impacts of marine litter far from land. She concluded that where there is a will there is a way and encouraged the meeting to achieve its ambitions.

12th UNEP Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans

The UNEP Regional Seas Programme has emerged over the last quarter century as an inspiring example of how to craft a regional approach to protecting the environment and managing natural resources.

The Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans cover issues ranging from land-based sources of pollution, chemical wastes and integrated coastal zone management to the conservation of larger marine areas. The aim is to promote the sustainable use and conservation of coastal and marine ecosystems and the services they provide, for the well-being of present and future generations.

The 12th UNEP Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans was held in Bergen, Norway, during the North-East Atlantic Environment Summit. The OSPAR Commission is an active member of the global group of Regional Management Organisations and cooperates closely with the different programmes established under the UNEP Regional Seas Programme. The meeting in Bergen fostered global discussions on marine conservation, inspired by OSPAR's efforts and supported by high-level involvement from UNEP.



Year in brief

The finalisation of the QSR 2010 and the preparation of the Ministerial Meeting remained a major component of OSPAR'S work during 2009/10, but some month by month milestones are listed below.

September 2009: An Intersessional Correspondence Group on Socio-Economic Analysis (ICG-SEA) is established with the aim of developing a concrete proposal on options for developing a regional economic and social analysis for the OSPAR Maritime Area.

October 2009: OSPAR holds a workshop in Paris on actions and measures in relation to the OSPAR List of threatened and/or declining species and habitats and a separate joint ICES/OSPAR workshop on assessment criteria for biological effects measurements.

November 2009: Norway nominates three areas around the Svalbard archipelago for inclusion in the OSPAR network of MPAs with a combined total area of 78 316 km².

OSPAR representatives participate in the Working Groups set up to assist with the implementation of those common principles and objectives of the EC Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) to be implemented at regional level.

December 2009: OSPAR sits on a panel on ocean-based mitigation responses at COP15. Panellists included the present OSPAR Executive Secretary and representatives of IMAREST, IMO, IUCN and industry.

January 2010: The Spanish Presidency of the EU focuses on biodiversity protection, holding a conference in Madrid. In a session examining diversity of approaches but coherence of goals, both OSPAR and UNEP-MAP set out experiences of establishing marine protected areas.

February 2010: OSPAR experts identify and discuss biodiversity monitoring and assessment issues critical to the understanding of Good Environmental Status under the MSFD.

March 2010: OSPAR holds an informal meeting with other key stakeholders on options for the management of the proposed Charlie Gibbs Marine Protected Area (CG-MPA). The outcome is a draft collaborative arrangement developing ideas on how competent authorities can work together.

April 2010: OSPAR maintains links with several EU-funded research projects contributing to the Hermione Science Policy Science Meeting, the Knowseas Advisory Board and the PISCES Steering Committee.

The ash cloud from the Eyjafjallajökull volcano eruption in Iceland causes OSPAR to postpone meetings of ASMO and RSC.

May 2010: OSPAR organises a session on the implementation of the ecosystem approach featuring an explanation of the process underpinning the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2010 at the Global Forum in Paris.

OSPAR participates in the 3rd European Maritime Day Stakeholder Conference (Gijon, Spain) which focuses on innovation in policy making for competitiveness, environmental protection and scientific excellence.

June 2010: ASMO adopts technical annexes for monitoring of planar CBs, dioxins, and PFOS under the CEMP.

ASCOBANS invites OSPAR to share published documentation on underwater noise and to explore options for contributing to the development of UNEP/CMS guidelines.

BDC adopts Guidelines for Monitoring Marine Litter on the Beaches in the OSPAR Maritime Area.

OSPAR takes part in the European Commission's Green Week Conference in Brussels (Biodiversity – our lifeline) with a presentation by the Secretariat on the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas.

July 2010: The ICG on Social and Economic Analysis identifies potential financial mechanisms for the implementation of a regional analysis.

September 2010: OSPAR hails the outcome of its Ministerial Meeting at Bergen as a great achievement. OSPAR proudly launches the Quality Status Report 2010. OSPAR Ministers move to protect a vast network of unique and ecologically sensitive areas in the wider Atlantic. The Ministers also agree a new Strategy for the North-East Atlantic Environment and adopt a Ministerial Statement which constitutes a political commitment to achieving the new goals set during the next decade. WWF awards the "Gift To the Earth" to OSPAR in recognition of the leading work on protection and conservation of marine biodiversity in the high seas.

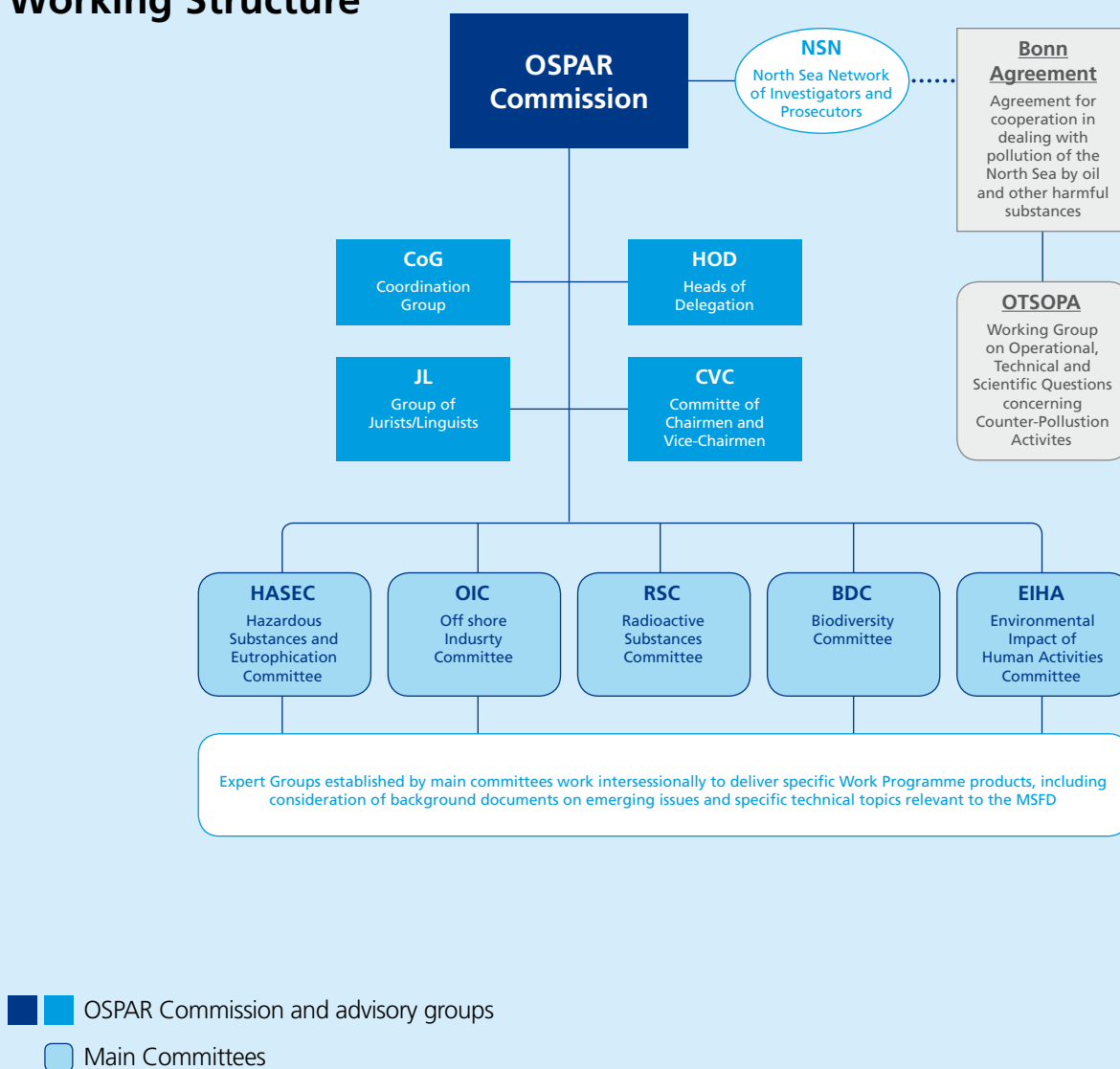


Strategy

In Bergen OSPAR Ministers adopted a new 'North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy' providing the strategic direction for the Commission from 2010-2020. The product of two years of deliberation by a high-level intersessional group, the Strategy reaffirms commitment to the ecosystem approach and within updated thematic sections reflects OSPAR's role to coordinate implementation of the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). Far-reaching targets, negotiated at previous Ministerial Meetings are retained as well as new priorities including climate change mitigation and adaption, ocean acidification and the need to factor in cumulative impacts.

To deliver the Strategy, OSPAR 2010 agreed a changed structure. A new Coordination Group is charged with ensuring the integration needed by the ecosystem approach and the MSFD together with oversight of the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme and key cross-cutting issues. Biodiversity protection will now be tackled by two separate Committees (BDC and EIHA), whilst work on hazardous substances and eutrophication has been consolidated into a single Committee (HASEC). Expert groups established on a yearly basis and reporting to the main Committees are responsible for taking forward specific products.

Working Structure



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 Ms Luisa Rodriguez-Lucas replaced Ms Hanne-Grete Nilsen as Deputy Secretary.

Committee Chairs

Vice-Chairs of the OSPAR Commission

Mrs Els de Wit (Netherlands) and Mrs Teresa Vinhas (Portugal)

This year both OSPAR Vice-Chairs completed their terms of office with the Commission.

The following individuals chaired OSPAR Strategy Committees and Working Groups during the period 2009/10

Assessment and Monitoring Committee (ASMO)

Professor Colin Moffat (United Kingdom)

Biodiversity Committee (BDC)

Dr Chris Vivian (United Kingdom)

Eutrophication Committee (EUC)

Mr Uli Claussen (Germany)

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

Mr Martin Mørk Larsen (Denmark)

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)

Internship

During 2009/10, OSPAR hosted one student from La Sorbonne, Paris. François Richard, has an MA in International Relations. He undertook a professional placement for four months and worked on the development of the communication aspects of the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting 2010.



Reports adopted by OSPAR 2010 for publication

OSPAR celebrated the publication of the Quality Status Report 2010 (QSR 2010) – a milestone evaluation of the quality status of the North-East Atlantic. A record number of 26 Background Documents on species and habitats were published. These and other reports adopted by OSPAR 2010 can be found on the publications page of the OSPAR website.



Official statements issued by Ministers, Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations at the Ministerial Meeting are available in the compendium to the Annual Report. Copies can be obtained from the OSPAR Secretariat or downloaded from the OSPAR website.

Official Statements

2010  **OSPAR**
COMMISSION



OSPAR
COMMISSION

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



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 Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft (the "Oslo Convention") and the 1974 Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources (the "Paris Convention").

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



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