



**OSPAR**  
**COMMISSION**

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



## From the Chairman and the Executive Secretary

Last year, implementation of the outcomes of the 2010 Ministerial Meeting in Bergen was reflected in a reorganised working structure that is now well-established and taking forward OSPAR work programmes with purpose and enthusiasm. OSPAR continues to be a leading example of regional governance, harnessing the expertise of Contracting Parties and delivering effectively alongside national, European and global environmental protection initiatives. Interestingly, a number of issues that were major considerations for OSPAR in the past are starting to 're-surface' and merit re-examination (e.g. historic radioactive waste dump sites and offshore decommissioning).

OSPAR 2012 gave consideration to how and over what timescale to plan for the next North-East Atlantic Ministerial Meeting; how this articulates with deliverables and the reporting cycle of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD); and implications for timing and financing of the next Quality Status Report or its equivalent. Arrangements are also being finalised to give OSPAR assessments more prominence as soon as they are produced, recognising that this work has a significant value in its own right as well as being part of a holistic periodic regional overview.

Significantly some work, such as the socio-economic analysis currently being undertaken within the Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA) and the development of a common suite of biodiversity indicators for the relevant MSFD Descriptors being undertaken by the experts of the Intersessional Correspondence Group on the Coordination of Biodiversity Assessment and Monitoring (ICG COBAM) within the Biodiversity Committee (BDC), is taking place over a timeframe that is longer than the annual OSPAR meeting cycle. During the year, where appropriate within different main Committees and through experts in ICG MSFD, OSPAR has consolidated advice for MSFD Good Environmental Status (GES) Descriptors and coordinated work across different MSFD GES Descriptors. However, the task of establishing an agreed methodology and approach to measuring and assessing cumulative impacts and effects remains a daunting and difficult problem.

OSPAR 2012 agreed to give more detailed consideration to the outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference (see page 11), in particular to interpreting the specific oceans and seas outcomes (§158-177) in order to identify and, as appropriate, prioritise those aspects having synergy with OSPAR's

work that can be taken forward at regional level. Support was expressed for the Regular Process for Global Reporting and Assessment of the State of the Marine Environment and OSPAR will identify contributions to the first global integrated assessment of the marine environment in 2014. Further efforts will also be made to consider relevant topics and innovative means to share success with other regions in order to strengthen global efforts towards marine protection. The development of a more formal link with the Abidjan Convention is an example of how this can be delivered.

### Achievements

The Coordination Group has explored OSPAR's science needs agenda and examined project funding opportunities in the MSFD context. OSPAR 2012 agreed to the initiation of OSPAR monitoring and assessment of Ocean Acidification and further elaborated an OSPAR Monitoring Framework to complement the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme. OSPAR 2012 also agreed to publish 'Finding Common Ground', a report on OSPAR's recent and ongoing work to coordinate regional implementation of the MSFD.

The Biodiversity Committee (BDC) has worked to further protect and conserve features on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats. Added impetus is needed in order to have measures in place for all features by 2013. The OSPAR Marine Protected Areas (MPA) network now covers 5% of the OSPAR maritime area but it will be a challenge to add significantly to this spatial coverage by the end of the year and to achieve the network coherence target set by Ministers in 2010. In this respect designation of Charlie-Gibbs North High Seas MPA is a major step forward (see pages 8-9).

The Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA) continues to have active and committed expert level work in the areas of marine litter and underwater noise. For the latter, EIHA agreed arrangements to establish a detailed inventory of mitigation techniques as a step towards developing detailed selected mitigation strategies.

The Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee (HASEC) has made good progress with assessment of CEMP data (Co-ordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme) (proposing adoption of Integrated JAMP (Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme) Guidelines for a 3-year trial basis), together with improvements to RID

(Comprehensive Study on Riverine Inputs and Direct Discharges) and CAMP (Comprehensive Atmospheric Monitoring Programme) programmes and principles. Development of Environmental Assessment Criteria (EACs) stalled this year due to lack of sufficient ecotoxicological data. Efforts have been suggested to tackle this in an European Union (EU) context. For eutrophication the expert group ICG-EUT has made progress in reviewing the Common Procedure ahead of its next application in 2013. Greater synergy with modelling experts is planned and there are issues to be resolved relating to coastal versus non-coastal waters.

The Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) has made significant progress on key outstanding so-called 'Bremen Issues', as well as on taking forward consensus on the definition of 'historic levels' and 'close to zero'. Technical work continues on trend detection, baselines for discharges and radiological environmental assessment criteria. In addition, RSC has concluded its overview assessment of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 and considered possible implications for its work on post-Fukushima stress tests and historic deep sea disposal of radioactive waste.

The Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) finalised a Recommendation and supporting Guidelines for a risk-based approach to the management of produced water discharges from offshore installations. In addition to this major element of work, OIC has also given scrutiny to considerations regarding drilling in extreme conditions and put in place a number of arrangements for taking forward work on areas such as the development of offshore activities in the Arctic.

An acknowledged strength of OSPAR is the Jurists and Linguists Group (JL) who help prepare measures for the Commission but also interpret the Convention when required and ensure consistency in the language and format of texts to be agreed by policy decision-makers. This year a separate report from JL was presented to OSPAR 2012. JL also assists with developing appropriate agreements establishing formal links between OSPAR and other organisations.

Partnerships continue to grow and OSPAR 2012 considered proposals to work closely with the Abidjan Convention, the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation and the Sargasso Sea Alliance.

Similarly OSPAR relies on collection of data and implementation reports to provide the evidence base upon which claims for environmental improvement and the effectiveness of policy measures are founded. An information system specification consultancy undertaken during the year provided OSPAR 2012 with details of what should be upgraded and detailed consideration of priorities and synergy with the demands of the MSFD. The appointment of Chris Moulton a dedicated data analyst within the Secretariat has complemented future investment.

## Management

During 2011/2012 the OSPAR Secretariat moved offices to accommodation within Victoria House, central London. The move took place without disruption and the new accommodation is open plan with far-reaching views over London in all directions.

OSPAR 2012 was the last OSPAR Commission meeting for Professor David Johnson as Executive Secretary. David stated that his six years with OSPAR had been a real privilege during which he has had an opportunity to help co-ordinate and deliver solid progress towards sustainable ocean governance. He sincerely thanked everyone within the OSPAR family, praised his team at the Secretariat and wished his successor, Dr Darius Campbell, every success. OSPAR 2012 re-elected Mr Victor Escobar (Spain) as Chairman, with Mr Richard Moxon (UK) and Dr Laura Piriz (Sweden) as Vice-Chairs.

**Mr Victor Escobar**  
Chairman

Mr Victor Escobar Paredes is a senior adviser on international affairs within the Cabinet of the Secretary of State for the Environment at the Spanish Ministry for Agriculture, Food and the Environment. He is an experienced negotiator at international level and is personally devoted to the protection of the marine environment. He was elected chairman in 2010.



**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, mediation and advocacy. He has been Executive Secretary since 2006.

During 2011/2012, the focus of each OSPAR Committee has been to implement the outcome of the Ministerial Meeting in Bergen, in line with the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy.

## Coordination Group

The Coordination Group (CoG) continued to oversee the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach across the entire range of OSPAR's work, in interaction with the main Committees. CoG made further arrangements for the establishment of an OSPAR Monitoring Framework, and the facilitation of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (through intense activity of the ICG MSFD). For this EU Directive, EU Member States are finalising in 2012 their initial assessment (Art. 8), determination of good environmental status (Art. 9) and establishment of a comprehensive set of environmental targets and associated indicators (Art. 10). This will set the direction for the coming years. CoG also took forward the discussion on OSPAR's Information System. In the area of climate change and acidification, CoG (with assistance from HASEC) made a start towards actual OSPAR monitoring and assessment for ocean acidification.



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## Hazardous Substances Progress

The Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee (HASEC) has made good progress, mainly on various aspects of monitoring and assessment. Data reports on inputs (CAMP and RID) and the annual assessment of contaminants in the maritime area (CEMP) were finalised. The monitoring programmes and assessment procedures are under review with a view to updating them to address current needs, such as the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. Following final delivery of ICES (International Council for the Exploration of the Sea) advice on the integrated monitoring of chemicals and their biological effects, HASEC adopted related Guidelines on a trial basis. Further work is required on the elaboration of Environmental Assessment Criteria (EACs).

Background documents for clotrimazole and trifluralin have been reviewed following requests from industry.

### **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.*



©Stephen Feist, CEFAS

## Biodiversity Progress

Further progress has been made in 2012 to protect species and habitats on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining species and Habitats with the adoption of Recommendations for action to protect and conserve the short-snouted seahorse, the long-snouted seahorse as well as for the habitat created by *Zostera* – otherwise known as eelgrass and of notable importance to the survival of the long-snouted seahorse. The Recommendations came into force on 29 June 2012.

In addition, OSPAR 2012 agreed to establish and manage a 7th extensive High Seas Marine Protected Area encompassing the water column of an area of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge immediately north of the Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone. Covering an area of almost 180,000 km<sup>2</sup>, this is a significant addition to the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas. OSPAR will be providing an update on the state of the OSPAR MPA Network to the 11th Conference of the Parties to the CBD in relation to the review of the Aichi targets in October 2012.

The second Informal meeting of competent authorities on the management of selected North-East Atlantic areas in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction was held in Paris, making progress towards agreeing a 'Collective Arrangement' and framework guidance for management planning. In association with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Secretariat, OSPAR also pioneered a regional workshop to describe Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) for the North-East Atlantic. The outcome of this workshop together with how and when to take forward results into the CBD process was agreed and set out explicitly by OSPAR 2012. Finally the assessment and monitoring of biodiversity elements has been a major work stream. The expert group ICG COBAM has been working on methodological approaches and common indicators and targets as part of an OSPAR Biodiversity Advice Manual. Work in the year ahead will focus on refining a list of possible targets and indicators that could be commonly

applicable across the OSPAR region. This work is acknowledged as extremely beneficial to national processes but it is complex and constrained by resource availability.

## Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Progress

The Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee (EIHA) has kept under review the developments for the MSFD GES Descriptors for which it is responsible (2, 7, 10 and 11) with the intention of convening a future workshop on common indicators. OSPAR continues to have active and committed expert level work on marine litter and underwater noise. Progress on the development of a regional action plan for marine litter has been made and arrangements to establish a detailed inventory of mitigation techniques for noise have been agreed. In addition, OSPAR 2012 adopted guidance for artificial reefs and cable laying and operation. Work still needs to progress on such a document for the management of dredged material.

Work has also continued in the key areas of cumulative effects and socio-economic analysis which could be significant work streams for EIHA in the future. The expert group on cumulative effects is currently investigating the adaptation of current methodologies to OSPAR's needs and work is progressing on the regional socio-economic study of the use of marine waters and the cost of degradation, with the collection and comparison of national data.

During the year, further to the conclusions and recommendations of the QSR 2010, EIHA has also critically reviewed OSPAR's responsibility to consider the impacts of international shipping. Decisions have been made to revive work on ballast water, in particular to better understand distribution pathways of problematic invasive species and how such species may affect relevant ports. A study by France has scoped possible protective measures within the competence of the International Maritime Organisation that may be relevant for the OSPAR High Seas MPAs.

### *Biodiversity and Ecosystems 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 has a two-fold approach (1) under the Biodiversity Committee, protecting identified species and habitats and establishing marine protected areas; and (2) under the Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee, assessing human activities that take place in the marine environment and the impact they might have.*



Intertidal *Mytilus Edulis* Bed ©Gerard Millat

## Offshore Oil & Gas Industry Progress

After four years gestation, the Offshore Industry Committee adopted an OSPAR Recommendation for a risk-based approach to the management of produced water discharges from offshore installations. With the new Recommendation, OSPAR goes one step further in managing produced water discharges by establishing a method of prioritising mitigation actions on the substances that pose most risk to the environment. This targeted approach will assist Contracting Parties in identifying, prioritising and adopting measures to reduce risks to the environment from discharges of produced water. OSPAR Guidelines in support of the Recommendation were also adopted.

With the risk-based approach settled, OIC focused on the implementation of OSPAR Recommendation 2010/18 on the prevention of significant acute oil pollution from offshore drilling activities. Thorough consideration was given to both national and international reviews post-Deepwater Horizon accident in the Gulf of Mexico, concluding that the need for additional measures from OSPAR should be revisited following the finalisation and adoption of the EU framework.

In seeking further avenues for regulation, OIC made a number of arrangements for taking forward work concerning oil and gas activities in the Arctic area, ageing installations and the impact of regular platform lighting on birds. Other issues OIC took action on included preparations for the review of OSPAR Decision 98/3 on the disposal of disused offshore installations.



## Eutrophication Progress

A thorough review of the Common Procedure for the Identification of the Eutrophication Status of the maritime area is on track for finalisation in 2013. Work that needs to be continued includes nutrient reduction target setting for eutrophication problem areas.

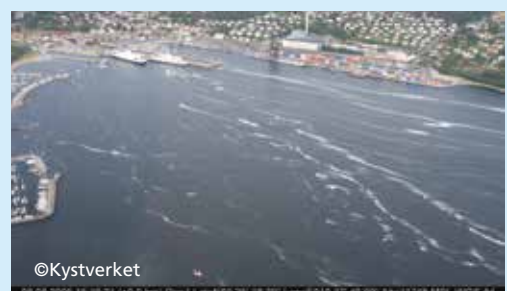


## Offshore Oil & Gas Industry Strategy

*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.*



## Radioactive Substances Progress

The Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) concluded that neither exceptional discharges nor variability will affect the performance and delivery of the North-East Atlantic Strategy. In addition, RSC put in place arrangements for taking forward work on the definition of historic or legacy waste in relation to the reporting of exceptional discharges. Having settled this, RSC turned its attention to the definition of "historic levels" and "close to zero" in the North-East Atlantic Strategy, making arrangements to further elaborate the definition of these terms.

RSC then took steps for its Expert Assessment Panel to establish a baseline period for discharges from the non-nuclear sector (offshore oil and gas sub-sector), paving the way to improve the assessment of progress towards the objectives of the North-East Atlantic Strategy.

Thorough consideration was also given to the overview assessment of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 which represents an overall assessment of the implementation of BAT in nuclear facilities by Contracting Parties across the OSPAR maritime area, and to the key outcomes of the joint International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)/OSPAR Workshop on radiological environmental assessment criteria. Concerning this latter strand of work, RSC agreed to test the proposed IAEA methodology for defining radiological environmental assessment criteria under the OSPAR Convention.

Work continued on the possible implications of historic deep sea disposal of radioactive waste, with arrangements agreed by OSPAR to assess the possibility of developing a proposal for a cost-effective monitoring programme. The conclusions of the post-Fukushima stress test were also examined.



### *Radioactive Substances Strategy*

*Seeks to prevent pollution from ionising radiation through taking the appropriate actions and measures to ensure that by the year 2020 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.*

Outer Hebrides, Scotland (OSPAR region II)



## Charlie-Gibbs North High Seas MPA

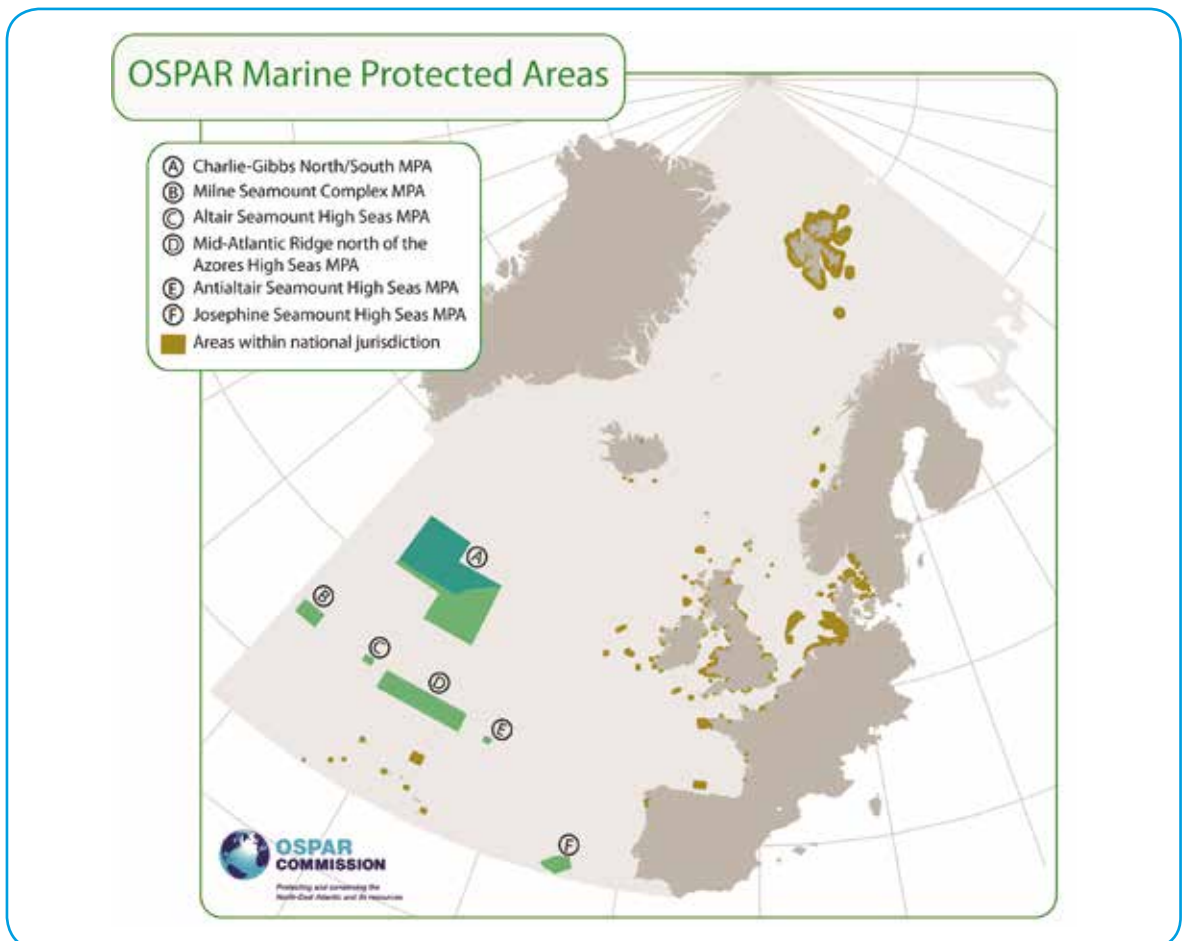
OSPAR 2012 established a 7th High Seas Marine Protected Area in the Wider Atlantic and agreed a Recommendation for its future management. The Charlie-Gibbs North High Seas MPA represents the northern part of the originally proposed Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone MPA that has been negotiated separately so as not to undermine the sovereign rights of any coastal State. The purpose of this MPA is to protect the water column features located beyond the limits of national jurisdiction of the coastal States in the OSPAR maritime area and Canada. According to Article 86 et seq. of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea the superjacent waters are considered as High Seas, which are open to all States, including the freedom of scientific research. The MPA (178,651 km<sup>2</sup>) overlays a sub-area of the extended continental shelf submission of Iceland and was agreed unanimously by all Contracting Parties to fulfil a commitment made at the 2010 Bergen Ministerial Meeting. It should not therefore be regarded as a precedent, but rather the conclusion of an agreed obligation.

The MPA (shown below) comprises water above a sub-area of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge (MAR), the major topographic feature of the Atlantic Ocean, and includes the Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone. The area extends from the central crest of the Ridge along the slopes and rifts on either side of the ridge axis into waters with depths of 3500m or more. When considered together with the adjacent Charlie-Gibbs

South High Seas MPA the areas span the meandering Sub-Polar Frontal Zone, representing a truly extensive and significant conservation effort.

To qualify as part of the OSPAR MPA network all proposed MPAs are judged against an OSPAR MPA Selection Criteria (OSPAR Agreement Number 2003-17). For the Charlie-Gibbs North High Seas MPA scientific experts considered that in particular the criteria of ecological significance, high natural biological diversity and representativity are met. Most importantly the Sub-Polar Frontal Zone represents a distributional boundary for many pelagic taxa, a meeting of southern and northern species, resulting in elevated natural biological diversity. For other criteria there is some uncertainty, either because of the lack of information or because the relative significance of the MPA compared with other similar or adjacent areas along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and in the wider OSPAR Region V cannot be determined.

Supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature conservation with funds from the German Federal Ministry of the Environment, the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) have launched a new media outreach website: Charlie-Gibbs Marine Protected Area – Preserving Diversity in the High Seas ([www.charlie-gibbs.org](http://www.charlie-gibbs.org)), with innovative features such as a deep sea explorer and interactive maps.





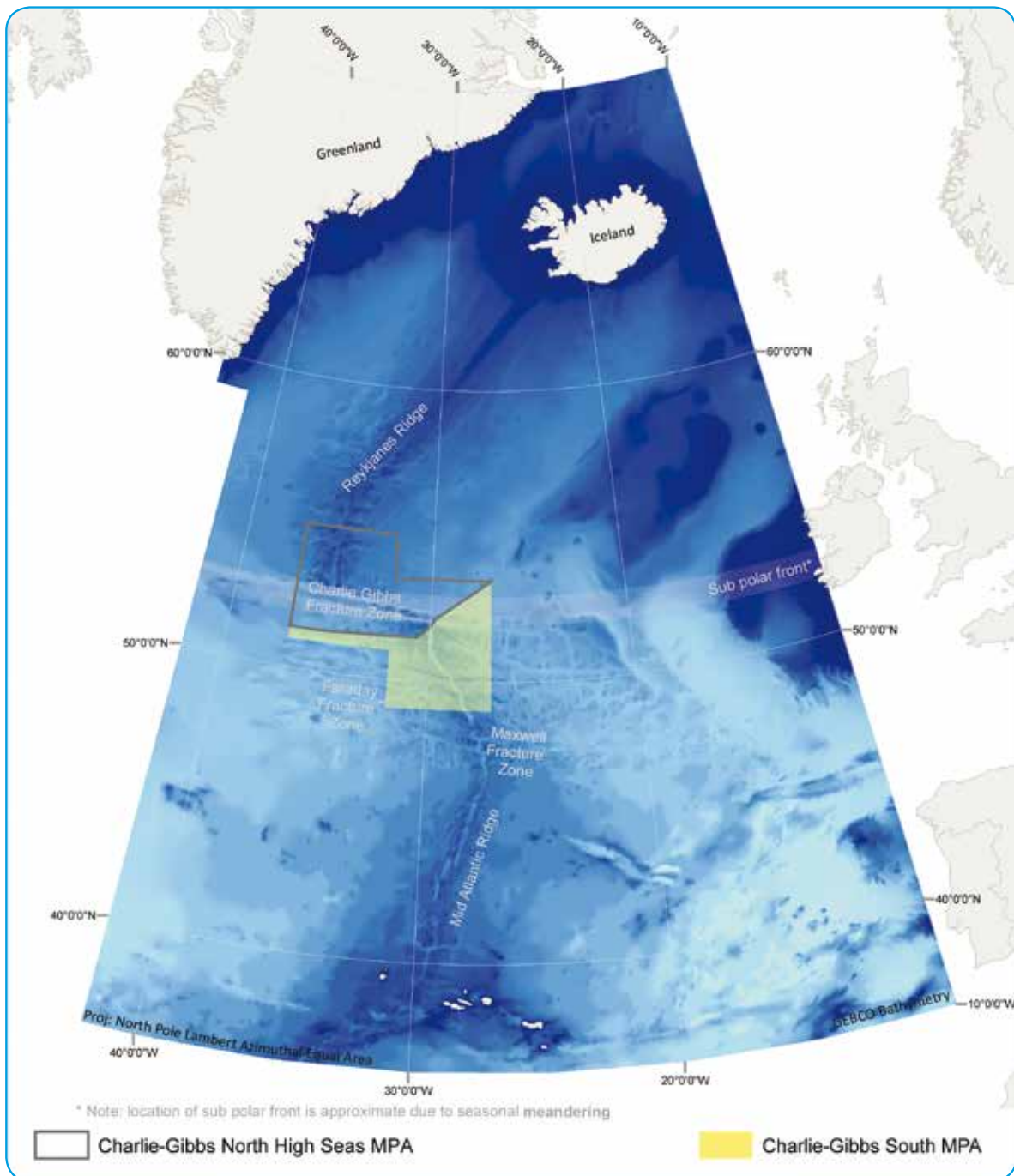


Illustration showing the OSPAR Charlie-Gibbs South MPA and Charlie-Gibbs North High Seas MPA



©David Shale. Photographs taken on the James Cook/ Ecomar cruises to the mid Atlantic ridge in 2010. They are of a new species of enteropneust (left), recently described as *Yoda purpurata*, and a holothurian *Peniagone cf. porcella* (right). The samples were not taken directly from the Charlie-Gibbs Fracture Zone, but north of the area, on the north-east side of the ridge.

## 20 years of OSPAR

Many delegates from Contracting Parties and members of staff have journeyed with OSPAR along the past 20 years. Below veterans share their experience of that journey.



*Hans-Georg Neuhoff:  
Ex-staff and head of German  
delegation*

We can be proud of forty years of continuous development in caring for the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. During the first twenty years the Oslo (1972) and Paris (1974) Conventions aimed at preventing marine pollution. The 1992 OSPAR Convention re-focused and Contracting Parties made the protection and conservation

of marine ecosystems and biodiversity a top priority. OSPAR crowned this year's twentieth anniversary of the Convention by designating a seventh High Seas Marine Protected Area. Such measures, but also the banning of most forms of dumping, including that of radioactive substances and of platforms are milestone achievements. OSPAR has been a role model for other regional conventions on a number of occasions. I trust that OSPAR will remain at the cutting edge in dealing with new challenges such as eliminating litter from the marine environment and organising the efficient protection of its marine protected areas in the high seas.



*Wanda Zevenboom: 25  
years' experience with  
OSPAR and its various  
strategies: Eutrophication,  
Joint Monitoring and  
Assessment, Biodiversity  
including fisheries and  
ecosystem approach and Oil  
and Gas issues.*

My first meeting on eutrophication was in winter 1987 in snow-white Berlin where Uli Claussen and I initiated our German - Dutch co-lead work on eutrophication e.g. the Common Procedure. Later work also concerns modelling, climate change and innovative monitoring tools together with the UK, under the various groups: NUT, NEUT, EUT, ETG, DPEUT, EUC and now ICG EUT

under HASEC and ICG EMO.

I am still impressed by OSPAR's way of dealing with the challenging issues of the marine environment, its international community of water managers and users of the sea. OSPAR has inspired many of us to join forces with e.g. HELCOM, and to show results in an integrated way (OSPAR QSRs) to our Ministers (North Sea and OSPAR Ministerial Conferences). OSPAR helps us to implement EU Directives, e.g. MSFD, WFD. The video "North Sea in Balance" that we jointly prepared for the North Sea Ministerial Conference in 2002 is still valid: it shows how we can work together on a "win-win" for the North Sea and all of its users, for present and future generations.



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*Sylvie Ashe: Longest-serving member of staff*

I joined the Secretariat on 1 October 1979; there were five of us then. The documents were all typed from manuscripts on an Adler typewriter with the great help of Tippex. There were 6 to 8 meetings per year and the main June meeting lasted 2 weeks! I was left to hold the fort while

the 4 others were gallivanting to various meeting places. Thankfully, I did eventually get many chances to travel and to meet a lot of very nice delegates.

33 years later and the Secretariat is still a wonderful place to be. Having seen 6 Executive Secretaries come and go, I can also declare that there is no more Telex or Tippex. I no longer wear Latex and Spandex. Things have become more complex. We still have the odd Annex but we now have Webex and I'm often more perplexed!



*Georges Pichot, long-standing delegate, Belgium*

Even now whenever I hear that beautiful song by Jacques Dutronc "It is five o'clock ..... Paris is waking up" on the radio, I can see us, the somewhat haggard-looking OSPAR sherpas on the steps of the Kléber Palace in Paris on 22 September 1992 - as it happens, at about 5 am - watching the sun rise over a beautiful Paris. We had just given birth to the OSPAR Convention and had just a few hours to get back to our hotels, shower,

and have an espresso before returning to Kléber to participate, from a certain distance, in the brouhaha of the signature. We had had the grace to leave some square brackets in the text, to give our Ministers the feeling that they were making the final decisions. We were real pros!

We had gently torn each other's hair out over various specific issues, such as the dumping of radioactive substances at sea, but at that moment, we could not have known in advance that we would have other issues to deal with. Essential, but romantic and intangible: the protection of marine biodiversity. By the time we learn to live, it is already too late.... isn't it?

## June 2012: a month of international anniversaries

### Rio+20: 20 years

In June the Rio+20 Conference included a substantive section on oceans and seas as part of its outcome entitled 'The Future We Want'. Reaction to the Conference has been mixed: OSPAR 2012 meeting immediately after Rio+20 recognised opportunities to advance the agenda for conservation and sustainable use of the oceans. Concerns expressed in Rio about the health of oceans and marine biodiversity closely reflect the aims of the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy. In particular a commitment at Rio+20 'to take action to, by 2025, based on collected scientific data, achieve significant reductions in marine debris to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment' (§163), could give impetus to OSPAR work on marine litter. Rio+20 also affirmed the importance of area-based conservation measures, including marine protected areas, but was disappointingly vague on the topic of incorporating socio-economics, such as 'blue-carbon', into marine conservation policies.

The Oceans Day at Rio+20 (16 June 2012) was a high level event that helped stimulate the ocean emphasis by calling for strong and immediate action to meet the sustainable development goals for oceans, coasts and small island developing States. Co-ordinated by the Global Forum, the event mobilised considerable

interest and ensured attention was given to the problems of the marine environment particularly those associated with fisheries and the plight of small island developing States.

### UNCLOS: 30 years

The Executive Secretary presented an overview of regional regulation of decommissioning by OSPAR at the 36th Annual Conference of the Centre for Oceans Law and Policy from 20-22 June in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This conference, which focused on the regulation of continental shelf development, marked the 30th anniversary since the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Leading experts from around the world considered the state of existing and further need for international regulation of continental shelf activities, focusing in particular on the exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbons.

The Conference affirmed UNCLOS as a sound framework but emphasised that its utility remains dependent on interpretation by States. UNCLOS was arguably the most intractable negotiating process of its time due to the wide-ranging scope of its agenda and the linkages made to different issues. Discussion in Halifax focused on challenges to the carefully constructed Continental Shelf Regime now posed by advances in science and technology. It was concluded that competing uses require active leadership and the prospect of ratification of UNCLOS by the United States was eagerly anticipated.

# Information system

The monitoring and assessments that take place within the context of OSPAR generate considerable amounts of data and information on the state of the North-East Atlantic. Some datasets stretch back several decades and represent a rich resource for decision making. To be as useful as possible though, this data must be accessible, managed in a format that can be interrogated against other types of data, allowing the results of any assessments to be presented in a clear, visual way that can be easily translated for non-specialists.

The last year has seen the culmination of a strand of work that has been undertaken throughout OSPAR to investigate how we can make the most of this rich treasure trove of data to better understand the North-East Atlantic ecosystem and how it is affected by human activities. The aim is to develop a system that will help us use the information at hand to respond to the challenges set out in both the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy as well as the EU Marine Framework Strategy Directive to ensure that we have seas that are healthy and functioning. The work to-date looked at the data and information that we have within OSPAR and then considered what we need to be able to do to that data in order to answer the questions posed – important consultations were held with Contracting Parties to understand these needs.

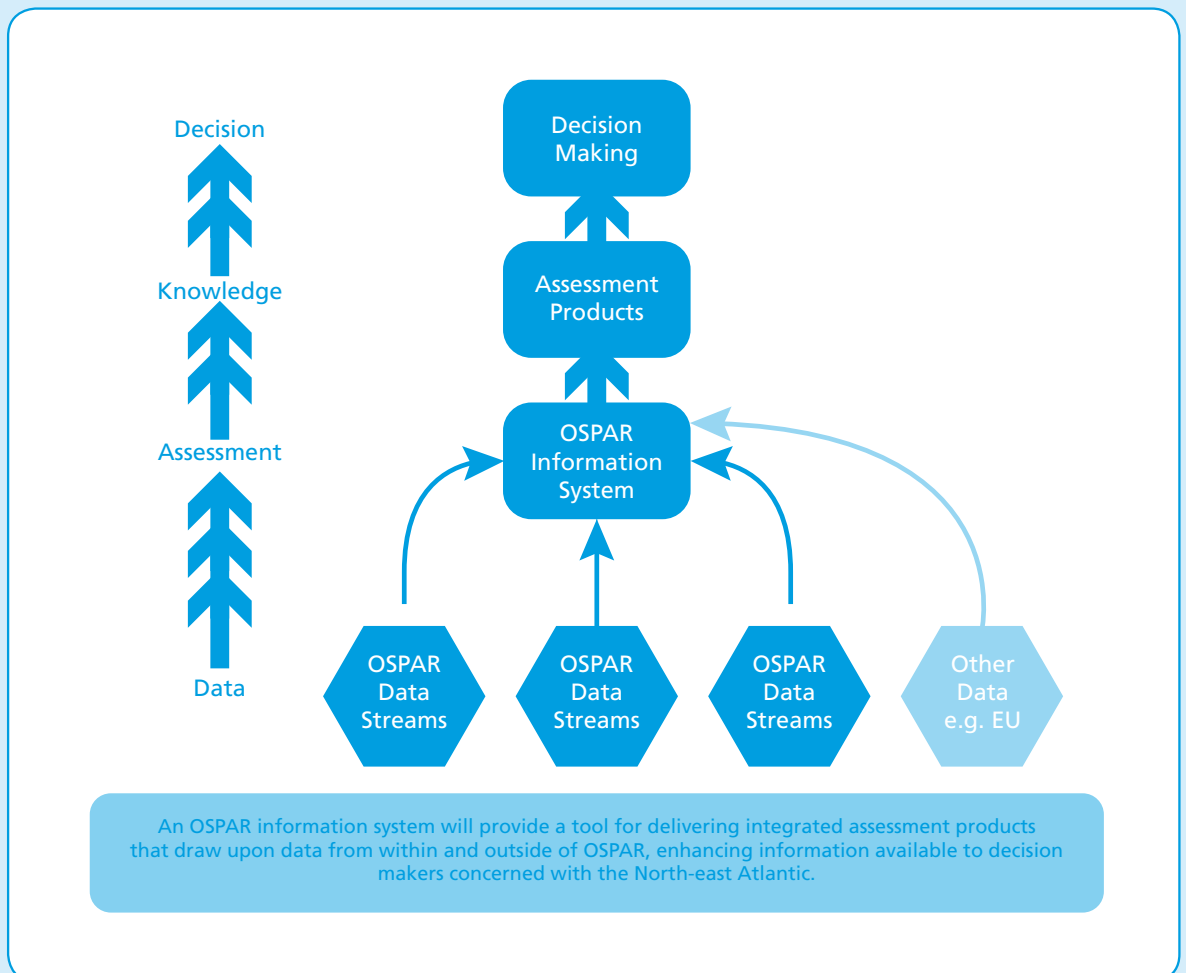
With this information at hand, consultants developed scenarios for a specification of an information system; what this could look like, how it

could be developed and what is needed to be done in preparation. The resultant report was considered by all OSPAR's Committees to ensure it responds to the needs of all thematic areas and to provide their views to the OSPAR Commission.

In June 2012 OSPAR agreed that an information system is required, and that this is an important investment in capacity. Such a system will be critical for realising ambitions of integrated spatial analysis, or developing more innovative assessments likely to be required to deliver ecosystem-based assessments. It has been recommended that the OSPAR information system should enable the interrogation of various datasets (both within and outside OSPAR) and present the results of assessments in a highly visual manner to make them understandable for decision-makers and external audiences.

There is a great deal of preparatory work to be done. The proposal is for this to go forward in a step-wise approach, the first of which is already in hand. A new tab can be found on the OSPAR website home page. The "Data" tab provides a list of all the datasets generated by OSPAR's monitoring and assessment activities. Before long it will also be where OSPAR datasets can be accessed.

The OSPAR information system should enable users within and beyond the OSPAR community to get the maximum value from the significant investment that has already been made in the collection of the data.



## Year in brief

OSPAR has continued to focus on the implementation and dissemination of the successful outcomes achieved at the Ministerial Meeting in Bergen in September 2010 within a now, well-established, reorganised working structure, taking forward OSPAR work programmes.

**September 2011:** The world's first regional workshop to describe Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) pursuant to CBD Decision X/29 was held in Hyères, France, convened by OSPAR, NEAFC and the CBD Secretariat. The workshop described 10 areas in the North-East Atlantic, beyond 200 nm that experts present considered to contain features that meet one or more of the CBD EBSA scientific criteria. OSPAR and NEAFC will determine how to refine these descriptions for submission to CBD COP12 in 2014.

**October 2011:** The 13th meeting of Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans was held in Busan, South Korea hosted by NOWPAP. The emphasis was on preparation of input to the Rio+20 Conference and strategic consideration of how the Regional Seas Programme should develop in future.

An OSPAR workshop on the improvement of the definitions of habitats on the OSPAR List was held in Bergen. The exercise was useful but more work is needed to cover the significant workload.

**November 2011:** A workshop on Multi-Disciplinary Case Studies of Maritime Spatial Planning to demonstrate how HELCOM/VASAB, OSPAR, and ICES could contribute and cooperate to the further development of the process of ecosystem-based marine spatial planning took place in Lisbon. A novel game, MSP Challenge 2011, was used to identify the main scientific, planning and governance challenges facing development of MSP plans.

An OSPAR workshop on MSFD biodiversity descriptors was hosted by the Netherlands. The three-day workshop brought together 66 technical and policy experts from nine Contracting Parties. Their task was to undertake a comparison and analysis of indicators and associated targets for MSFD biodiversity descriptors 1, 2, 4 and 6 between OSPAR Contracting Parties involved in the implementation of the MSFD and identify common indicators.

**January 2012:** An OSPAR workshop to identify options and ways forward in the theoretical research into the possible effects of regular platform lighting on specific bird populations was held in London.

The second informal meeting of competent authorities on the management of selected areas in ABNJ in the North-East Atlantic (Madeira process) in Paris was productive and a draft guideline for the purposes of developing a joint management plan was developed.

The Bonn Agreement BE-AWARE project was launched to produce an area-wide risk assessment with respect to oil and hazardous and noxious substances for the Greater North Sea and its wider approaches. Collaboration with OSPAR on risks posed by other human uses and marine spatial planning is envisaged.

The United Nations Environment Programme held its 3rd Intergovernmental Review of the Global Programme of Action in Manila. On behalf of OSPAR, the Executive Secretary mediated a session on the effectiveness of Regional Seas Conventions with respect to tackling land-based sources of marine pollution especially nutrients, wastewater and marine litter.

**February 2012:** The MAIA Project (Marine Protected Areas in the Atlantic Arc) explained their analysis of the management documents and implementation of measures at an excellent side event during BDC. The OSPAR Secretariat was invited to explain how this was being developed for MPAs in ABNJ at an international workshop in Galicia, Spain in June.

**March 2012:** The OSPAR Secretariat waved goodbye to New Court and relocated on the 9th floor at Victoria House.

**May 2012:** OSPAR elaborated an OSPAR Science (needs) Agenda with a 2018 time horizon

**June 2012:** Happy 20th anniversary OSPAR. In a special 20-year anniversary speech Prof. Dr. Töpfer, Germany, congratulated OSPAR at its annual meeting for having led the way in defining the ecosystem approach, helping to inspire the EU MSFD and for now being responsible for a significant network of marine protected areas.

And congratulations to Prof Colin Moffat who was selected to carry the Olympic torch through Aberdeen in recognition for his humanitarian and inspiring work with the British Red Cross. We are very privileged to be associated with him.



©Colin Moffat

## 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 Union, 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 Mr Gert Verreet and Mr John Mouat replaced Ms Andrea Weiss and Mr Sebastian Unger as Deputy Secretaries. Mr Chris Moulton was recruited as Data Analyst.

## Committee Chairs in 2011/12

### Vice-Chair of the OSPAR Commission

Mr Richard Moxon (United Kingdom)

The following individuals chaired OSPAR Strategy Committees and Working Groups during the period 2011/12.

### Biodiversity Committee (BDC)

Mr John Clorley (United Kingdom)

### Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA)

Mr Lex W A Oosterbaan (The Netherlands)

### Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee (HASEC)

Mr Reinier Goud (The Netherlands)

### Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Committee (OIC)

Mr Kevin O'Carroll (United Kingdom)

### Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC)

Dr Justin Gwynn (Norway)

### Working Group on Inputs to the Marine Environment (INPUT)

Assoc. Professor Berit Arheimer (Sweden)

### Working Group on Monitoring and on Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (MIME)

Mr Martin Mørk Larsen (Denmark)

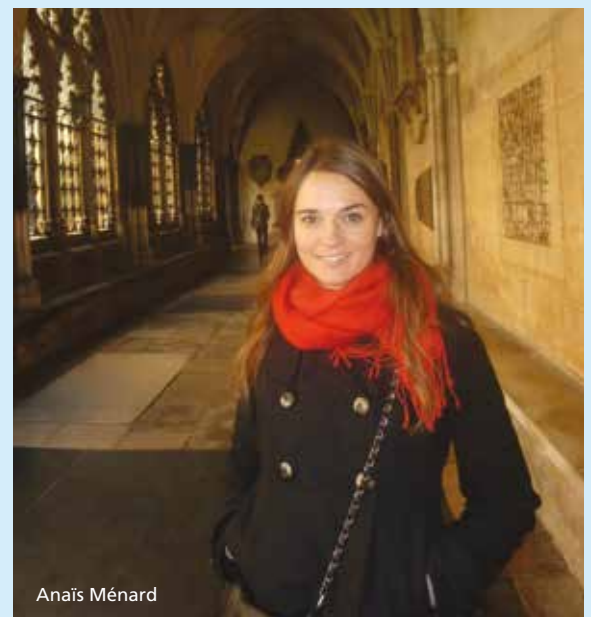
### North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors (NSN)

Captain Jeremy Smart (United Kingdom)

## Internship

During 2011/12, OSPAR hosted one student, Anaïs Ménard, an environmental law student from France.

Anaïs worked primarily on biodiversity protection issues including aspects related to measures to protect species and habitats on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (drafting recommendations for seahorses and zostera beds), on Ecological Quality Objectives established to readily determine the state of the marine environment using specific biotic indices and on the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs); in particular, aspects associated with MPAs in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction.



## Reports adopted by OSPAR 2012 for publication

Reports adopted by OSPAR 2012 can be downloaded from the OSPAR website at [www.ospar.org](http://www.ospar.org) once they are published.

### Implementation Reporting

Overview assessment of implementation reporting on:

- PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive Discharges
- OSPAR Recommendation 2003/5 to promote the use and implementation of environmental management systems by the offshore industry

### Biodiversity

Annual report on dumping of wastes or other matter at sea in 2010

OSPAR database on offshore wind-farms: Data 2011 (Updated)

Report of the Joint HELCOM/VASAB, OSPAR and ICES Workshop on Multi-Disciplinary Case Studies of Maritime Spatial Planning (WKMCMSP)

Report on OSPAR workshop on MSFD biodiversity descriptors: comparison of targets and associated indicators

Background document on the Ecological Quality Objective (EcoQO) on Seabird Population Trends

Background Document for Charlie Gibbs North High Seas Marine Protected Area

2011 Status Report on the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas

MSFD Advice Manual and Background Document on Biodiversity

MSFD Advice document on Good environmental status - Descriptor 7: Hydrographical conditions

MSFD Advice document on Good environmental status - Descriptor 10: Marine Litter

MSFD Advice Manual and Background document on Good environmental status - Descriptor 11: Underwater noise

### Hazardous Substances

Review Statement for the OSPAR Background Document on Trifluralin

Mercury losses from the Chlor-alkali industry in 2010

MSFD Advice Document on Good environmental status - Descriptor 8: Contaminants

### Monitoring and Assessment

CEMP 2011 assessment report

Comprehensive Atmospheric Monitoring Programme: Deposition of air pollutants around the North Sea and the North-East Atlantic in 2010

Riverine Inputs and Direct Discharges to Convention Waters: OSPAR Contracting Parties' RID 2010 Data Report

Background documents and technical annexes for biological effects monitoring

### Offshore Oil and Gas

Annual report on discharges, spills and emissions from offshore oil and gas installations in 2009, including the assessment of data reported in 2008 and 2009

Annual report on discharges, spills and emissions from offshore oil and gas installations in 2010

Report of the OSPAR Workshop on research into possible effects of regular platform lighting on specific bird populations

### Radioactive Substances

Annual report on liquid discharges from nuclear installations in 2010

Annual report on discharges of radionuclides from the non-nuclear sectors in 2010

Definition of Radiological Environmental Assessment Criteria for the OSPAR Convention

### Eutrophication

MSFD Advice Manual and Background document on Good environmental status - Descriptor 5: Eutrophication

### General

'Finding common ground' - Towards regional coherence in implementing the Marine Strategy

Framework Directive in the North-East Atlantic region through the work of the OSPAR Commission

Annual report of the OSPAR Commission 2011/12

Rapport annuel de la Commission OSPAR 2011/12

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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ISBN 978-1-909159-00-6

Publication Number: 579/2012

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

