



**OSPAR  
COMMISSION**

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



# Overview of 2013-2014 by the Chairman and Executive Secretary

OSPAR has continued over the last year to promote its special perspectives as Regional Convention taking forward its work, as set out in the North East Atlantic Environment Strategy. The key products of this have been the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter and new Recommendations on Species and Habitats, as well as a new programme for joint assessment and monitoring. Both specific products and more routine work have been developed, despite increasing work pressures, under the OSPAR 'Contracting Party led' philosophy. This way of working resonates with collaborating organisations and stakeholders as it clearly demonstrates how Contracting Parties lead the process and own OSPAR's outputs.

## Achievements

OSPAR this year adopted an OSPAR Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Marine Litter. This was a major output of the Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA). Work by Contracting Parties under German and Netherlands leadership, with close involvement of stakeholders, culminated in a finalised RAP with a detailed implementation plan which should also form an input to national measures on marine litter to be developed by relevant Contracting Parties for the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

This year has seen continued partnership working with HELCOM Maritime in the development and adoption of joint guidelines on the granting of exemptions from the International Maritime Organization (IMO)'s Ballast Water Management Convention. These were adopted at the HELCOM ministerial in October 2013. Such activity highlights OSPAR's ability to work with neighbouring Regional Seas Conventions and in the practical regional application of regulation developed under the competence of another organisation (the IMO in this case). The focus of this work has now moved to the practical implementation of the guidelines, with the convention due to enter into force within the next few years.

OSPAR 2013, by use of an extraordinary meeting at the end of last year, was able to agree a suite of 12 Recommendations to protect and conserve species and habitats on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats. This was accompanied by a Statement on the Common Understanding of the Recommendations on Species and Habitats.

OSPAR 2014 was able to adopt a further 16 Recommendations. However OSPAR recognised the need to turn the recommendations into a practical reality through a dedicated OSPAR group focused on implementation, for which it agreed Terms of Reference.

For some OSPAR Committees this year's progress reflected more regular activities to deliver the normal cycle of assessments. The Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee (HASEC), for instance took forward a trial of guidelines for integrating chemical and biological effects monitoring and assessment. Also of note this year was HASEC's investigation of options related to the improvement of the Riverine Inputs and Direct Discharges database. This work included consideration of opportunities for close cooperation with HELCOM. This highlights continued exploration of how we can work closely with our neighbouring regional seas - the Barcelona Convention and HELCOM. Sometimes the detail of differences between activities and systems practised in HELCOM, Barcelona and OSPAR conventions can in practice stand in the way of cross-regional join up. However this is not stopping us working together and we are looking to replicate the successful instances where we are joining up approaches, such as on biodiversity indicators for birds and on a shared ICES databases.

The Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) continued its developments on regular work, including on practical application of the definitions of "discharges associated with operational activities" and "discharges associated with historical or legacy wastes" adopted at RSC 2013. Differentiation between such discharges will be important where the magnitude of discharges associated with the recovery of historical or legacy wastes is expected to become prominent in the future.

In a new departure, RSC and the Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) held a joint meeting to cover their overlapping interests on Naturally Occurring Radioactive Materials (NORM). They agreed a division of focus between RSC on monitoring and assessment of background levels and produced water discharges and OIC focusing on measures to address any sources relevant to their remit. In addition, RSC is liaising with the London Convention and its Protocol on the issue of historic deep sea disposal of radioactive wastes in the North-East Atlantic.



OIC considered how the OSPAR Harmonised Mandatory Control System (HMCS) could be brought into line with the EU REACH Regulation. Key outcomes included a thorough review of the OSPAR PLONOR<sup>1</sup> List, the OSPAR Guidelines for completing the Harmonised Offshore Chemical Notification Format (HOCNF) and adoption of OSPAR Recommendation 2014/18 amending Recommendation 2010/3 on HOCNF.

## Cross-Cutting Issues

OSPAR is continuing to develop its role to support Contracting Parties which are EU Member States in regional cooperation for coherence and coordination under the EU MSFD and its Common Implementation Strategy. OSPAR further refined its suite of common indicators. Indicators on impulsive noise, seabed litter and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) in biota were adopted and further work initiated on developing ambient noise monitoring. Common indicators for biodiversity were also amended and added to, with further development of plans for their monitoring and assessment. OSPAR also adopted common documentation on monitoring and furthered plans for a 2017 OSPAR intermediate assessment to assist Contracting Parties which need to produce assessments for the MSFD in 2018.

OSPAR 2014 formally adopted the Collective Arrangement with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) on cooperation on Marine Protected Areas in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction. This is the sign of the ever more practical cooperation OSPAR is developing across sectors operating in our oceans. OSPAR will be starting to implement the Arrangement with NEAFC in practical terms, while working on extending the Arrangement to other sectoral/ international organisations.

OSPAR 2014 discussed issues related to the Arctic and agreed to explore potential consideration of Arctic issues by its Committees, where appropriate, in 2015.

OSPAR Contracting Parties are continuing their consultations concerning the submission of the details of areas that meet the scientific criteria for Ecologically or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSAs) of the Convention on Biodiversity. Nevertheless OSPAR was able to reflect on a successful joint process with NEAFC that overcame differences in organisational perspectives in developing and peer-reviewing the information on these areas.

Underlying all OSPAR's processes are science, monitoring and assessment. OSPAR this year adopted a new Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme to deliver OSPAR's assessments, including those to be used for the MSFD. The OSPAR Data and Information Management System which underpins such assessments started its build phase this year. The OSPAR Commission meeting also adopted a Science Agenda which sets out OSPAR's top evidence needs and will act as a clear focus for scientists and scientific organisations to develop knowledge to support our work.

## Management

OSPAR's 2013/14 programme of work has been delivered under what seems an ever compressed working agenda, set against competing pressures for limited resources. Nevertheless, Contracting Parties, Observers and the Secretariat have shown the commitment to work together to develop quality-products and the willingness to seek compromise to enable agreement on plans and recommendations. Last year OSPAR reflected on late meeting documents and general consideration of efficiency of meeting arrangements. I am happy to report that this year there has been much better performance in terms of meeting efficiency. This included better coordination on content and timing of meetings with other organisations such as the European Union and ICES. Other improvements include new agreements to join up certain expert groups and hold back-to-back meetings with other regional seas. Webex and other virtual meetings are also increasingly being used as part of the process to cut down costs in both time and money.

**Mr Victor Escobar Paredes**  
Chairman



**Dr Darius Campbell**  
Executive Secretary



<sup>1</sup>OSPAR List of substances used and discharged offshore which are considered to pose little or no risk to the environment (PLONOR)

## Coordination Group (CoG)

The Coordination Group (CoG) in OSPAR meets to discuss issues that cross the thematic committees' agendas. Its aim is to ensure more joined up and strategic approaches within OSPAR. This is of particular importance for the MSFD and in considering other cross-cutting issues such as climate change and the Arctic. Much of its decisions in the last year are reflected in the work streams on MSFD, the JAMP and the Science Agenda. In Addition, CoG discussed the ecosystem approach, re-emphasising potential joint working with ICES and underlining the importance of socio-economic analysis. Work initiated this year to be considered by CoG in due course includes widening the Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme from pollutants to all OSPAR environmental monitoring.

## Biodiversity

### *Biodiversity and Ecosystems Strategy*

*Seeks to protect and conserve the ecosystems and the biological diversity of the OSPAR 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.*

Under the watchful eye of the Biodiversity Committee (BDC) Chair, John Clorley, 2013/2014 has seen a major step forward in the work to protect species and habitats at risk in the OSPAR maritime area. A total of 28 new Recommendations were adopted, meaning that now measures have been adopted for over 80% of the species and habitats that were listed against the Texel-Faial criteria in 2008 because of concerns that they were under threat and/or in decline. You can find out more about the Recommendations in a special feature on page 8.

The next challenge will be the coordinated implementation of the actions and measures that have been recommended. In recognition of this, a new intersessional group has been established under BDC called ICG-POSH (Protection Of Species and Habitats). This group will report to both BDC and EIHA and will begin its work in the next meeting cycle.

© Chris Moulton



Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are one of the management approaches used to help protect biodiversity and ecosystem function. The OSPAR MPA Network now covers over 5% of the OSPAR maritime area, with over 10% cover in at least one of the OSPAR Regions. In line with the Convention on Biological Diversity target, OSPAR's ambitions go beyond just a measure of area covered, but also to the requirement that the network makes sense from an ecological perspective, and is well managed. Under the leadership of France, Germany and Sweden, work has begun to be able to understand and assess the management that has been put in place, and whether this is sufficient. This has been an important first step towards the 2016 target to achieve a well-managed MPA network. The work to develop and test biodiversity indicators that will support the implementation of the MSFD at the regional scale continued over the year. Over 130 experts have now been nominated from across the Contracting Parties to contribute to this joint effort, with the results of the first tests due in the coming year.

### Environmental Impacts of Human Activities

During the 2013/2014 meeting cycle, under the proactive Chairmanship of Lex Oosterbaan, one of the key actions undertaken by EIHA was the development of the OSPAR Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter. The development work was led by Stefanie Werner of Germany and included a series of workshops to refine the draft plan before its final approval at the OSPAR Commission Meeting in Cascais, Portugal. The plan covers actions to reduce the input of litter into the marine environment at sea and from land, as well as removing it where possible.

Work on regional activities to support the implementation of the MSFD also continued with the further development of common indicators on both underwater noise and marine litter, including outlining of technical specifications. Both the indicator on seabed litter and the indicator on impulsive noise were agreed as OSPAR Common indicators.

OSPAR has also been actively cooperating with HELCOM in preparing for the entry into force of the International Maritime Organisations Ballast Water Management Convention. One of the key successes of the Joint Task Group has been the development of an online decision support tool for granting exemptions to the Convention based on risk assessment and harbour monitoring outlined in the joint OSPAR/HELCOM guidelines. This tool can be used by both the coastal administrations and shipping companies to determine if an exemption is likely or not.



Following a lengthy revision process EIHA also agreed Guidelines for the Management of Dredged Material at Sea, including giving more consideration to the potential beneficial uses of dredged material. Finally the committee has also started to focus on the potential impacts of deep sea mineral extraction in the North East Atlantic and has been actively engaging with the MIDAS project ([www.eu-midas.net/project](http://www.eu-midas.net/project)) which will investigate the possible environmental effects.



## Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication

### *Hazardous Substances Strategy*

*Seeks to prevent pollution of the OSPAR 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.*

HASEC's results from the latest assessment in Monitoring and on Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (MIME) under the lead of Vice-Chairman, Martin Mørk Larsen, on the imposex effect of trybutylin (TBT) on marine snails suggest that "Improvement was detected at >80% of the common monitoring sites with non-improvement shown at 16% of locations, while at 4% of sites the status is at background and continues to be stable so overall improvement is clearly evident". This and other contaminants and biological effects data from the Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP) will be used for the implementation of the agreed OSPAR 'common indicators' for the MSFD, including as an addition in 2014: PAH in non-fish biota for Regions II, III and IV. The automated annual CEMP roll-over assessment, under the lead of Rob Fryer, and the online presentation of its results on the OSPAR website again ran smoothly. The Riverine Inputs and Direct Discharges Monitoring Programme (RID) was updated by INPUT's task group under the lead of Eva Skarbovik and this long-term monitoring of loads of nutrients and contaminants to the sea will also provide data for common indicators and assessments, such as that of the eutrophication status of the maritime area.

Eutrophication experts in OSPAR are making preparations for the next application of the Common Procedure for the Identification of the Eutrophication Status of the Maritime Area, following the official update of the Procedure by OSPAR in 2013. The assessment will also address the eutrophication-related MSFD common indicators following their discussion at a workshop in Paris in February 2014, chaired by Uli Claussen and Wanda Zevenboom.

Particular attention was attributed to tools for trend assessment and confidence rating. It will be important that on going and future data handling at the OSPAR level is paid attention to in order to secure an efficient data flow and good links between the assessment results and the data that underpin them.

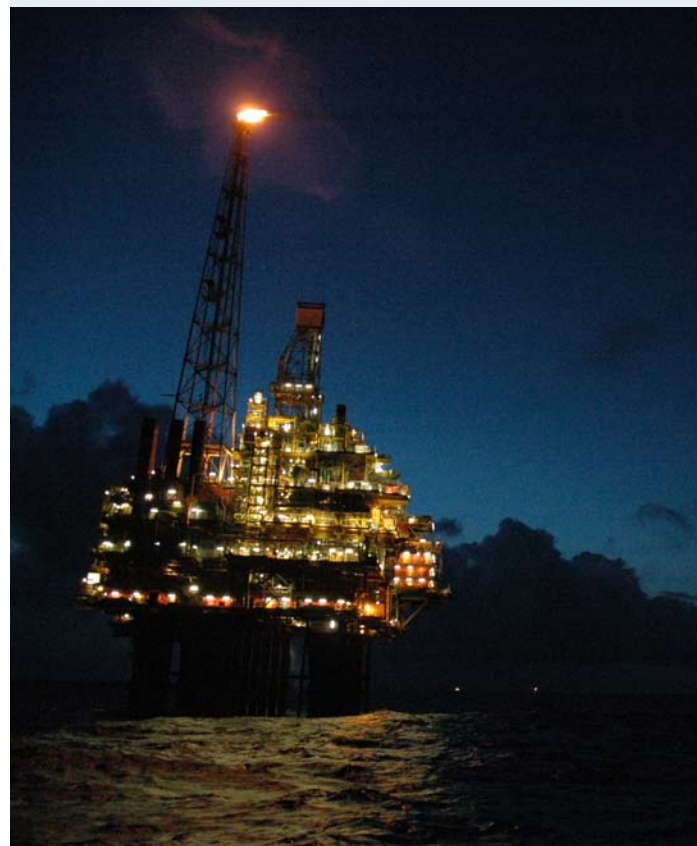
HASEC adopted draft JAMP Guidelines for Monitoring Chemical Aspects of Ocean Acidification and consequently amended the pre-CEMP for these parameters based on advice from the Joint OSPAR-ICES Study Group on Ocean Acidification with Evin McGovern as a co-chair.

The work of HASEC relies on its established and dedicated network of professionals. In 2013/14 some individuals particularly helped the process along. In OSPAR's MIME working group, Chairman Thomas Maes made a significant contribution at the same time as managing a full-time job and challenging microplastics PhD research. Lars Sonesten from Sweden revitalised the fortunes of OSPAR's INPUT working group on inputs of nutrients and contaminants which is vital to quantifying related pressure indicators.

## Offshore Oil & Gas Industry

### *Offshore Oil & Gas Industry Strategy*

*Sets the objective of preventing and eliminating pollution and taking the necessary measures to protect the OSPAR 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.*



Work at expert level, skilfully led by Derek Saward, has resulted in the adoption of two key products - revised OSPAR Guidelines for completing the Harmonised Offshore Chemical Notification Format (HOCNF), and a new OSPAR Recommendation amending OSPAR Recommendation 2010/3 on HOCNF. This adds to the thorough review of the OSPAR PLONOR List.

Regulation of offshore chemicals is an active area of work for OIC. In practice this means that OIC has built up a strong network of experts with well-established procedures to respond effectively to REACH developments.

Another key expert group is the OIC Expert Assessment Panel, which under the active lead of Andrew Taylor, delivers the annual OIC reports on discharges, spills, and emissions, as well as a number of specific assessments.

There has been a lot of focus this year on offshore developments in the Arctic, with OIC concluding that *“there is currently no need for a new OSPAR measure specifically designed for the Arctic part of [OSPAR] Region I”*. The topic however is kept on the OIC Agenda, with arrangements in place to articulate closer cooperation with the Arctic Council.

Work has continued on the possible effects of regular platform lighting on birds, including specific preparations for further advancement in this field under the lead of Germany and the Netherlands.

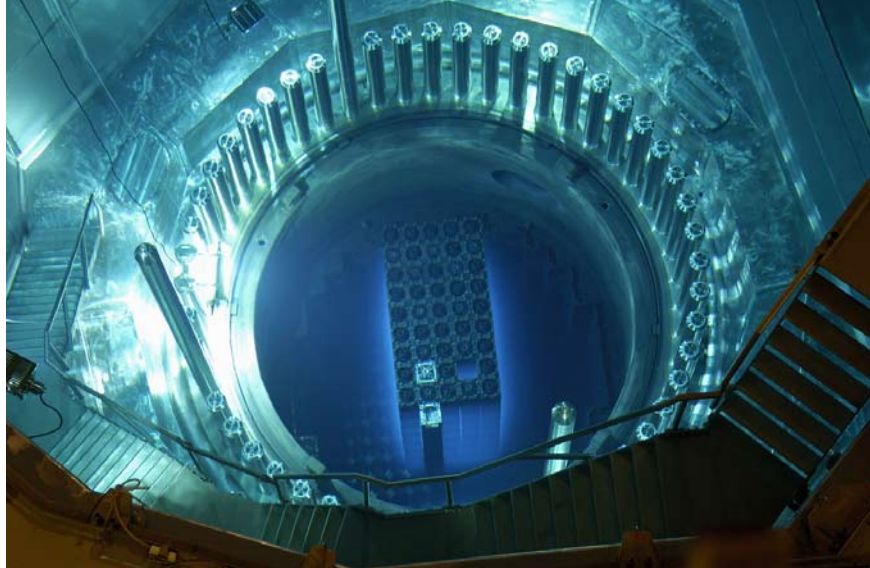
During this year, OIC has strengthened cooperation with RSC on the common area of Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM). Cooperation with the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme and REMPEC<sup>2</sup> has also driven OIC activity.

## Radioactive Substances

### *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.*

RSC has taken important steps to improve the reporting of discharges data from the nuclear sector. Building on expert level work, reporting formats have been extensively revised to enable OSPAR countries to differentiate between operational and exceptional discharges when reporting on radioactive substances associated with the nuclear sector. This represents



a clear benefit to OSPAR and the public in terms of transparency and assisting understanding of the sources of discharges.

The completion of work on “historical and legacy wastes” represents the culmination of a process that started in 2009 with the adoption of the Consensus on the Bremen Issues. Throughout these years, RSC experts have been skilfully led by convenors Franz Cartier and Stuart Page, making it possible to reach an agreement in this challenging area of work.

Thanks to the RSC Expert Assessment Panel (EAP), successfully led by Henning Natvig, another major achievement this year has been the adoption for the oil and gas subsector of indicator radionuclides Radium-226 and Radium-228, for the period 2005-2011 as the baseline period against which progress towards the objective of the OSPAR Radioactive Substances Strategy is evaluated.

Work has continued at RSC expert group level to evaluate whether additional concentrations in the marine environment above historic levels are close to zero and to demonstrate the application of the methodology proposed by the International Atomic Energy Agency for defining radiological environmental assessment criteria for the OSPAR Commission.

During this year, RSC has deepened cooperation with OIC, with the EAPs of the two Committees holding joint meetings to discuss Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM) issues.

RSC is chaired by Justin Gwynn from Norway. In his four years as chair he has given RSC new impetus by making the committee more responsive to the evolving OSPAR arena. His outcomes-based approach has helped resolve long-term issues such as the approach to the definition and reporting of exceptional discharges from the nuclear sector and the establishment of a baseline period for assessing trends in discharges from the non-nuclear sector. Under his chairmanship, experts groups have evolved to more focused, supportive and self-sufficient structures, and the RSC agenda has been modernised with priorities for the next five years.

<sup>2</sup> The Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)



# OSPAR Recommendations

## Species and Habitats

The protection of species and habitats at risk in the North-East Atlantic is a core commitment in the Convention. To help establish priorities in OSPAR's work, Contracting Parties agreed a List in 2003 (extended in 2008) to include 42 species and 16 habitats that were assessed to be either threatened and/or declining. Once identified as being at risk, it was a priority to agree actions and measures that could be put in place to alleviate the threats and improve the status of these ecological features. By 2013, 20 Recommendations for such measures had been adopted. In 2013/2014 this increased to 48, with 28 new recommendations adopted this year. Steps were also taken to ensure targeted measures can be agreed for the remaining species and habitats on the List for which Recommendations on protection measures have not yet been made. Here we present the range of biodiversity that will be protected by these latest commitments, including birds, fish, mammals and invertebrates, shallow and deep sea habitats to be found from all over the OSPAR Maritime Area. Some are well known to us as being very special and very rare, like the blue whale or the White Cliffs of Dover (otherwise known as a littoral chalk community). Others like cod, have successful populations in some OSPAR Regions, but not in others. Some of the deep sea species and habitats are much more elusive.

Common actions to be taken across the species and habitats include improvements in the awareness of their status amongst those who live and work around and on the seas, increasing knowledge and improving the way this information is fed back into decision making – whether this is within OSPAR or whether it is to be brought to the attention of other organisations that have responsibilities for management in the oceans.



**Invertebrates:** A particularly special inhabitant of our region that has been known to live over 500 years old and particularly sensitive to fishing pressures and damage to habitat.

- a. The ocean quahog - Region II;



**Fish:** This group includes deep sea sharks, rays, and fish that spend at least part of their lives in the OSPAR Maritime Area. The role of other organisations is particularly important in addressing the key threats faced by these species and recognised in the actions recommended.

- a. Common/ European sturgeon - Regions II and IV;
- b. Spurdog – across all OSPAR regions;
- c. Gulper shark in Regions IV and V;
- d. Leafscale gulper shark – across all OSPAR regions;
- e. Portuguese dogfish – across all OSPAR regions;
- f. Porbeagle shark – across all OSPAR regions;
- g. Spotted ray - Regions II, III, IV and V;
- h. Thornback ray - across all OSPAR regions;
- i. Cod - Regions II and III;
- j. European eel - Regions I, II, III and IV;



**Marine Mammals:** The three species of whale listed were severely depleted by commercial whaling up to the 1960s. Due to the rarity and distances travelled by these whales, there is still much to be done to increase our understanding of their ecology, and the pressures from human activities – such as noise.

- a. Bowhead whale - Region I;
- b. North Atlantic blue whale – across all OSPAR regions;
- c. Northern right whale;
- d. Harbour porpoise in Regions II and III;





**Birds:** Both of these bird species have very specific population ranges. Despite being found at almost opposite ends of the OSPAR Maritime Area, they share a high sensitivity to oil on the surface of the sea. Actions recommended include preventing oil pollution.

- a. Iberian gull - Region IV;
- b. Steller's eider - Region I;



**Reptiles:** The North-East Atlantic provides foraging grounds for these two species of turtle. Both species can confuse plastic bags for food. Implementation of the Recommendations for the turtles is also closely linked to the work of the OSPAR Regional Action Plan on marine litter.

- a. Leatherback turtle— across all OSPAR regions;
- b. Loggerhead turtle - Regions IV and V;



**Shallow water habitats:** The shallow shelf seas of the OSPAR Maritime Area are intensely utilised for a number of human activities, as well as being home to habitats that provide us with a wide range of ecosystem services – nursery grounds for commercial fish, removing nutrients from the water, removing particulate matter, dissipating wave energy – are just a few. The actions included for the protection of shallow water habitats include the introduction of legislation to protect the habitat and to intensify actions to reduce the pressures from human activities.

- a. Cymodocea meadows - Region IV;
- b. Maerl beds - Region III;
- c. Littoral chalk communities - Region II;
- d. *Sabellaria spinulosa* reefs - Regions II and III;
- e. *Modiolus modiolus* beds – across all OSPAR regions;
- f. *Ostrea edulis* - Region II and *Ostrea edulis* beds - Regions II, III and IV;



**Deepwater habitats:** Bringing together existing knowledge of these remote deep water habitats, their status, dynamics and functioning, as well as improving this knowledge, will be an important contribution to their protection.

- a. Seamounts - Regions I, IV and V;
- b. Carbonate mounds in Region V;
- c. Hydrothermal vents/fields occurring on oceanic ridges in Region V.



## Marine Strategy Framework Directive Cooperation

The OSPAR coordination role for the EU Member States that implement the MSFD resulted, at OSPAR 2013, in an agreement on common indicators and candidate indicators. Over 2013/14, joint documentation on OSPAR monitoring was collated, while experts in a range of OSPAR groups continued to make progress towards the first assessments of common indicators. Existing monitoring parameters, as well as new ones, will contribute to those indicators. In this process, limitations in scientific knowledge and/or 'testing experience' have to be overcome quickly so that the indicators can deliver useful assessment results for inclusion in the OSPAR Intermediate Assessment 2017. While EU Member States were finalising their MSFD monitoring programmes (by July 2014), OSPAR discussions also addressed regional coordination issues related to the MSFD Programmes of Measures.

*To clarify what OSPAR can do, Contracting Parties agreed that the regional coordination action in OSPAR can be described in the following three categories:*

- (1) the exchange of information and coordination of measures that are primarily of national concern and responsibility;*
- (2) the development of measures at regional level (e.g. through OSPAR decisions or recommendations) with a focus on large-scale, widespread and trans-boundary issues. This form of coordination is central to the establishment of an OSPAR Regional Action Plan, as has been adopted for marine litter;*
- (3) the development of joint proposals for measures that are required to achieve GES but are in the competence of the EU or international authorities (such as river basins and/or the International Maritime Organization but excluding Regional Sea Conventions) and agreement of concerted actions of Contracting Parties to approach those bodies/authorities through OSPAR.*

OSPAR 2014 noted that it may be necessary to develop additional measures following the assessment of common biodiversity indicators, and that a Regional Action Plan on underwater noise could be considered after 2017. For the latter, there was scope for cooperation with HELCOM.

The outcome of the European Commission's 'Article 12 assessment' of Member States' reporting of actions taken under the MSFD so far will be taken into account in further work under OSPAR. The OSPAR 2014 meeting agreed that a Regional Plan would be drafted for the coordination of actions to pursue coherence and to implement agreements on follow-up of the 'Article 12 assessment'.

## North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors

Under the chairmanship of Ann Jakobsen, the North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors (NSN) continues its work to improve the enforcement of internationally agreed regulations preventing pollution from ships in the North Sea. This year, NSN has created a purpose built database on sea pollution offences cases and started to update the North Sea Manual on Oil Pollution Offences. Cooperation has been intensified with EMSA and the Network of Prosecutors on Environmental Crime in the Baltic Sea Region.





© Marine Photobank

## OSPAR Science Agenda

To be effective, the work of OSPAR needs to be science-based. OSPAR has a long standing partnership with the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) to tap into its scientific advice. The OSPAR Science Agenda, a first version of which was adopted by OSPAR 2014, is a novel document signalling OSPAR's specific science needs to a wider community of stakeholders.

The Science Agenda contains the priority needs that were identified by Contracting Parties, especially in the context of the coordination for the implementation of the MSFD. It also reflects a number of collective needs identified through the EU STAGES project to which OSPAR contributed. OSPAR can therefore act as a platform for co-ordination of scientific programmes for policy advice at the level of regions and sub-regions. Setting the agenda is part of that process. Further steps will include the formulation of project proposals on the basis of the most pressing scientific needs.

## OSPAR Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme

All OSPAR Committees became responsible for their monitoring and assessment activities in 2010. OSPAR 2013 adopted a series of 'common indicators' as the main component of OSPAR monitoring and assessment work. At this time an intention was expressed that these indicators would produce assessment results by 2017 for use in updating the national MSFD marine assessments in 2018. OSPAR 2014 has now also adopted an entirely revised Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP).

The new 2014-2021 version reflects all target outputs across all Committees. The new JAMP builds on the achievements of the JAMP 2010-2014 and emphasises the point that 'monitoring and assessment' are undertaken as a support to policy requirements, to inform decision making. The JAMP paves the way towards the next OSPAR Quality Status Report (QSR). An Intersessional Correspondence Group under the Coordination Group will be tasked with technical preparations for the flagship 'Intermediate Assessment 2017' and the next QSR.





© Eleanor Partridge/Marine Photobank



© Antoine Desbordes/Marine Photobank

© Fredrik Myhre, Hjelp Havets HaierMarine Photobank



## Marine Litter Regional Action Plan

The OSPAR Ministers highlighted in Bergen in 2010 “...that quantities of litter in many areas of the North-East Atlantic are unacceptable, and therefore we will continue to develop reduction measures and targets, taking into consideration an ambitious target resulting in a reduction in 2020.” In order to fulfil this aim and to contribute to the regional implementation of the MSFD, OSPAR agreed to develop a Regional Action Plan (RAP) to tackle marine litter and reduce its impact on the marine environment.

Impetus was given to the development of the RAP by the International Conference on Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in European Seas, which was organised by Germany and the EU in Berlin, Germany, in 2013. The OSPAR RAP was elaborated through a series of workshops, also under the lead of Germany, which included input from Contracting Parties, experts from industry, academics and NGO’s and the dedicated OSPAR intersessional correspondence group on marine litter. It was adopted at OSPAR 2014 in Cascais, Portugal to contribute to the further protection and conservation of the ecosystems and biological diversity of the North-East-Atlantic.

The main objectives of the plan are to prevent and reduce marine litter pollution in the North-East Atlantic and to remove litter from the marine environment where practical and feasible. These objectives include reducing the impact on marine species, habitats, human health and safety and reducing the socioeconomic costs marine litter causes. As well as addressing the Ministerial commitments, the plan is also crucial to the protection of species such as Loggerhead and Leatherback turtles which are susceptible to ingesting marine litter and plastic bags, and both of which are on the OSPAR List of threatened and/or declining species. Other species are frequently subject to entanglement which can threaten entire populations. An example is the decline of deep water sharks in the North Atlantic which has been linked to ghost fishing.



In general, the actions are divided into four themes to

- a) combat land-based sources,
- b) combat sea-based sources,
- c) remove existing litter from the marine environment and
- d) ensure outreach and education on marine litter.

The implementation of the plan will take place over a number of years and has two categories of actions: those that will be taken collectively within OSPAR and those that should be implemented nationally. As marine litter has such diffuse sources, it is essential that a wide range of stakeholders are involved in the implementation of the plan as not all measures fall within the competence of OSPAR.

Each action in the plan will be taken forward by a lead OSPAR country or countries, which will undertake an assessment before proposing the appropriate measures to reduce litter from that source. As part of the implementation process OSPAR will also develop and agree regionally coordinated targets linked to relevant actions as listed in the plan, from 2015. This will monitor the implementation of the plan and ensure that the momentum is maintained so that, by 2020, we can see a clear reduction in the quantities of litter in the North-East Atlantic, ensuring that marine litter does not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment.



© David Cayless/Marine Photobank



© Katrin Baerwald/Marine Photobank



© Marine Photobank



© Malik Naumann/Marine Photobank



## Implementation phase of the OSPAR data and information management system

Following last year's OSPAR Commission meeting where the development of the OSPAR Data and Information Management System (ODIMS) was endorsed, the implementation phase has now begun. Phase 7 – development of the ODIMS tool is on track for completion mid-2016 and development will continue in parallel with the further implementation of the OSPAR Data and Information Management Strategy.

### The OSPAR Data and Information Management Strategy Phases

1. To understand what the data and information management needs and expectations are for OSPAR
2. To create a standard set of reference files for use across OSPAR (e.g. a standard shapefile for the OSPAR Maritime Area)
3. To develop OSPAR data standards (drawing on existing standards where these exist) to make analyses that require integration more feasible
4. To ensure all data sets have adequate metadata and that this complies with INSPIRE so that OSPAR's data is readily discoverable and users can understand what it is they are using
5. That OSPAR data is available online, according to the data policy
6. To put in place arrangements for sharing of data and its responsible use
7. Development of a web interface tool that will increase the visibility, accessibility and use of OSPAR's data
8. To establish transformation pathways to create products in a form that is useful for decision makers
9. Sustainable funding: looking after data will need resources over the long term

ODIMS will play a key role in delivering most elements of the ODIM Strategy and will actively enhance the discoverability, accessibility and usefulness of the data that OSPAR Contracting Parties spend a great deal of time and effort collecting. The map interface will be user-friendly, allowing intuitive navigation around OSPAR's data. ODIMS will also handle the underlying data from assessments, thus enhancing discoverability, whilst increasing the transparency of assessments and enabling repeatability of analysis.

© Thomas Hallermann/Marine Photobank





## Year in Brief

### July 2013

The Executive Secretary gave a presentation on OSPAR's perspectives on Ocean Acidification at the second international workshop of the Global Ocean Acidification Observing Network, St Andrews, Scotland.

OSPAR Deputy Secretary Gert Verreet acted as Vice Chair at JPI Oceans Strategic Advisory Board. JPI Oceans is a form of cooperation on R&D between its Member States which aims to increase critical mass. It provides a forum for articulating OSPAR Science needs.

### August 2013

The Executive Secretary visited HELCOM to discuss exchange of information and experience with a view to increasing opportunities for cooperation over the coming years.

The Executive Secretary presented at the International River Commissions Secretariat meeting. He highlighted common interests such as the Water Framework Directive, litter and migratory species. This meeting also provided an opportunity to keep up to date with developments in several different River Commissions with relevance to the North East Atlantic.

Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) and the European Commission held a workshop on Offshore Drilling in Haifa where Deputy Secretary Luisa Rodriguez-Lucas gave a presentation on OSPAR regulation of offshore oil and gas activities.

### September 2013

Deputy Secretary John Mouat attended a STAGES Project Workshop on pressures and their impacts on marine ecosystems to discuss information on OSPAR research needs for noise and litter. STAGES is a coordination and support action, which has received funding from the European Union under the Seventh Framework Programme of Cooperation (FP7; Food, Agriculture and Fisheries). The project consortium represents a broad constituency of MSFD stakeholders, and national organisations with responsibility to support research and provide advice on MSFD at Member State level.

The UNEP Regional Seas Inter-Secretariat meeting was held in Jamaica. The Executive Secretary gave an update on OSPAR as well as presenting OSPAR's performance against UNEP Regional Seas Strategic Directions.

### October 2013

Vice Chair, Laura Piriz represented OSPAR at the HELCOM Ministerial meeting in Copenhagen. HELCOM (Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission - Helsinki Commission) is the governing body of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area and a fellow Regional Seas Convention.

Deputy Secretary, Emily Corcoran, attended IMPAC 3 with the Chairs of BDC and IGG-MPA as well as representatives from a number of Contracting Parties. The aim of this international meeting was to discuss progress on Marine Protected Areas. OSPAR gave a number of presentations on the OSPAR MPA process and had an exhibition stand at the event.

© Shutterstock





### November 2013

OSPAR attended the 36th Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties to the London Convention and London Protocols. Follow-up discussions took place on the Memorandum of Understanding between the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and OSPAR.

The North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) annual meeting was also attended in November. Further development of the Collective Arrangement was agreed.

The Executive Secretary presented OSPAR perspectives to the Celtic Seas Partnership workshop. This project is part funded by Life+ to bring together sea users, industry, governments and the scientific community with a focus on input to MSFD.

OSPAR policy perspectives were discussed in relation to development of integrated overviews to influence fisheries and other advice in the ICES system at the ICES meeting DGECOVER.

### January 2014

OSPAR attended a HELCOM meeting to produce an integrated monitoring manual.

The Secretariat attended the annual meeting organised by ICES to consult with the recipients of ICES advice. This provides an opportunity to review the advice that has been received, checking the timing and processes for delivering the advice as well as that the output responds sufficiently to the needs of the requesting Committees.

### February 2014

A new part-time role of Communications Lead was created at OSPAR in February 2014 with the aim of raising the profile of OSPAR's work.

### March 2014

The HOPE Marine Conference was held in March to discuss progress and problems in taking forward the MSFD. The Executive Secretary's presentation on OSPAR perspectives on the Regional process received good feedback on social media.

Emily Corcoran attended the Convention on Biodiversity workshop on identification of Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs) in the Arctic.

HELCOM celebrated its 40 year anniversary in March. The Executive Secretary attended to underline cooperation between OSPAR and HELCOM.

### April 2014

OSPAR presented at a panel session on integrated management of the marine environment at the Global Oceans Action Summit for Food Security and Blue Growth.

### May 2014

The FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) meeting in Rome gave OSPAR the opportunity to meet with Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs) Secretariats to highlight opportunities for cooperation between Regional Seas Conventions and RFMOs.

A joint task group meeting on ballast water was held between HELCOM and OSPAR to discuss ongoing cooperation in this matter as well as the finalisation of the joint online ballast water management tool.

### June 2014

The Executive Secretary attended the EU Marine Directors Meeting. He highlighted progress on cooperation between EU Member States within OSPAR on the MSFD, while at the same time setting out challenges and opportunities in the year ahead.



## 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 vital expertise, draw attention to specific issues and facilitate networking with stakeholders.

Two new observers were welcomed to OSPAR this year; International Commission on the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) and the International Cables Protection Committee (ICPC). Full details of all other observers can be found on the OSPAR website.

## OSPAR Secretariat

A professional Secretariat of 12 staff based in London

### Committee Chairs in 2013/14

Chair of the OSPAR Commission

Victor Escobar

Vice-chairs of the OSPAR Commission

Laura Piriz (Sweden)

Richard Moxon (United Kingdom)

The following individuals chaired OSPAR Strategy Committees and Working Groups during the period 2013/14

Biodiversity Committee (BDC)

John Clorley (United Kingdom)

Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee (EIHA)

Lex W A Oosterbaan (The Netherlands)

Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee (HASEC)

Reinier Goud (The Netherlands)

Offshore Industry Committee (OIC)

Hanne-Grete Nilsen (Norway)

Radioactive Substances Committee

Justin Gwynn (Norway)

Working Group on Inputs to the Marine Environment (INPUT)

Lars Sonesten (Sweden)

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

Thomas Maes (United Kingdom)

North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors

Ann Jakobsen (Denmark)

## Au Revoir Lise



In 2014, one of the Secretariat's longest serving assistants and the finance lead, Lise Rossi, retired. Lise brought to her role a meticulous approach combined with the flexibility to work out ways to overcome barriers. She brought to the office a sense of never ending vitality and fun, so we are pleased to keep links to her for occasional visits to audit expenses. Lise said;

*"After 26 years, it is time to retire and say goodbye to the OSPAR family. I have enjoyed every minute of it. Stay in touch please and keep cleaning those seas!"*

## We would like to remember...

Ulla Kaarikivi-Laine, who represented Finland as head of delegation at OSPAR over many years. Sadly she passed away after a short illness on 29 June 2014 at the age of 61. She showed in her career a dedication to better and more effective marine and freshwater protection. Colleagues in OSPAR recall she was always friendly and helpful. Quite often when an issue had reached an impasse she would raise her flag and say some short wise words that would help to move things on. "If OSPAR had a hall of fame she would be in it".

Professor Laurence Mee, who had many interactions over the years with OSPAR through his work on marine environment science and policy and in regional seas. He passed away suddenly on 14 August 2014 at the age of 63. Laurence always brought new, amusing and inspiring perspectives to discussions on marine science and practical marine management issues. His views and presentations demonstrated his grounding in science, practicality and above all his sense of fun and understanding. He will be sorely missed.

## Reports adopted by OSPAR 2014 for publication

Reports adopted by OSPAR 2014 can be downloaded from the OSPAR website at [www.ospar.org](http://www.ospar.org)

- Annual Report 2013/2014
- Annual report on discharges of radioactive substances from the non-nuclear sector in 2012
- Annual report on liquid discharges from nuclear installations in 2012
- Annual OSPAR report on mercury losses from the chlor-alkali Industry
- Assessment of the OSPAR report on discharges and emissions to air from offshore installations, 2010-2012
- Comprehensive Atmospheric Monitoring Programme (CAMP) –2012 data report
- OSPAR report on dumping of wastes or other matters at sea in 2012
- Levels and trends of contaminants and associated biological effects – 2013 assessment of data of the Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP)
- National implementation report of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive Discharges from France
- National implementation report of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive Discharges from Germany
- National implementation report of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive Discharges from Norway
- National implementation report of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive Discharges from Switzerland
- OSPAR coordinates monitoring in the North-East Atlantic
- OSPAR database on offshore wind-farms
- OSPAR inventory of noise mitigation measures
- Overview assessment of implementation reporting – Rec. 2010/5
- Overview assessment of implementation reporting – Rec. 2010/19
- OSPAR report on discharges, spills and emissions from offshore oil and gas installations in 2012
- Rapport annuel 2013/2014
- Science agenda
- Update of the background document on Cod
- Update of the background document on Atlantic Tuna

© Thomas Hallermann/Marine Photobank





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

Copies of this Annual Report are available from:

OSPAR Secretariat  
Victoria House  
37-63 Southampton Row  
London WC1B 4DA  
United Kingdom

t: +44 (0)20 7430 5200  
e: [secretariat@ospar.org](mailto:secretariat@ospar.org)  
[www.ospar.org](http://www.ospar.org)

© OSPAR Commission, 2014.

Photos: The OSPAR Commission would like to thank the organisations and individuals who have kindly given permission for their photographic material to be used for this Annual Report. These photos are not downloadable and under no circumstances should they be reproduced. Anyone wishing to use any image should contact the OSPAR Secretariat.

Text: Permission may be granted by the publishers for the text to be wholly or partly reproduced in publications provided that the source of the extract is clearly indicated.

ISBN 978-1-909159-41-9  
Publication Number: 608/2014

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