

## Work priorities for OSPAR Secretariat 2018-2020

(Source: OSPAR 18/10/2 Rev.1)

1. OSPAR is a Regional Seas Convention that regulates and manages human activities impacting the marine environment, it provides regular assessments of the state of the North-East Atlantic Environment, and is an example of combining sustainability concerns with protection and conservation of marine resources. It relies on the participation of representatives from the industry and trade organisations, alongside nature conservation organisations, thus making its work valuable and globally recognised.
2. To the international community, OSPAR provides important examples of an ecosystem approach applied to the management of human activities, combined with regular scientific assessments based on measurable indicators on the state of the marine environment. The work that OSPAR continues to deliver is well received by the international community.
3. The Secretariat will continue to engage with other Regional Seas Conventions and international organisations, with EU institutions, industry observer organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), in order to identify possibilities for collaboration and cooperation. The Secretariat will present such opportunities for the consideration of the Contracting Parties at the respective subsidiary bodies.
4. The Secretariat is committed to reinforce its role as a facilitator of collective work on the protection of resources and ecosystems through better understanding of the state of marine resources and the impacts from human pressures. Fundamental assistance will be provided by the Secretariat in the preparation of OSPAR deliverables, whilst matching the different work streams to specific OSPAR tasks and priorities.
5. A roadmap for 2018-2020 assists Contracting Parties in planning the timelines for products and deliverables. The Secretariat will keep the planning tool up to date, adjusting it as necessary, to ensure sufficient time is given to the different stages of work and the necessary steps to underpin the activities developing under the main processes, namely the new Strategy 2020-2030, the Ministerial meeting in 2020 and the QSR in 2023.

### **A New North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2020-2030**

6. There are two main priorities for the Secretariat during OSPAR's review and renewal of its North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES). Firstly, to support Contracting Parties, the Strategy Task Group, the Committees and ICGs in their work to assess OSPAR's achievements against the objectives of the NEAES 2010-2020 and the effectiveness of measures. Secondly, to support the Strategy Task Group, Contracting Parties and Committees towards the delineation of the structure and content of the new NEAES 2020-2030, to be launched in 2020.

## **Ministerial meeting in 2020**

7. The Secretariat will pay particular attention to the work on the preparation of a high level OSPAR Ministerial meeting in 2020, following OSPAR 2018's decision, and will take due consideration of the different timelines of OSPAR deliverables from 2018 to 2020.

## **Governance**

8. OSPAR efficacy and adaptation capability are of utmost importance in relation to international engagement, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the Biological diversity of areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) process, and the United Kingdom's transition to exit the European Union. The specific work ambitions, particularly the launching of a new NEAES in 2020 and the improvement of governance aspects in OSPAR, add to the international challenges. The Secretariat will provide assistance to the Contracting Parties in their process of developing ways to improve OSPAR and to overcoming obstacles for better performance and decision-making processes.

## **International agenda**

9. The ambitious international agenda on ocean governance, particularly Agenda 2030 and SDG 14, will allow OSPAR to reveal itself as a regional body taking effective action to protect and conserve the resources of the North-East Atlantic.

10. The international community has high expectations in respect to protecting oceans and sea from adverse impacts caused by increasing pressures such as climate change, acidification, eutrophication, biodiversity loss, pollution, over-exploitation and illegal activities. The promotion of resource conservation and sustainable use of the oceans is an upcoming collective challenge where OSPAR's experience and expertise will play a substantial role to pro-actively respond to emerging international responsibilities.

11. Moreover, emerging international developments under the auspices of the United Nations, as the future international legally binding instrument (UN Implementing Agreement) on the conservation and sustainable use of BBNJ are likely to create new opportunities for Regional Seas Conventions and regional organisations, which like OSPAR cover areas beyond national jurisdiction in their geographical scope. The Secretariat will in cooperation with UNEP develop material on the role of the Regional Seas Conventions for the upcoming Intergovernmental Conference on an International legally binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the protection and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

12. UN goals, and in particular the UN SDG 14, brings more international attention on ocean governance. Regional cooperation on the protection and sustainability of the marine environment gains renewed importance.

13. OSPAR is very well placed to contribute to SGD 14 on the marine environment and other goals such as those on climate change are of interest to OSPAR. The initial discussions on the development of a new Strategy 2020-2030 noted SDGs were one of the important global frameworks for the context of developing a new overarching Strategy and its thematic objectives. The Secretariat will map OSPAR work against UN SDGs and targets and provide assistance to Contracting Parties in volunteering reporting on SDG 14, and provide assistance to Committees in making the SDGs a visible component of their work.

14. The Secretariat is also committed to assist Contracting Parties to ensure OSPAR is increasingly seen as an important actor in the North-East Atlantic, developing a key role in facilitating cooperation with other European and international commitments.

15. The Secretariat will continue its cooperation with IMO and the London Convention and London Protocol to implement the new MoU between the two Secretariats.

16. The Secretariat will liaise with other international organisations with which OSPAR seeks to enhance a dialogue. This will include work in line with OSPAR/NEAFC, the voluntary UN commitment on promoting the benefits of cross-sectoral/regional dialogue and the OSPAR/Caribbean Environment Programme voluntary UN commitment to cooperate on subjects that have been commonly identified by both Secretariats, particularly on Marine Protected Areas and prevention, reduction and control of marine litter pollution.

17. The collective arrangement (Agreement 2014-9) adopted in 2014 between OSPAR and NEAFC is a good example of a cooperative mechanism between two complementary organisations with different competencies. Although the collective arrangement began as a bilateral instrument in respect of areas-based management, it has always been intended to be a multilateral platform involving different competent bodies from other sectors and marine regions. The Secretariat's priority will be on enhancing the current work under the collective arrangement, as well as seeking to increase the collaboration with other competent authorities.

18. The Secretariat will continue to support the work of the Arctic Council to which OSPAR became an observer in 2017, and its working groups, where the Secretariat is actively engaging, particularly with the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME), as co-lead on a project on marine litter, including microplastics; and on the development of a report on underwater noise, to assess its impacts on the Arctic marine ecosystem and identify knowledge gaps. The Secretariat is sharing information on transport of floating nuclear power stations with the Arctic Working Group – Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR). The Secretariat will continue to identify relevant OSPAR work that can complement the work of the Arctic Council Working Groups.

#### **EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD)**

19. Coordination of OSPAR work that can be used by Contracting Parties that are also EU Member States in their implementation of MSFD is an ongoing strand of work. As MSFD Article 6.1 states, in order to achieve coordination, "Member States shall, where practical and appropriate, use existing regional institutional cooperation structures, including those under Regional Sea Conventions, covering that marine region or subregion". The Secretariat will assist Contracting Parties to consider how OSPAR can support regional coordination in the second and third cycles of the MSFD and provide assistance to Contracting Parties in their efforts to update OSPAR products in the light of the revision of the Commission Decision on good environmental status (GES) (2017/848/EU).

20. The main commitment of the Secretariat will be to find ways to help more closely align current different methodological approaches, and to identify common grounds that benefit all Contracting Parties to the maximum extent possible. The work already achieved and the valuable collaboration with other Regional Seas Conventions, such as HELCOM and Barcelona Convention, may contribute to overcome obstacles and to help meet the different legitimate expectations of our Contracting Parties.

21. The Secretariat will engage closely with EU MSFD Working Groups and the Marine Strategy Coordination Group to ensure OSPAR work is used effectively to meet MSFD requirements. In this regard the Secretariat will work in particular with the data and information group and the GES group. The MSFD will feature in OSPAR's new NEAES 2020-2030, whilst balancing it with the overall needs and priorities of all

Contracting Parties. Furthermore, OSPAR's Regional Action Plan on MSFD<sup>1</sup> will be updated by ICG-MSFD and the Secretariat in 2020, following the EU Commission's Art. 12 assessment of the updates of Art. 8, 9 and 10 MSFD (due 2019).

### **Preparation for the next Quality Status Report (QSR) in 2023**

22. The Secretariat will support Contracting Parties in planning the work towards the publication of the QSR in 2023 and provide a constant overview to the planning, by focusing OSPAR subsidiary bodies on deliverables. Our main priority will be to contribute through establishing commonly agreed working procedures, including through documentation of data delivery and roles in the approval process of the different QSR components.

23. The Secretariat will prioritise coordination of work through the timely review of the JAMP to plan for the delivery timing of QSR components and, where relevant, will ensure coordination in delivery of products across Committees. The Secretariat can play a fundamental coordinating role in promoting the intra-OSPAR dialogue in order to build a common understanding on the focus of next QSR, at an early stage of the process.

### **OSPAR thematic priorities**

24. The Secretariat will continue to support Contracting Parties implementation of measures in the Recommendations on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats. This includes supporting implementation of the "POSH Roadmap", and the Contracting Parties' reporting on all Recommendations in 2019 with subsequent synthesis of the results. The Secretariat will facilitate the establishment of a framework for rolling status assessments of all listed features. The Secretariat will support Contracting Parties that have taken the lead for the implementation of a collective action or a status assessment of a feature in timely communication of the issues to be progressed to relevant OSPAR subsidiary bodies.

25. The Secretariat will continue to support the operationalisation of OSPAR common biodiversity indicators. This includes supporting Contracting Parties' efforts to expand the indicators into OSPAR Regions where they are currently not assessed. Where feasible the Secretariat will facilitate the development of data streams for the indicators to allow long-term rolling assessments.

26. The Secretariat will continue to support Contracting Parties on different elements of work on Marine Protected Areas. This will include facilitating assessments on eco-coherence and management effectiveness with the aim to evaluate if OSPAR strategic goals in relation to the MPA network have been met.

27. The Secretariat will support management of High Seas MPAs through the collective arrangement.

28. On impacts of human activity, the Secretariat will support work to develop the new NEAES 2020-2030 and review the working practices within the EIHA Committee to ensure that it functions as efficiently as possible. The Secretariat will continue to prioritise work in relation to marine litter and underwater noise, including the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on marine litter, development of further indicators, in line with the Revised Commission Decision, and the development of ambient noise monitoring, through specific projects. The Secretariat will also continue to focus on the development of integrating management actions, such as cumulative effects and economic and social analysis, as a contribution to the QSR 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> OSPAR regional plan to improve adequacy and coherence of MSFD implementation 2014-2018 (CoG(2) 14/7/1, Annex 4), 18 November 2014

29. For the Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication theme, the Secretariat will support procedures seeking to deal with key databases and analytical processes in the work of the Committee. It will also support as a priority work on common indicators for eutrophication and contaminants, for example expanding their geographical coverage and aligning with the EU Commission Decision on GES criteria, where appropriate. The Secretariat will support important work towards closer harmonisation of the eutrophication common indicators, the Common Procedure for the identification of eutrophication and the Commission Decision eutrophication criteria, towards the QSR 2023.

30. The Secretariat will support the OIC and RSC Committees to identify new and emerging issues to be included in the new NEAES 2020-2030.

#### **Cross-cutting priorities: monitoring, assessment, measures, communication, data and information**

31. The Secretariat will provide ongoing support to update and develop the Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP). In particular, the Secretariat will support Contracting Parties in documenting OSPAR monitoring and assessment across all its activities to help coordinate monitoring where possible.

32. The Secretariat will support OSPAR's developing measures and actions programme (MAP), including expanding and refining the online MAP matrix tool (<https://www.ospar.org/matrix>).

33. On communication, the Secretariat will continue to develop its Communication Strategy and Annual Plan, including through the use of social media and continued work on the website. During 2018-19 communication actions will particularly develop in relation to the Marine Litter Regional Action Plan and the POSH Roadmap on the progress of species and habitats Recommendations. The production of a few short films on OSPAR work, data, MPAs, marine litter, marine birds, radioactive substances, offshore industry and eutrophication will play a substantive role in promoting OSPAR visibility.

34. In the run up to the OSPAR Ministerial meeting in 2020, the Secretariat will need to massively increase the communication work due to the activities that are usually developed in preparation for this kind of high level event. These activities may include refreshing the OSPAR website; a specific logo for the Ministerial; an introductory graphic presentation on OSPAR work and achievements; pop-up banners to be displayed *in loco*; meeting mementoes; brochures and press releases to be distributed prior and after the Ministerial meeting.

35. In terms of data and information, the priorities for 2018-2020 will be to support Committees on data and information related activities (via ICG-Data), providing support to Contracting Parties that are EU Member States in their reporting under the MSFD including metadata and data specifications work in relation to WISE-Marine and INSPIRE, to ensure that external data linkages are fully operational and making preparations for QSR2023. ODIMS and OAP will require on-going development programmes to ensure the systems remain relevant for all Contracting Parties.

36. Considering there has been no major overhaul for a long time, the Secretariat will need to prioritise the security of the OSPAR Secretariat IT system and make it sufficiently robust, which will imply server hardware upgrades, migration to new software and alignment of all users.

#### **OSPAR internal organisational challenges**

37. The Secretariat receives an increasing number of information requests and requests to participate in many relevant regional and international meetings and processes, which is proof of the increased visibility of OSPAR, but requires increased dedication, time and resources. The new challenges ahead – namely the

Ministerial meeting in 2020, a new NEAES 2020-2030, the reflection on governance aspects, the revision of the JAMP and the preparation for the QSR2023 – will require close coordination and increased efficiency of all OSPAR bodies. A realistic debate focused on OSPAR core matters will facilitate the task of Contracting Parties and provide clear directions for the refinement of Secretariat's priorities.

38. In terms of contributing to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of OSPAR bodies, the Secretariat will seek to promote sound discussions at the meetings of the Committees, Working Groups and ICGs so that common proposals can mature and duplication of work is avoided. Priority will be given to reinforce the relevance of the OSPAR Commission and HOD as privileged *fora* for decision-making, and of CoG as the OSPAR coordination body.

39. The Secretariat will commit to contributing to the efforts of the Contracting Parties for an enhanced OSPAR Commission in the forthcoming demanding times, including the preparation of the Ministerial meeting in 2020 and launching a new NEAES 2020-2030.

40. The Executive Secretary will dedicate a lot of her time and self-determination in finding practicable solutions, including external funding or additional resources for specific activities, but also responses to particular problems. The managerial load placed on the Secretariat in relation to securing additional resources needs to be balanced, and solutions where Contracting Parties can support the Secretariat in such endeavours and share the managerial load should be further explored. The current budget constraints are a big priority, given the uncertainties and the practicalities related to the move of the Secretariat from Victoria House, which will happen in 2018-2019.

#### **Finances**

41. The Executive Secretary will remain committed to maintaining proper accounts and ensuring effective internal financial control as well as to providing clear information to Contracting Parties on the financial position of the Commission at any time.

42. The Secretariat will need to prioritise the following 3 main strands of action, by order of importance, that will require proper funding and have financial implications over the period 2018-2020:

- a. the adaptation to logistical needs such as the Secretariat's move from Victoria House in September 2019, at the latest, will develop in parallel to the ambitious work-plan for 2019 and 2020;
- c. The preparation and organisation of the Ministerial meeting in 2020 and costs associated with communication.
- b. The proposed continuation of the 2-year Marine Litter project (2019-2020) to be funded in its entirety by voluntary contributions from Contracting Parties;