

The OSPAR Secretariat Objectives 2015 - 2017

1. The following document sets out the objectives that will guide the Secretariat in its support to Contracting Parties over the next two years, within the existing structure of OSPAR. This document will be reviewed in due course by the Secretariat in consultation with Contracting Parties. This document aims to ensure that Contracting Parties understand and direct the principles and practices that guide the work of the Secretariat as it interprets the priorities set out for it to it by the OSPAR Commission. This document will assist the members of the Secretariat as they set their own individual objectives for the year.

Secretariat aims related to OSPAR strategies and priorities

2. The Secretariat will aim to support Contracting Parties' joint activities under the Convention and in particular their negotiations and work packages as they to deliver the North East Atlantic Environment Strategy through Committee processes, decisions, recommendations and other agreements. The Secretariat also notes the high priority Contracting Parties hold for broader international cooperation. The Secretariat will work to deliver the 2014-2021 Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme to ensure OSPAR is able to continue to spot issues and opportunities through its monitoring and assessment.
3. The Executive Secretary will dedicate a significant personal effort to engage with OSPAR and European Union processes focused on delivering regional coordination in support of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive by OSPAR Contracting Parties that are EU Member States. In this regard he will seek out opportunities for collaboration with other Regional Seas Organisations, ICES and relevant European Union institutions. This effort should also serve OSPAR purposes. Therefore he will also pay attention to the links between the North East Atlantic Environment Strategy and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, and coordination with Contracting Parties not implementing the Directive.
4. The Secretariat will prioritise support to Contracting Parties as they implement the OSPAR Regional Plan to improve the adequacy and coherence of the MSFD implementation 2014-2018. This will include strong prioritisation to the support to ICG-MAQ in the development of a high quality Intermediate Assessment in 2017, on the way to the next Quality Status Report in 2021. The Secretariat will seek to understand the needs of Contracting Parties in using the Intermediate Assessment for their national assessment processes and make the relevant connections to other organisations that are developing assessment reports and methodologies to undertake integrated assessment (eg HELCOM, the Barcelona Convention and ICES).
5. The Secretariat will continue to engage with NGO and industry OSPAR observer organisations and global and European marine organisations, in order to maintain OSPAR's profile and to spot opportunities for co-operation. This function will also enable the Secretariat to identify significant new issues that are developing in international marine science and environment policy to raise to the attention of Contracting Parties through the relevant working groups and Committees.

OSPAR Themes, Current Priorities

6. The Secretariat will support all priorities as identified by Contracting Parties. The Secretariat will also attend to policy and finance issues raised by Contracting Parties. The following are some areas that are currently highlighted under the OSPAR strategies:
7. The Secretariat will continue to provide support to Contracting Parties via the intersessional group on species and habitats (ICG-POSH) as they seek to operationalise Recommendations on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats under the North East Atlantic Environment

Strategy. The Secretariat will also prioritise its support to Contracting Parties on different elements of work on Marine Protected Areas and on biodiversity indicators for the EU MSFD and OSPAR, including finalising development and implementation of the new OSPAR Common biodiversity Indicators.

8. On impacts of human activity, the Secretariat will support work to develop understanding of cumulative impacts of activities in the Marine Environment given the importance for this in delivering the North East Atlantic Environment Strategy's focus on an ecosystem approach, as well as the challenges presented by coordination of Contracting Party management actions under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The Secretariat has also prioritised its support to Contracting Parties as they progress the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter and develop OSPAR's work on marine noise. On support to 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. The Secretariat will support this theme as it continues its evolution.
9. In both Radioactive Substances theme and the Offshore Industry theme, the Secretariat will ensure ongoing processes continue to deliver high quality products, and help assessment processes to improve. The Secretariat will also help the Committees as their agendas mature and some redefinition of form and focus may be called for. The Secretariat will continue to facilitate pro-active cooperation between the two Committees. A key element is to carry out a smooth transition to a new deputy who will join OSPAR on the departure of Luisa Rodriguez in early 2016.
10. The Secretariat will work with the Coordinated Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP) task group to develop a broader Coordinated Environmental Monitoring and Assessment Programme, setting more out the detail of how OSPAR carries out monitoring and assessment across all its activities. The Secretariat will also support Contracting Parties as they develop an 'OSPAR measures and actions programme' for a more structured development of measures across the convention.
11. The Secretariat will represent Contracting Parties where appropriate in international and sectoral forums. This includes in attending meetings to present OSPAR's achievements and current activities, as well as implementation of the collective arrangement with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Organisation. In order to implement the North East Atlantic Strategy and deliver Contracting Parties' objectives, including the Recommendations on threatened and declining species and habitats, the Secretariat will liaise with other international organisations with which OSPAR is seeking to strengthen its relationships, via memoranda of understanding and other more formal links. Priorities for engagement by the Secretariat over the next period include engagement with the Abidjan Convention, the Arctic Council, the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, the International Maritime Organisation, the International Seabed Authority and the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea.

OSPAR Processes; making the OSPAR more efficient and effective.

12. The Secretariat will continue to review with respective Chairs, the length of meetings, number of papers, mix of plenary and break-out sessions etc, to ensure meetings are focused and productive. A regular verbal update will be relayed to the meeting of OSPAR Heads of Delegation. The Secretariat will plan for annual work programmes to include an overall number of Secretariat supported meeting days below maximum, where this can be agreed to by the Contracting Parties. The Secretariat will aim to ensure a level of meeting support that is in proportion to the priorities set out above, covering the range of Intersessional Correspondence Groups (ICGs) across all Committees. Where the Secretariat needs to reduce meeting support to an ICG, this will be in consultation with the convenor and the Chair of the parent body.
13. The Secretariat will work with Chairs to challenge on products arriving to Committees, aiming to ensure that these are sufficiently prepared and mature to be considered. Concerns whether the

product meets OSPAR quality/competence requirements may mean the product is referred back for further development, JL or technical advice etc. The Secretariat may also be able to advise on other considerations that may need to be taken into account, for instance broader perspectives from other committees, Coordination Group or Heads of Delegation (including broader sectoral or international perspectives).

14. The Secretariat, from its central vantage point will advise Chairs on areas of duplication between Committees or OSPAR working layers. In addition, with regard to the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Secretariat will support Contracting Parties in identifying unhelpful duplication between considerations in OSPAR, European and national working groups so that planning documents can be adjusted as is appropriate. It will also identify synergies with other organisations processes, such as work done for implementation of the MSFD in HELCOM, the Barcelona Convention or ICES.
15. Where resources are available for seeking funding external to OSPAR or for outsourcing or of particular parcels of work, the Secretariat will consider such opportunities in consultation with Chairs or Contracting Parties. In doing so the Secretariat and Contracting Parties will need to balance consideration of the management resource required to secure funds, tender and manage contracts, against the additional resource for particular activities that is thus obtained. In addition, ownership and buy-in of Contracting Parties to such products will be a consideration, as will the avoidance of any conflict of interests between the Secretariat and the Contracting Parties in serving OSPAR's aims.
16. The OSPAR Secretariat will endeavour to ensure OSPAR meeting schedules, intersessional work flow and clearance processes give Contracting Parties sufficient time to consult internally. In the annual Committee processes in the lead up to the OSPAR Commission meeting, the Secretariat will work with Chairs to remind Contracting Parties of deadlines and key check points for internal national policy and technical co-ordination. Where possible, check points in particular processes may be introduced to allow Contracting Parties to confirm that they are content that they have coordinated in their administrations on key issues in OSPAR. This will be designed as far as possible to avoid issues arising late in agreement processes.

Deadlines for working groups and Committees.

17. As far as within the Secretariat's competence, we will guide delegations, where necessary, on the relevant Rules of Procedure and enforce them (such as agreed deadlines for documents and other inputs to OSPAR working groups and Committees). The Secretariat will assist Chairs and convenors of such meetings in their decisions on acceptability of late documents and the process of decision by Head of Delegations in this regard.
18. The Secretariat will also assist Chairs and convenors in preparing letters (Chair's Guidance letters) to go out to working group/Committee registered or expected participants to help orientate and focus discussions.
19. The Secretariat will provide a short generic guidance document on the format and length of papers to be submitted for meetings, including guidance on clear signalling of whether discussion is needed or not for each paper. This is to avoid a process driven agenda, but to focus discussion on key issues for Contracting Parties.

Role of key Committees and working groups in MSFD processes.

20. The Secretariat will support the OSPAR Commission and its subsidiary Committees in developing elements of work for the MSFD. This will include helping ICG MSFD in its development of products for approval by the Commission, and also helping the process of feeding in specific developments into ICG MSFD from the key thematic Committees and their working groups. The Secretariat will

represent the interests of OSPAR at the EU MSFD Marine Strategy Coordination Group and the working groups associated with the MSFD Common Implementation Strategy.

21. The Secretariat will work with Contracting Parties in developing joint activities and structured complementary work plans with other relevant organisations such as HELCOM, the Barcelona Convention and the European Commission's Common Implementation Strategy process. Such activities should aim to deliver improved effectiveness and efficiencies in MSFD processes.

Meetings and Technical developments

22. The Secretariat will assist Contracting Parties in taking forward work through seeking to use the most effective and relevant forums for particular work package needs. Meetings should include opportunities for strategic thinking with innovative formats for plenary and break out groups. The Secretariat in conjunction with meeting Chairs will seek out approaches to maximise useful output from meetings and written procedures.
23. To assist Contracting Parties engage most productively with OSPAR meetings, the Secretariat will produce a '**new entrants' guide**. This guide will help those joining OSPAR meetings from national administrations to understand OSPAR structures and procedures. This will hopefully help experts and policy makers hit the ground able to run, rather than being too disorientated.
24. In addition the Secretariat will continue to encourage intersessional work (including of ICGs) via new technologies such as WEBEX meetings, to enable Contracting Parties to interact effectively, while at the same time reducing costs of meetings from travel related expenditure and loss of time. The Secretariat is reviewing the guidance letters sent to hosts for OSPAR's various meetings, to tailor these for the needs of each meeting and the latest technical solutions available to save Contracting Party resources.
25. Technical developments will also allow for a continuing evolution in the use of electronic sharing of documents, for instance in providing meeting documents and in Committee summary record procedures. Such an evolution will balance a respect for the privacy and restricted nature of some OSPAR meetings with trying to lighten the load for Contracting Parties in terms of providing infrastructure for meetings and work-load in correcting summary records etc.

Data, Information and Communications

26. The Secretariat is continuing with the development of the OSPAR Data and Information Management System tool (ODIMS) following the endorsement of the Data and Information Management Strategy in OSPAR 2013. Subject to on-going support by Contracting Parties, this will deliver more accessible OSPAR data to mesh in with MSFD data developments, delivery of assessments and future QSR needs. The Secretariat will also work to cooperate with the European Commission to coordinate with their development of an EU MSFD information system.
27. The Secretariat will continue to maintain and develop OSPAR's Communications Strategy and Annual Plans. Significant activity over this objective's period will be on redevelopment of OSPAR's website to make it a more effective tool. The secretariat communications lead will fully support production of assessment sheets linked to OSPAR's Intermediate Assessment 2017 and the JAMP 2014-2021. In addition the Secretariat will continue to develop its communications through social media, as set out in the current Communication Plan.