



Press release

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International marine litter experts agree a way forward to develop a Marine Litter Index

Experts from Northern Europe continue to work on developing monitoring techniques, undertaking statistical analysis of the data collected from beach monitoring and developing proposals to address the issue of marine litter. The Group was set up by the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR) to expand the work of a pilot scheme set up eight years ago to monitor beaches in a number of countries and to establish trends in marine litter.

During a six-year pilot project (2000-2006) OSPAR has collected data on beach litter at 51 European beaches. This monitoring has since continued and has been expanded to other countries. The group compared different guidelines for beach monitoring which a worldwide technical group has developed as part of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and reviewed existing protocols and suggested amendments. A major part of the work focused on how statistical analysis can illustrate marine litter trends and whether this could be used to develop a Marine Litter Index. They also agreed that the development of a Marine Litter Index could work.

The work will contribute to the drafting of the Quality Status Report 2010, a major holistic assessment of the quality status of the North-East Atlantic. This assessment will inform the 2010 OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in Bergen about the environmental status of the North-East Atlantic and future actions for its protection and conservation.

The project is led by the Netherlands and Belgium who have contracted the environmental organisation KIMO International to facilitate the project.

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Note for editors

The [OSPAR Commission](http://www.ospar.org) was set up by the 1992 OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, which unified and updated the 1972 Oslo and 1974 Paris Conventions. It brings together the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, together with the European Community. (<http://www.ospar.org>).