



## Press statement

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## OSPAR celebrates World Oceans Day

### World Oceans Day celebration

To celebrate World Oceans Day, the OSPAR Commission has launched a dedicated website for the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting, the North-East Atlantic Environment Summit, which will be held in Bergen, Norway, 20-24 September 2010.

#### [OSPAR 2010 website](#)

The highly visual website provides information on the key issues that will be discussed by the Ministers, as well as illustrations of OSPAR achievements over the last decade, with interviews with delegates from the OSPAR Commission. It also includes case studies of the rich and diverse ecosystems of the North-East Atlantic. The website will be updated regularly and enriched with social media over the summer. It highlights how diverse and valuable our ocean environment is, the importance of balancing human uses and ecological health and the relevance of political cooperation at the scale of sea basins.

### Informal Meeting of Arctic Ministers

At the same time the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico has thrown into sharp relief the need for marine environmental protection elsewhere. The OSPAR Maritime Area extends to the North Pole covering a 'slice' of Arctic waters. This week, in addition to key speakers from the Arctic Council and the International Maritime Organisation, both the Executive Secretaries of HELCOM and OSPAR have been invited to make presentations to an Informal Meeting of Arctic Ministers in Ilulissat, Greenland.

Arctic Ministers will focus on the potential impacts of increased shipping activity given that projected losses of Arctic sea ice will influence shipping activities and routes in the future. Impacts from shipping in the cold Arctic waters are potentially greater than in warmer waters and could add to stresses for Arctic species that are adapted to the cold environment and dependent on sea ice. Understanding food webs in the Arctic marine environment and monitoring biodiversity will be essential. Additional protection, for example for breeding, staging and overwintering animals may be needed. Work underpinning the OSPAR QSR 2010 already indicates, for example, that seabird populations in Arctic waters are under severe pressure, probably from changes to their food supply.

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#### Note for editors

1. In 2008, the United Nations General Assembly decided that, as from 2009, 8 June would be designated by the United Nations as "World Oceans Day" (resolution 63/111, paragraph 171). Many countries have celebrated World Oceans Day following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The oceans are essential to food security and the health and survival of all life, power our climate and are a critical part of the

biosphere. The official designation of World Oceans Day is an opportunity to raise global awareness of the current challenges faced by the international community in connection with the oceans.

2. The [Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission](#), usually referred to as the [Helsinki Commission \(HELCOM\)](#), is an intergovernmental organisation of the nine Baltic Sea coastal countries - Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden - and the European Community working to protect the marine environment of the Baltic Sea from all sources of pollution and to ensure safety of navigation in the region. HELCOM is the governing body of the "Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area," more usually known as the Helsinki Convention.

3. The [OSPAR Commission](#) was set up by the 1992 OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, which unified and up-dated 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.

4. General assessments of current knowledge of the health status of the sea, assessing the impact of humans on hydrodynamics, chemistry, habitats and biota, provide a basis for implementing the ecosystem approach. Assessing the cumulative and relative impact of all the human pressures on the marine environment can identify where action needs to be taken. OSPAR publishes such general assessments in the form of [Quality Status Reports \(QSRs\)](#) of the North-East Atlantic and its sub-regions. QSRs are published periodically as major benchmark assessments resulting from the joint efforts of the Contracting Parties. OSPAR Contracting Parties are currently working together to prepare the next Quality Status Report for publication at the 2010 OSPAR Ministerial Meeting. The Quality Status Report 2010 will examine all aspects of human influence on the sea, including contaminants, nutrient pollution and radioactive substances and the effects of human activities such as the offshore oil and gas industry, offshore wind farms, maritime transport, and fisheries. An evaluation will be made of the effectiveness of the policies being taken for the protection of the marine environment and priorities for future action will be identified.

5. The Ilulissat meeting will be opened by H.E. Mrs Karen Ellemann, Danish Minister for the Environment. The [Ilulissat Ice Fjord](#), part of a dramatic UNESCO World Heritage Site, provides an awe inspiring backdrop for this important meeting. Located on the west coast of Greenland, 250 km north of the Arctic Circle, Greenland's Ilulissat Icefjord (40,240 ha) is the sea mouth of Sermeq Kujalleq, one of the few glaciers through which the Greenland ice cap reaches the sea. Sermeq Kujalleq is one of the fastest (19 m per day) and most active glaciers in the world. It annually calves over 35 km<sup>3</sup> of ice, i.e. 10% of the production of all Greenland calf ice and more than any other glacier outside Antarctica. Studied for over 250 years, it has helped to develop our understanding of climate change and icecap glaciology. The combination of a huge ice-sheet and the dramatic sounds of a fast-moving glacial ice-stream calving into a fjord covered by icebergs makes for a dramatic and awe-inspiring natural phenomenon.