



Press statement

Contact number David Johnson +0044 (0)20 7430 5203

For immediate release

New Court
48 Carey Street
London WC2A 2JQ
United Kingdom

t: +44 (0)20 7430 5200
f: +44 (0)20 7430 5225
e: secretariat@ospar.org
www.ospar.org

OSPAR welcomes reductions in radioactive discharges to the North-East Atlantic

Introduction

Radioactive Substances is one of the five thematic strategies of the OSPAR Commission. Over the past decade Contracting Parties to OSPAR have put in place National Plans to progressively reduce discharges of radioactive substances and collectively monitored discharges and concentrations of indicator radionuclides and estimated radiation doses. Contracting Parties also regularly report on how they are implementing Best Available Techniques (BAT) at their nuclear installations.

In September OSPAR Ministers will launch the Quality Status Report 2010, a comprehensive overview assessment with detailed supporting evidence, setting out progress against the OSPAR Strategies. This will confirm significant progress in reducing discharges from the nuclear sector as a result of changes in practices and improved waste treatment.

Meeting in Stockholm this week, the OSPAR's Radioactive Substances Committee (RSC) welcomed the latest analysis of beta emitting radioactive substances from the nuclear sector. "Our latest figures confirm good progress in terms of a continuing improving trend towards the OSPAR objective and we have recorded the lowest total-alpha and total-beta discharges since our data collection began in the early 1990s. The discharges in 2008 were approximately fifteen times lower than in 1990", stated Bob Russ, of the Environment Agency (UK) and Chair of the Expert Assessment Panel charged with validating and interpreting OSPAR data. There are no similar reductions for tritium because abatement techniques have yet to be developed.

Mr Leif Moberg, Chairman of the RSC and Research Director at the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority said, "I am very encouraged by this progress that gives us a solid basis to address outstanding challenges in the coming years to meet agreed commitments."

ENDS

Note for editors

1. 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 Commission on behalf of the European Union.
2. The objective of the OSPAR Commission Radioactive Substances Strategy is to prevent pollution of the maritime area from ionising radiation through progressive and substantial reductions of discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances, with the ultimate aim of concentrations in the environment near background values for naturally occurring

radioactive substances and close to zero for artificial radioactive substances. In achieving this objective the following issues should, inter alia, be taken into account:

- a. legitimate uses of the sea;
- b. technical feasibility;
- c. radiological impacts on man and biota.

3. In a critical year for the future of the North-East Atlantic, OSPAR will hold the Ministerial meeting of the OSPAR Commission "North-East Atlantic Environment Summit" in Bergen, Norway. Ministers will be invited to take far-reaching strategic decisions based on the scientific evidence summarised in the QSR 2010. OSPAR is determined to face the challenges to our oceans and lead by example to create a sustainable marine environment for future generations.

4. OSPAR Contracting Parties report data annually on discharges of radioactive substances from the nuclear sector (nuclear power stations, nuclear fuel reprocessing plants, nuclear fuel fabrication and enrichment plants, research and development facilities and decommissioning). An Expert Assessment Panel prepares an assessment of these data.

5. Radioactive discharges are grouped by OSPAR into three categories "total-alpha", "total-beta" and tritium. Tritium is a single radionuclide which is separated from the main group partly because of measurement issues, but also because there is currently no practicable way of removing it from discharges.