



Press release

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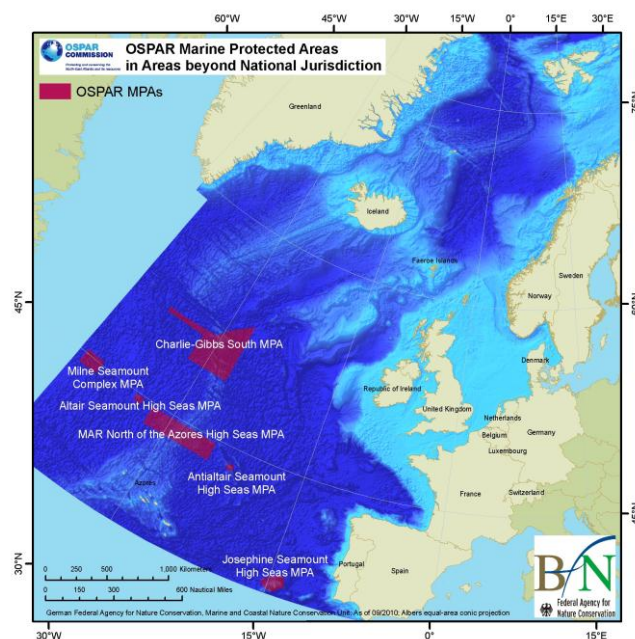
OSPAR Ministers protect the North-East Atlantic deep seas treasures

A vast network of unique and ecologically sensitive areas in the wider Atlantic has been protected in a bold move for the protection of high seas biodiversity by the OSPAR Commission at its third ministerial meeting in Norway this week, bringing the network of OSPAR's marine protected areas to cover an area of 433 000km².

OSPAR Ministers have also given consideration to key human activities, such as offshore drilling activities, and agreed a new Strategy for the North-East Atlantic Environment.

OSPAR Ministers have established six marine protected areas covering a total area of 285 000 km² protecting a series of seamounts and sections of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and hosting a range of vulnerable deep-sea habitats and species. Four of the MPAs have been established in collaboration with Portugal¹.

This groundbreaking work of OSPAR on ocean governance sets a precedent for other regions in working towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) goal of implementing representative systems of MPAs by 2012. OSPAR Ministers agreed to present this breakthrough to the 10th meeting of the Parties of the CBD in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010. OSPAR Ministers have also adopted targeted measures to improve the protection and the conservation of threatened and/or declining species and habitats² in the OSPAR maritime area.



¹ The MPAs established by the OSPAR Commission lie in areas of the North-East Atlantic that are beyond the jurisdiction of the coastal States. Altair Seamount, Antialtair Seamount, Josephine Seamount and MAR North of the Azores MPAs are for the high seas above seabed that is subject to a submission by Portugal to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. For the seabed in these areas, Portugal has established MPAs under its national jurisdiction.

² Two factsheets presenting the species and habitats targeted are included in the press pack.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity, and OSPAR is now armed with unique measures to protect marine biodiversity, which Ministers have committed to extend in the coming years.

To achieve a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic used sustainably, the Ministers have also adopted key measures for human activities. Ministers committed to take firm steps to apply relevant lessons learnt from the accident on the Deepwater Horizon in the Gulf of Mexico to prevent significant acute pollution from offshore drilling activities in the North-East Atlantic. OSPAR Ministers are also determined to tackle marine litter. With a recommendation encouraging the fishing for litter initiatives and guidelines for monitoring marine litter on the beaches, OSPAR is now at the forefront of the battle against this ever-growing pressure on the marine environment.

The North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy has been adopted by OSPAR. This new far-reaching Strategy for the period 2010-2020 provides OSPAR with new and ambitious goals to deliver the Ecosystem Approach and achieve good environmental status in the North-East Atlantic by 2020. The Strategy provides the regional platform for facilitating implementation of the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive. [The Quality Status Report 2010](#) launched the day before, played an important role in the development of the Strategy by providing scientific evidence of the challenges ahead of OSPAR and recommendations to tackle them.

Finally, the Ministers adopted a Ministerial Statement which constitutes a political commitment to achieving these new goals during the next decade.

The OSPAR Ministerial Meeting has been witnessed by the three OSPAR witnesses, Maud Fontenoy, Jostein Gaarder and Lewis Pugh. These three personalities shared with the meeting their personal experiences of the changing marine environment with moving and engaging speeches.

WWF awarded the “Gift To the Earth” to OSPAR in recognition of the leading work on protection and conservation of marine biodiversity in the high seas. The Gift to the Earth is WWF’s recognition of a globally significant conservation achievement, which addresses WWF’s priorities in this field.

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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.