



Press statement

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“Youth: The next wave of change” – Abidjan Convention, IMO and OSPAR are celebrating the World Oceans Day 2011

Gabonese youth joined marine experts in celebrating the World Oceans Day in Libreville. This event took place during a capacity building workshop that brought together marine experts from Western, Central and Southern Africa, the North-East Atlantic maritime area and the International Maritime Organization.

Libreville (Gabon)/Nairobi (Kenya)/London (England), June 8, 2011 – representatives from seventeen countries from Western, Central and South African countries, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, together with stakeholders from non-governmental organisations and industries celebrated World Oceans Day in Libreville, Gabon. The event was part of a joint regional capacity building workshop for countries of the Abidjan Convention, including Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mauritania, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Togo, that is taking place from 6 - 10 June 2011 in the Gabonese capital.

The workshop, co-organized by the Abidjan Convention, IMO, the OSPAR Commission and the Gabonese Government, supports capacity building in the countries of the Abidjan Convention with regard to the protection of the marine and coastal environment. In his opening statement to the workshop, the Minister for Habitats, Urban Affairs, Ecology and Sustainable Development, HE Mr. Blaise Louembé emphasized the commitment of Gabon to sustainable management of its natural resources and the need to reinforce legal measures for better compliance and enforcement of environmental law.

Participants are sharing experience and best practice with regard to: the prevention of marine pollution; the dumping of wastes and other matter at sea; marine protected areas; offshore oil and gas activities; and identifying regional approaches to solve some of the most pressing environmental concerns. The workshop also raises awareness of the benefits of regional cooperation and the work of international agreements and conventions, such as the London Convention and Protocol, and helps to build the case for an inter-regional cooperation between the Abidjan Convention and the OSPAR Commission. In addition to senior governmental officials, representatives from non-governmental organisations such as WWF and IUCN and regional and national stakeholders, e.g. from the oil and gas industry, participated in the workshop.

To mark World Oceans Day 2011, workshop participants met with school children and young people from Libreville encouraging them to join with hundreds of other marine environmental protection organisations and initiatives, and thousands of individuals in dozens of countries around the globe

celebrating World Oceans Day. This year's theme, "Youth: the Next Wave for Change" emphasizes the important role that young people are playing in conserving our oceans.



Executive Secretary of the Abidjan Convention, Mr Abou Bamba, said that the celebration of World Oceans Day in Gabon marks the beginning of a new dawn regarding the conservation of marine and coastal ecosystems in the region with the active involvement of future generations of Africa.

The organisation of this workshop and the celebration of World Oceans Day have received financial and technical support from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Maritime Organization, the Governments of Gabon, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Notes to the editors:

The Abidjan Convention is the legal tool for cooperation in the protection and development of the marine environment and coastal region of West Africa, Central and Southern Africa. It has an emergency protocol on oil spills and entered into force in 1984. The Convention covers 22 countries bordering the Atlantic coast of West Africa from Mauritania to South Africa. The Convention is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with Headquarters based in Abidjan, Ivory Coast.

The OSPAR Convention is the current legal instrument guiding international cooperation for the protection of the marine environment of the North-East. Work on behalf of the Convention is undertaken by the OSPAR Commission, composed of government representatives of 15 Contracting Parties and the European Commission, representing the European Union. The OSPAR Commission was established by the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, which unified and updated the Oslo Convention (1972) and Paris Convention (1974). It brought together the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom with the European Commission. For further information please see www.ospar.org

The International Maritime Organization is a specialized agency of the United Nations which is responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent marine pollution from ships. It is also involved in legal matters, including liability and compensation issues and the facilitation of international maritime traffic. See www.imo.org for further details.

The "Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972" (the London Convention) and its 1996, the "London Protocol" protect the marine environment from all sources of marine pollution resulting from dumping of wastes and other matter at sea. Refer to www.londonprotocol.imo.org

World Oceans Day is held on 8 June every year, and is coordinated by The Ocean Project (theoceanproject.org) and the World Ocean Network (worldoceannetwork.org). For more information, including a comprehensive list of events locally and globally, please visit the website of World Oceans Day (<http://worldoceansday.org>).

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