



Press release

OSPAR contact number Darius Campbell, Tel: 00 44 (0)20 7430 5200

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Victoria House
37-63 Southampton Row
London WC1B 4DA
United Kingdom

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

OSPAR agrees further steps to protect the Marine Environment in Gothenburg

Today the OSPAR Commission agreed on several new and innovative measures in its mission to ensure that human activities in the North East Atlantic are carried out in step with the natural ecosystems of the North East Atlantic. Meeting in Gothenburg (Sweden) this week, the sixteen Contracting Parties to the OSPAR Convention agreed the following:

- Areas of ecological or scientific interest in the high seas. These are to be proposed as submissions to the Convention on Biodiversity, working together with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission;
- A first set of Common indicators to assess the status of the North East Atlantic and its subregions. This is a step forward in coordinating and extending marine monitoring within the OSPAR area, as also required by the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive;
- Joint Guidelines with the Helsinki Commission on the granting of Exemptions under the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention to prevent the spread of Non-indigenous species, pending the agreement at the HELCOM Ministerial in October 2013;
- The first regional social and economic analysis of human activities across the entire North East Atlantic;
- To develop by 2014 an ambitious Regional Action Plan to reduce the huge problem of marine litter on our seas and coastlines in the North East Atlantic;
- OSPAR's Contracting Parties have now achieved 10% coverage of MPAs in the Greater North Sea and are continuing with the ambition to increase this coverage over the wider OSPAR area.

Welcoming delegations to Gothenburg, State Secretary, *Mr Anders Flanking*, said: "Our marine environment is a shared value and resource and the cooperation within the Regional Seas Convention OSPAR, is of great importance in our common challenges in reaching a healthy marine environment. Sweden appreciates the key role of OSPAR and the other Regional Seas Conventions (RSCs) in coordinating the implementation of the MSFD and supports the OSPAR work on common indicators in the context of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). The Swedish government also acknowledges the valuable work that OSPAR Contracting Parties have carried out regarding marine protected areas and threatened and declining species and habitats. Finally, for us here in Sweden, marine litter is an issue of great concern. Every year, between 4000 and 8000 cubic meter of litter is washed ashore on the Swedish West Coast. Sweden therefore supports the development of reduction targets and welcomes OSPAR's

initiatives to develop measures and targets for marine litter. I can assure you that the Swedish government will work actively to support these endeavours”.

Mr Victor Escobar (Spain), Chairman of the OSPAR Commission said ‘I am pleased with the agreements we have made at this meeting of the OSPAR Commission. We have expressed our clear intention as OSPAR to expand our connection to the social and economic aspects of activity in our seas. As a real step towards that, we have started our plans for tackling marine litter, an important concern for the economy of our seas, for the environment and for human enjoyment of our seas and coasts. We have also made progress in the complex process of agreeing some common elements to monitoring the state of the marine environment. This will be the basis of improved cooperation, focused within the unique ecology of the seas of the North East Atlantic. OSPAR has not yet been able to adopt a set of measures to protect 23 species and habitats that are at risk in the North East Atlantic, but continues to aim to deliver the Ministerial commitment on this issue, made in Bergen, Norway in 2010.

The Director General of Sweden’s Agency for Marine and Water Management, Björn Risinger added: “The establishment in 2011 of the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management was evidence of the importance of the marine environment to the Swedish government. Given the diverse nature of the sea, the management of human uses in sea is difficult and costly and cooperation and coordination are necessary if Good Environmental Status is to be achieved. It is in this respect that the RSCs have a very special role to play”.

Since its inception OSPAR has in particular:

- Banned dumping and incineration of wastes at sea;
- Significantly reduced the input from the land of hazardous substances and nutrients;
- Ensured discharges from nuclear power plants are the lowest recorded;
- Regulated key aspects of the offshore oil and gas industry such as decommissioning;
- Developed ecological quality objectives for a healthy ocean; and
- Comprehensively evaluated the health of the North-East Atlantic in the Quality Status Report 2010.

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 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.
2. More than 30 international non-governmental organisations are involved in OSPAR as official Observers. They represent a broad range of interests and expertise related to the marine environment and the uses of marine resources. Many contribute information, insights and standpoints. This is much appreciated feedback from civil society and the economy. The OSPAR Commission greatly values these partnerships that help inform its decisions and other results. (see list on OSPAR website at <http://www.ospar.org/content/content.asp?menu=0016>)
3. The **Bergen Statement** was adopted at the third Ministerial Meeting of the OSPAR Commission in 2010 in Bergen, Norway.