



Press release

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OSPAR COMMITS TO REDUCING MARINE LITTER AND PROTECTING VULNERABLE SPECIES AND HABITATS IN THE NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC

Today, in Cascais (Portugal), the OSPAR Commission adopted a landmark Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter along with measures to protect 16 vulnerable species and habitats.

The Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter will enable OSPAR countries to substantially reduce marine litter in North-East Atlantic. The Plan will address litter from both land and sea based sources and will result in a reduction in marine litter on coasts and beaches.

The Plan supports the global effort to achieve significant reductions in marine debris by 2025 as agreed by Heads of States at Rio+20. It provides a regional contribution to the European Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive. The plan also invites international organisations, the private sector and the non-governmental organisations to cooperate in its implementation.

The meeting also agreed on measures to protect and conserve 11 species and 5 habitats identified by OSPAR as being particularly vulnerable within the North-East Atlantic. These include cod, European eel, 5 species of shark and 2 species of ray along with 5 important marine habitats including seagrass meadows and deep sea hydrothermal vents.

A biologically diverse North-East Atlantic is vital for the proper functioning of marine ecosystems as well as supporting human health and the millions of livelihoods that depend on it. The measures agreed today demonstrate OSPAR countries' willingness to take active steps to protect biodiversity in the region.

Mr Victor Escobar (Spain), Chairman of the OSPAR Commission said "I am proud of the coordinated effort OSPAR Contracting Parties have made to adopt these measures. We have firmly committed to tackling marine litter, an important concern for the health, economy and human enjoyment of our seas and to protecting vulnerable habitats and species.

We have taken these significant steps to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic as it is an essential resource which must be safeguarded for all".

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.
4. The 16 marine habitats and species protected in these recommendations bring the total list to 34 species and 14 habitats including those agreed at previous OSPAR meetings. The 16 added to the list today are:

SPECIES

- European eel (*Anguilla Anguilla*)
- Cod (*Gadus morhua*)
- European sturgeon (*Acipensar sturio*)
- Spurdog (*Squalus acanthias*)
- Gulper shark (*Centrophorus granulosus*)
- Leafscale gulper shark (*Centrophorus squamosus*)
- Portuguese dogfish (*Centroscymnus coelolepis*)
- Porbeagle shark (*Lamna nasus*)
- Spotted ray (*Raja montagui*)
- Thornback ray (*Raja clavata*)
- Iberian guillemot (*Uria aalge*)

HABITATS

- Seamounts
- Carbonate mounds
- Hydrothermal vents on oceanic ridges
- *Cymodocea* meadows
- *Maerl* beds