



Editorial



"It is a great honour for me to welcome my colleagues from the North-East Atlantic region and beyond to Bergen for the Ministerial Conference. Cooperation and a joint commitment to the safeguarding of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic have brought us far. Yet there are major challenges ahead of us.

Marine species and habitats are declining. Pressures on the marine environment are numerous and often increasing, with climate change and ocean acidification as major future threats. Our meeting in the international year of biodiversity is timely. Many of us will have met in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009 for the UN Climate Change Conference and will see each other again in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010 for the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. When joining forces in Bergen, I am confident we will have a lot to discuss and will be able to agree on measures that will produce results. Doing so, we are in a unique position to influence the global ocean governance debate."

Erik Solheim, Norwegian Minister of the Environment and International Development

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The QSR 2010 soon available!

The Quality Status Report 2010 is a major holistic assessment of the quality status of the North-East Atlantic in line with the recommendations of the UN Assessment of Assessments. Over the past few months, this flagship OSPAR product has been in the process of being made ready for publication and translated into French. In parallel, the electronic version, which creates a high level of interactivity and includes all the supporting assessments, has been developed. A document summarising the Committees' responses to the peer review of the QSR 2010 and the QSR e-consultation has been published as part of the QSR package and is available on the OSPAR website. The QSR 2010, in both languages - hardcopy versions and on the Internet, will be launched by Ministers during the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting.

Communication progress for the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting 2010

The [Ministerial Meeting website](#), developed by [Squizmix](#), has been successfully launched, and the Secretariat would like to thank all contributors for their time and inputs. [Squizmix](#) is an Australian firm whose name means 'take a look'. The website is still of course evolving and being updated on a regular basis. The Secretariat will conduct video interviews during the ministerial meeting with selected participants on a voluntary basis. They will be posted on the Ministerial Meeting website and will contribute to the post-meeting dissemination.



The OSPAR Secretariat has now opened a Twitter account (account name: [osparcomm](#)) and will update it regularly which will give the opportunity for those who are interested and not able to attend the meeting to follow progress. At the same time OSPAR will begin to further explore the potential of social media and can reach a wider community of stakeholders. Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read other users' messages called tweets.

A Press conference will be held on Friday 24 September 2010 (1345 – 1415) at the meeting venue and a press conference notification will be sent shortly.

Ministerial Meeting of the Bonn Agreement, 24 November 2010, Dublin, Ireland

The Greater North Sea and its approaches is one of the world's busiest international shipping areas. Although pollution from shipping and other maritime activities has been reduced, the danger of pollution incidents is ever present. The Dublin Ministerial Meeting of the [Bonn Agreement](#) will offer the opportunity to acknowledge the successful work, of more than 40 years, of this early multilateral environmental agreement on pollution prevention, preparedness and response, whilst at the same time re-invigorating cooperation for the protection of the Greater North Sea and its approaches. The accession of Ireland, which took place last year, has considerably enlarged the Bonn Agreement area and will stimulate us to continue our efforts.

The Ministerial Meeting will agree and adopt the Bonn Agreement Action Plan, providing an important strategic framework for future work. This will be accompanied by the signing of a Ministerial Declaration providing high level commitment to working towards the Bonn Agreement vision - a Greater North Sea and its approaches free from accidental and illegal pollution from shipping and other maritime activities.

UNEP Regional Seas Secretariat meeting

The 12th UNEP Global Meeting of the [Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans](#) will be held in Bergen, alongside the North-East Atlantic Environment Summit, 20–22 September 2010. 2010 is the [International Year of Biodiversity](#), and the Regional Seas, amongst other topics, will focus on marine biodiversity, in coastal waters and high seas.

The Regional Seas Programme recently conducted a Marine Biodiversity Outlook Report by marine region. The objective of this project is to enhance the understanding of key regional and global issues for marine biodiversity conservation through the compilation of outlook reports on the coastal areas covered by the different global Regional Seas Conventions. Furthermore, these outlook reports will contribute to the discussions on marine and coastal biodiversity at the [10th Conference of Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity \(COP 10\)](#). OSPAR contributed to the report by providing summary data for the North-East Atlantic, using *inter alia* the OSPAR supporting assessments of the QSR 2010.

COP 10 will be held in Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, from 18 to 29 October 2010. COP 10 will include a high-level ministerial segment organised by the host country in consultation with the [Convention on Biological Diversity \(CBD\)](#) Secretariat and the

Bureau. The high-level segment will take place from 27 to 29 October 2010. Strategic issues for evaluating progress and supporting implementation of the CBD will be considered and it is anticipated that negotiations to conclude an International Regime on Access and Benefit-sharing will result in the adoption of a relevant instrument. It is hoped that Germany, as the outgoing Presidency of the CBD, will be able to take a message from Bergen to Nagoya on behalf of OSPAR.



The life of OSPAR Decisions and Recommendations (Part 1)

In addition to acknowledged concerns being tackled by OSPAR, the marine environment in the OSPAR maritime area can face new and emerging threats. After identification of such a threat and in accordance with the General Obligations of the Convention, the OSPAR Commission organises expert work to gather robust scientific evidence, sometimes over several meeting cycles. This work is usually carried out by a working-group or an intersessional correspondence group under the lead of one or several Contracting Parties and, in some cases, can be supported by advice from ICES. If appropriate and supported by a sponsoring Contracting Party or Parties, the thematic Committee in charge analyses this work and prepares a draft legal text that will describe measures that the Contracting Parties should adopt to tackle the problem. Under Article 13 of the OSPAR Convention, this text can be a “Decision”, which will be legally binding once entered into force, or a “Recommendation”.

Once the thematic Committee concerned has agreed the draft text, it is examined by the OSPAR Group of Jurists-Linguists, which checks its legal and linguistic soundness. The Group of Jurists-Linguists works closely with the lead Contracting Party, or with the chairman or the vice-chairman of the relevant main Committee, who can advise on the technical content of the drafts. On this basis, the Group formulates advice on the draft OSPAR Decisions or Recommendations and submits its advice to the OSPAR Commission. Measures must then be adopted by the Commission unanimously or, if this is not possible, by three-quarters majority. Exceptionally this year, in the runup to the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting, the Group of Jurists-Linguists is considering 20 different measures.

Census of Marine Life Publishes Historic Roll Call of Species in 25 Key Ocean Areas

Representing the most comprehensive and authoritative answer yet to one of humanity’s most ancient questions - “what lives in the sea?” - Census of Marine Life scientists have just released an inventory of species distribution and diversity in key global ocean areas.

The [Census of Marine Life](#) is a global network of researchers in more than 80 nations engaged in a 10-year scientific initiative to assess and explain the diversity, distribution, and abundance of life in the oceans. Each plays an important role in what is known, unknown, and may never be known about what lives in the global ocean. It will help to set a baseline for measuring changes that humanity and nature will cause.



A new species of squid *Promachoteuthis sloani* found along the mid-Atlantic Ridge.

Credit: MARECO / Richard Young ©.

Scientists combined information collected over centuries with data obtained during the decade-long Census to create a roll call of species in 25 biologically representative regions -- from the Antarctic through temperate and tropical seas to the Arctic. Australian and Japanese waters, which each feature almost 33,000 forms of life that have earned the status of “species” (and thus a scientific name such as *Carcharodon carcharias*, a.k.a. the great white shark), are by far the most biodiverse. The oceans off China, the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico round out the top five areas most diverse in known species.

In a prelude to the ultimate summary of the landmark, decade-long marine Census, to be released on Oct. 4 in London, national and regional committees of the Census compiled the inventory of known and new species in the 25 key ocean areas. Published by the [open access journal PLoS ONE](#), the landmark collection of papers and overview synthesis (Marine Biodiversity and Biogeography — Regional Comparisons of Global Issues) will help guide future decisions on exploration of still poorly-explored waters, especially the abyssal depths, and provides a baseline for still thinly-studied forms, especially small animals.

The Census complements work on species being taken forward in many forums including the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting.