

**OSPAR CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT OF  
THE NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC**

**MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE OSPAR COMMISSION**

**SINTRA: 22 - 23 JULY 1998**



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ANNEX 45  
(Ref. § B-10.2)

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## **Sintra Statement**



## Sintra Statement

WE, THE MINISTERS AND THE MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, meeting within the framework of the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic, in the year 1998, which was declared International Year of the Oceans by the United Nations, and during EXPO 1998, which is dedicated to the oceans as the common heritage of mankind,

EMPHASISE our commitment to take all possible steps to achieve our overall objective for the protection of the marine environment of the North East Atlantic of preventing and eliminating pollution, protecting human health and ensuring sound and healthy marine ecosystems, and

COMMIT ourselves to pursuing this goal through the following actions to produce a sustainable approach to the marine environment of the OSPAR maritime area and thus protect this inheritance for the new millennium.

### ***CONTINUITY AND PROGRESS***

WE WELCOME the entry into force on 25 March 1998 of the OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic.

WE WELCOME the continuity with the former Oslo and Paris Commissions that has been achieved through a Decision clarifying which decisions, recommendations and other agreements of the Oslo and Paris Commissions remain in force as a basis of the work of the OSPAR Commission.

WE RE-EMPHASISE the clear commitments to the application of the precautionary principle and the polluter-pays principle and to the identification of best available techniques (BAT) and best environmental practice (BEP), including, where appropriate, clean technology.

### ***ECOSYSTEMS AND BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY***

WE STRENGTHEN the Convention's framework for the protection of the marine environment by the unanimous adoption of an Annex on the Protection and Conservation of the Ecosystems and Biological Diversity of the Maritime Area. WE SHALL SEEK an early entry into force of this Annex.

WE RE-EMPHASISE our commitment, in implementing the new Annex, to protect and conserve the biological diversity of the maritime area and its ecosystems which are, or could be, affected as a result of human activities, and to restore, where practicable, marine areas which have been adversely affected.

To this end, the Commission will implement the strategy on the protection and conservation of the ecosystems and biological diversity of the maritime area and, in doing so, *inter alia*:

- assess a candidate list of human activities which may produce adverse impacts on the marine environment and its species, habitats and ecological processes other than through causing pollution;
- identify and prioritise those of the activities for which programmes and measures should be developed;
- identify those marine species, habitats or ecosystems that need to be protected, conserved or restored;
- promote the establishment of a network of marine protected areas to ensure the sustainable use and protection and conservation of marine biological diversity and its ecosystems;

- as a first step develop by 2003 the most necessary programmes and measures to achieve the purposes of the Annex.

### ***HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES***

WE AGREE to prevent pollution of the maritime area by continuously reducing discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances (that is, substances which are toxic, persistent and liable to bioaccumulate or which give rise to an equivalent level of concern), with the ultimate aim of achieving concentrations in the environment near background values for naturally occurring substances and close to zero for man-made synthetic substances. WE SHALL MAKE every endeavour to move towards the target of cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances by the year 2020. WE EMPHASISE the importance of the precautionary principle in this work.

To this end, the Commission will:

- implement our strategy progressively and with well-defined intermediate targets; this implementation will start from the OSPAR List of Chemicals for Priority Action which we have already agreed, including carrying forward the drawing up of programmes and measures by 2003 for the control of discharges, emissions and losses of the substances on that list, and their substitution with less hazardous or non-hazardous substances where feasible;
- develop a dynamic selection and prioritisation mechanism, in order to tackle first the substances and groups of substances which cause most concern, and use it to up-date by 2000 the current OSPAR List of Chemicals for Priority Action;
- identify and assess substances that, although not fulfilling all the traditional criteria of a hazardous substance give rise to equivalent concern, especially those that act as endocrine disruptors;
- develop the necessary programmes and measures within three years after agreeing on the need for OSPAR action on a substance or group of substances.

WE INVITE industry and other international organisations to join us in these efforts to achieve this target.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE the need to provide consumer and purchaser with information on hazardous substances in goods thereby promoting the reduction of risks from the use of such chemicals, and WE WILL DEVELOP, individually or jointly, further means for disseminating this information.

### ***RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCES***

WE WELCOME the announcements by the French and United Kingdom Governments that they wish to give up their possible future exemptions from the ban on the dumping of low-level and intermediate-level radioactive wastes. WE ARE GLAD to complete that ban through a unanimous Decision terminating the possible exemptions for France and the United Kingdom.

WE AGREE, in addition, to prevent pollution of the maritime area from ionising radiation through progressive and substantial reductions of discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances, with the ultimate aim of concentrations in the environment near background values for naturally occurring radioactive substances and close to zero for artificial radioactive substances. In achieving this objective, the following issues should, inter alia, be taken into account:

- legitimate uses of the sea;

- technical feasibility;
- radiological impacts to man and biota.

WE SHALL ENSURE that discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances are reduced by the year 2020 to levels where the additional concentrations in the marine environment above historic levels, resulting from such discharges, emissions and losses, are close to zero. WE SHALL PAY particular attention to the safety of workers in nuclear installations.

To this end, the Commission will:

- undertake the development of environmental quality criteria for the protection of the marine environment from adverse effects of radioactive substances and report on progress by the year 2003;
- continue to reduce radioactive discharges from nuclear installations to the marine environment by applying BAT;
- review activities which may give rise to concern of this kind, and assess them to identify and prioritise fields where action is required and develop the necessary measures.

WE NOTE the concerns expressed by a number of Contracting Parties about the recent increases in technetium discharges from Sellafield and their view that these discharges should cease. WE FURTHER NOTE that the UK Ministers have indicated that such concerns will be addressed in their forthcoming decisions concerning the discharge authorisations for Sellafield. WE WELCOME the announcement of the UK Government that no new commercial contracts will be accepted for reprocessing spent fuel at Dounreay, with the result of future reductions in radioactive discharges to the maritime area.

WE SHALL TAKE STEPS, both nationally and in international discussions, to bring the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and the Safety of Radioactive Waste into force as soon as possible.

### ***EUTROPHICATION***

WE AGREE to eliminate eutrophication where it occurs in the maritime area from anthropogenic inputs and to prevent future occurrences.

To this end, to supplement the existing obligations and commitments of the Contracting Parties to address nutrient inputs, especially from urban and industrial waste-water and agriculture, the Commission will:

- apply the Common Procedure for the Identification of the Eutrophication Status of the Maritime Area to make an initial identification on non-problem areas by 2000 and complete the identification and characterisation of the eutrophication status of all parts of the maritime area by 2003;
- implement immediately the integrated target-oriented and source-oriented actions provided for areas already identified as problem areas with regard to eutrophication;
- as one of the main elements of the source-oriented actions promote good housekeeping in industry and sewage treatment and good agricultural practice, ecological agriculture and balanced fertilisation;
- agree by 2003 any additional programmes and measures needed to achieve by 2010 a healthy marine environment where eutrophication due to anthropogenic inputs does not occur;
- take preventive action in areas identified as potential problem areas with regard to eutrophication;

- review the status of areas identified as non-problem areas with regard to eutrophication if there is ground for concern that there has been a substantial increase in their anthropogenic nutrient load.

WE EMPHASISE the importance in combating eutrophication of relevant EC Directives and corresponding legislation of other Contracting Parties and WE AGREE that compliance with such legislation is of the utmost importance.

### ***OFFSHORE OIL AND GAS***

WE RE-EMPHASISE our commitment to prevent the sea being used as a dumping ground for waste, whether from the sea or from land based activities. WE ADOPT a Decision on the disposal of disused offshore installations in support of this. Under this Decision, all dumping of steel installations is prohibited. Derogations, subject to assessment and consultation under agreed procedures, may allow the footings of steel installations weighing more than 10,000 tonnes to remain in place. However, WE WILL STRIVE to avoid using such derogations for footings of steel installations, by returning to land for recycling and disposal all steel installations where it is safe and practicable to do so. Derogations will also be available for concrete installations. WE HAVE no plans to create new concrete installations in any new oil-field developments in the maritime area. Concrete installations will only be used when it is strictly necessary for safety or technical reasons.

The Commission will review this Decision from time to time in the light of developments, with the aim of reducing as fast and as far as possible the cases for which derogations from the general ban on sea disposal may be considered. To support this, WE SHALL PROMOTE

- research and development by industry and relevant Contracting Parties on techniques for reusing and dismantling disused offshore installations and returning them to land for recycling or final disposal;
- exchange of information between competent authorities of Contracting Parties, operators and contractors on such techniques;
- collaboration between operators of offshore installations in joint operations to decommission such installations.

WE AGREE that environmental goals should be set for the offshore oil and gas industry and improved management mechanisms established to achieve them. The Commission will adopt a strategy for this purpose at its next meeting. In preparing this strategy, the Commission will consider how to address, *inter alia*:

- the use and discharge of hazardous substances, consistent with the Strategy with Regard to Hazardous Substances;
- discharges of oil from offshore installations, including that in produced water;
- reduction of emissions of substances likely to pollute the air.

### ***QUALITY STATUS REPORT***

WE NOTE progress on the preparation of the Quality Status Report on the marine environment of the North East Atlantic, to be published in 2000. This is a major, ground-breaking task, since a comprehensive quality status report on this scale has not previously been produced. WE AGREE the special budget for the Commission's future work on this report, and WE LOOK FORWARD to establishing through it and the Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme a sound, scientific basis for identifying and prioritising future tasks in an overall comparative approach.

***WIDER INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION***

WE SHALL SEEK the cooperation in our work of other states within the catchment of the North East Atlantic, especially the Czech Republic and the Russian Federation.

WE RECOGNISE that the North East Atlantic is only a small part of the world's oceans and that many other international organisations make vital contributions to protecting the marine environment. WE SHALL CONTINUE to work nationally, within the OSPAR Commission, with other regional seas programmes, especially those for the Arctic Ocean, the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean and with bodies such as the Convention on the Long-Range Transport of Air Pollution, to achieve the effective application, world-wide, of the recommendations of Chapter 17 (Oceans and All Seas) of Agenda 21 and the full implementation of the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment against Land-Based Activities. WE ESPECIALLY WELCOME the extra support which the Netherlands Government has given for this purpose.

WE SHALL COOPERATE, especially in the work of the International Maritime Organization, to tackle threats to the marine environment from shipping through promoting better waste reception facilities and their more effective use including harmonised arrangements to remove economic, administrative or organisational incentives for ships not to use port waste reception facilities, through banning the use of tributyl-tin (TBT) antifouling treatments and replacing them with clean antifouling technologies, improved controls over the unintended transport of non-native species by ships, through measures to eliminate marine litter and through bringing into effect the new Annex VI to MARPOL controlling air pollution from ships.

WE SHALL CONTINUE AND INTENSIFY our cooperation with the international river organisations for the Rhine, Meuse, Scheldt and Elbe, in order to reduce further riverine inputs into the North-East Atlantic and to improve the important ecological relations between the rivers and the sea.

***FOLLOW-UP***

WE LOOK FORWARD to the greater involvement of non-governmental organisations in the work of the Commission as a result of the opening of committees and working groups to them as observers.

Finally, WE COMMIT ourselves to continuing involvement of Ministers and members of the European Commission in the work of the OSPAR Commission, in order to ensure proper political support and direction. WE SHALL THEREFORE ARRANGE another Ministerial Meeting of the Commission in 2003 based on a thorough review of progress in the implementation of the strategies and their effectiveness and the implications of the Quality Status Report 2000.

Sintra, 23 July 1998

When completed, the list of Ministers' signatures will be attached to the Sintra Statement in the OSPAR publication on the outcome of the Ministerial Meeting.