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OSPAR Contact:
Lucy Ritchie

Tel: +44 (0)20 7430 5200
Email: lucy.ritchie@ospar.org
www.ospar.org

The Aspect
12 Finsbury Square
London, EC2A 1AS

PROTECTING AND CONSERVING THE NORTH-EAST ATLANTIC

Marine policy makers from across Europe gathered for the annual meeting of the OSPAR Commission for the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic.

Delegates representing 14 countries and the European Union, supported by 7 observer organisations came together to discuss the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic.

High on the agenda was the development of OSPAR's new North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030. This will set out a series of ambitious targets to deliver OSPAR's vision of a clean, healthy and biologically diverse ocean used sustainably. The strategy will be adopted at a Ministerial Meeting to be held in Portugal in 2021, cementing OSPAR Parties' commitment to work together to tackle the shared challenges of ocean governance.

Progress was made in the ground-breaking initiative to designate a new Marine Protected Area (MPA) for migrating seabirds in areas beyond national jurisdiction of the OSPAR maritime area. OSPAR agreed to publish the nomination proforma for the proposed 'North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Seamount Marine Protected Area (NACES MPA)'. This comprehensive document presents the scientific analyses of seabird-tracking studies which have been completed to identify the importance of this area as a foraging site for seabirds which is seen to be in near natural condition. If designated the proposed MPA would be the largest MPA in the OSPAR network covering nearly 600,000km², an area the size of France, and would become the eighth collectively designated MPA in the area beyond national jurisdiction within the OSPAR maritime area. OSPAR will continue work on a possible designation of this site towards the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in June 2021.

OSPAR Chair, Richard Cronin (Ireland), said that: "It was encouraging to see that the wider political and global issues facing countries at this time proved no barrier to furthering the work of the OSPAR Commission and shows the importance of cooperation and unity if we are to overcome the challenges facing our shared oceans."

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/organisation/observers>).
3. Our current strategy 2010-2020 can be viewed here <https://www.ospar.org/convention/strategy>
4. For more information on the Ministerial meeting 2021, please see this page <https://www.ospar.org/ministerial>
5. The nomination proforma collates results from studies using the most accurate tracking technology. For example, the small Desertas petrels travel more than 2,000km from the colony, located in Desertas (Madeira), to forage at the site during the breeding period when they are bound to return to their breeding site. The fact that these birds travel such long distances during a single incubation trip to target the waters of the site indicates the value of the area for this vulnerable species. The thick-billed murres that breed in Arctic Canada, Greenland and Iceland also utilise the site as a foraging ground year-round. The seabirds using the area are sensitive to any changes in their feeding ground, and thus protecting a large area of the ocean, ensures that any future shifts in the occurrence of the species preyed upon by the seabirds will remain protected. More information on OSPAR's network of Marine Protected Areas can be found in our latest assessment sheet <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/committee-assessments/biodiversity-committee/status-ospar-network-marine-protected-areas/assessment-sheets-mpa/2019/> For further information on our MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction, please see this page <https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/bdc/marine-protected-areas/mpas-in-areas-beyond-national-jurisdiction>
6. The Recommendations adopted by OSPAR 2020 were:
 1. OSPAR Recommendation 2020/01 amending OSPAR Recommendation 2011/5, OSPAR Recommendation 2013/4, OSPAR Recommendation 2013/5, OSPAR Recommendation 2014/1;
 2. OSPAR Recommendation 2020/02 amending OSPAR Recommendation 2001/1 for the Management of Produced Water from Offshore Installations (as amended by OSPAR Recommendation 2006/4 and 2011/8);
 3. OSPAR Recommendation 2020/03 amending OSPAR Recommendation 2012/5 for a risk-based approach to the Management of Produced Water Discharges from Offshore Installations.
7. The OSPAR Maritime Area

