

Dear esteemed colleagues,

I want to thank to Mr. Santos for such a warm welcome.

And a big thank you for excellent arrangements in beautiful surroundings here in Cascais.

Since joining the Norwegian Ministry of Environment and Climate, OSPAR has been a frequently recurring term. And always, it has been a term with positive connotations. It is a pleasure to finally get to meet and be a part of the famous OSPAR family.

It is also indeed a pleasure to be able to meet with colleagues again in person, after almost two years where most meetings have taken place over a screen.

Since the previous ministerial meeting, hosted in Bergen, Norway in 2010, OSPAR contracting parties, individually and collectively, have worked committedly to implement our common goals.

Our collective efforts are also highly important when implementing global commitments, such as the Aichi targets and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Furthermore, a new global instrument on marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction is currently under negotiation. In this context, OSPAR stands out as a successful example of how regional seas conventions could and should play a key role.

While the UN Secretary General has noted that the new IPPC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) report is nothing less than a "code read for humanity", there is a rising awareness and knowledge of the importance of the sea in facing climate change. The seas are also under threat from pollution, importantly plastic pollution. Additionally, we are faced with unprecedented biodiversity loss. These are issues that one state simply cannot solve alone.

At this meeting, I am pleased to note that OSPAR is again ready to deliver key outcomes and commit to ambitious goals for a new decade. Together, we set out to achieve a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic, which is productive, used sustainably and resilient to the effects of climate change and ocean acidification.

As a country with sea areas almost three times larger than our land areas, we are well aware of the value and importance of achieving this.

Even before plastic pollution became an issue on the global agenda, OSPAR was hands on and addressed this issue, though down to earth action such as the fishing for litter program. Today we are ready to commit to reducing plastic litter on our

beaches by 50% by 2025 and 75% by 2030, in our strive towards zero pollution by 2050.

Our network of marine protected areas, which includes areas also beyond national jurisdiction, is one of many collective achievements of OSPAR. As we now commit to the ambitious goal of protecting 30% of our maritime area, we also set a powerful example to rest of the world. Today, we will expand this network to include the North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea Basin marine protected area.

The UN has designated this the Decade of Oceans Science for Sustainable Development. In fulfilling the ambitions of this decade, I am confident that OSPAR has the will and tools to be a key player.

Thank you!