

Statement

1. Portugal welcomes the new OSPAR Strategy for the North-East Atlantic. The Strategy's update is crucial to draw the action roadmap for the next decade within the OSPAR area, according to the novel and ambitious marine conservation policies that are emerging at national, European and global scales.

The document commits OSPAR and their Contracting Parties to high levels of responsibility, and shows will and compromise to face anthropogenic induced environmental changes and disturbances happening at a planetary scale that are particularly affecting the oceans.

Success in the implementation and the actual impact of the new OSPAR Strategy for a sustainable use and recover of marine resources will greatly depend on the action and effort of each Contracting Party; but also on the OSPAR Secretariat's ability to actively steer the engagement of contracting parties and to partnership with other conservation international key players and initiatives in reversing and recover the environmental degradation of the oceans, particularly with regard to the marine ecosystems of the North-East Atlantic.

2. Secondly, Portugal considers that a network of national and international marine protected areas, proper and effectively managed, is an essential and unique tool in halting the loss of marine biodiversity, tackling climate change by increasing the resilience of marine ecosystems and the capture CO₂ and supporting an

economically and socially sustainable blue economy. Beyond these central functions, Marine Protected Areas also benefit and promote marine research and scientific knowledge, the development of ocean observation and exploration technology and social innovation on management processes.

1. We recognise the pioneering determination of OSPAR, at global level, on the designation of deep sea and open ocean Marine Protected Areas both on contracting parties' waters, after their request, and at the high seas after international consensus.
3. The establishment of a Marine Protected Area on the Evlanov sea basin is another significant step from OSPAR towards the 30% MPA covering target , which is the new ambition expected to be adopted this month during the CoP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Recognizing that seamounts are critical and vulnerable habitats that have a great effect on oceanographic circulation patterns and currents, such as upwellings, and then on the productivity of the surrounding water masses, Portugal believes that the Evlanov seamount is a key ecological feature of the Evlanov pelagic MPA. Therefore Portugal would support an the inclusion of this geological elevation on the Evlanov pelagic MPA, in the future, according to the roadmap to be prepared and eventually approved by OSPAR parties.

4. Marine litter is a massive transboundary problem impacting species, habitats, ecosystems, our health, landscapes, leisure and the blue economy. The understanding that marine pollution was an increasing threat to the functioning of coastal and oceanic ecosystems, stimulated the creation of OSPAR; the aim

was to tackle large-scale problems that could be solved only through concerted international initiatives. At that time the prevalence of marine litter and specifically plastics was not yet considered a real concern, despite they already show-up in the oceans and coastal areas. Today we realize the scope of OSPAR's pioneering vision as marine plastics pollution assumed an unforeseen dimension and environmental impact. Meanwhile important improvements were achieved mainly related to monitoring and to scientific understanding about the impacts of marine litter on the environment. More than ever we know that we should act and it is urgent to accelerate the pace towards the elimination of single-used plastics and microplastics and well as any other form of oceanic pollution. Therefore Portugal reiterates its support to the zero pollution 2050 objective for the Northeast Atlantic Area defined by OSPAR.

5. To finalise, I would like to underline the commitment made by the OSPAR Parties regarding the financing of the Convention. The commitment made represents a considerable funding effort and an expressive contribution to ensure the achievement of the OSPAR Convention mission.

Last but not the least, I also want to share with the following thoughts:

OSPAR should intensify its action to find solutions for the major problems the planet is facing, namely climate change, loss of biodiversity, sustainability of human systems. The Quality Status Report, expected to be published in 2023, should be a central document to guide OSPAR action, that should continue to be based and make the best use of the most updated scientific knowledge.

The intensification of cooperation among contracting parties is crucial to achieve our common goals, aligning in partnership with other regional and global initiatives that share the same concerns and aim the same objectives.

A final word to mention the Cascais Declaration that not only celebrates the achievements that we reached but the maritime village that hosted so warmly this meeting. Thank you Cascais!