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OSPAR Contact:
Lucy Ritchie
Communications Lead

lucy.ritchie@ospar.org
07769613549
www.ospar.org

The Aspect
 12 Finsbury Square
 London, EC2A 1AS

11% of the North-East Atlantic is now protected

Today the OSPAR Commission announced that its network of North-East Atlantic Marine Protected Areas (MPA) now comprises 583 MPAs covering a surface area of 1.5 million km² or 11% of the North-East Atlantic. This means that OSPAR has achieved Aichi Biodiversity target 11 of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

Since 2005, all 12 OSPAR Contracting Parties bordering the North-East Atlantic have nominated sites to the OSPAR Network of MPAs in their national waters. In addition, Contracting Parties to OSPAR have collectively designated 8 MPAs in areas outside of national jurisdiction, including last year's designation of a high seas MPA of over 600 000 km² to protect seabirds. The North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin MPA will protect vitally important feeding and foraging areas for both coastal and migratory seabirds and was identified through tracking data for the first time.

There is still work to do, and in 2021 OSPAR Contracting Parties committed to "further develop its network of marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective conservation measures (OECMs) to cover at least 30% of the OSPAR Maritime Area to ensure it is representative, ecologically coherent and effectively managed to achieve its conservation objectives" by 2030.

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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 Union.
2. OSPAR's North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) 2030 details the commitments that OSPAR Contracting Parties have made to protect and conserve the North-East Atlantic and can be viewed here www.ospar.org/convention/strategy
3. OSPAR's newly published MPA status report can be viewed here: <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/committee-assessments/biodiversity-committee/status-ospar-network-marine-protected-areas/assessment-reports-mpa/mpa-2021/>
4. OSPAR's newly published MPA assessment sheet can be viewed here: <https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/committee-assessments/biodiversity-committee/status-ospar-network-marine-protected-areas/assessment-sheets-mpa/mpa-status-2021/>

