



Statements received from OSPAR  
observer organisations on the  
occasion of the OSPAR Ministerial  
Meeting 2025

OSPAR observer organisations play an essential role in the OSPAR Commission. They include other intergovernmental organisations working in similar fields, and international non-governmental organisations. The non-governmental observer organisations are environmental protection and nature conservation organisations, industry and trade organisations and organisations of regional and local authorities. A full list of OSPAR observer organisations can be found on the OSPAR website [www.ospar.org/organisation/observers](http://www.ospar.org/organisation/observers)

While the primary responsibility of carrying out the OSPAR Convention lies with the Contracting Parties, the observer community plays an essential role in the promotion of protecting and conserving the North-East Atlantic and its resources. The observers not only take part in the various meetings of the OSPAR Commission but also contribute actively to its work and to shaping policy development. In this way non-governmental organisations are essential partners in the implementation of the Convention and translating its principles into practical action at local, national and regional level.

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This document contains OSPAR observer organisation statements that were submitted to its 2025 Ministerial meeting. Observers who were present at the meeting in Vigo were invited to deliver their statement live at the meeting. Those observers who did so are indicated in the List of Statements.



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**Statement by Rüdiger Stempel, Executive Secretary, HELCOM, at the fifth  
Ministerial meeting of the OSPAR Commission, Vigo, Spain, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

**26 June 2025**

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues and friends,

It is a great pleasure to address you today on behalf of HELCOM.

As two of the four Regional Seas Conventions in Europe, HELCOM and OSPAR have a shared responsibility, as well as a shared opportunity, to safeguard the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic and the Baltic Sea. This task is both technically challenging and increasingly urgent. In this context, our cooperation is not only logical, but essential. And, I am pleased to add, successful. Over the decades, HELCOM and OSPAR have built a strong tradition of practical collaboration.

One of the most impactful examples of this has been our work on developing biodiversity indicators. Through joint expert groups such as the HELCOM-OSPAR-ICES Joint Working Group on Seabirds (JWG Bird), we have harmonized assessment methodologies and created outputs that are regionally comparable, strengthening the knowledge base for marine governance.

Our cooperation is also resource-efficient. By pooling technical expertise, we avoid duplication and ensure that the often scarce resources, especially expert time and institutional capacity, are used in the most effective way. This not only fosters new professional networks, but also creates momentum across regional boundaries, which is vital in today's fast-evolving policy landscape.

We are inspired by the progress made by OSPAR, for instance, with the adoption of Recommendation 2024/02 on reducing seabird bycatch. At HELCOM, we are already reviewing whether and how some of these actions could be transferred and applied in the Baltic context, particularly as part of our efforts to further integrate ecosystem-based approaches into fisheries management.

Similarly, our work on marine protected areas, or MPAs, is moving forward in parallel. Our EU-funded project ‘PROTECT BALTIC’ is working to modernise our database on MPAs to accommodate richer and more operationally relevant information. OSPAR is undertaking a similar update of its MPA systems. This parallel work has provided many opportunities to exchange best practices and align technical solutions, including ensuring interoperability.

Another example of this “leapfrogging” is the work on other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs). In 2023, HELCOM developed a regional common understanding of the Convention on Biological Diversity’s criteria for OECMs, through a wide stakeholder engagement and dialogue. This provided a useful foundation for the later work in OSPAR to develop more detailed guidance on the interpretation of OECMs for the North-East Atlantic. We look forward to learning from your experience and considering how it might help to further shape our own approaches.

Turning to hazardous substances, HELCOM’s strategic approach for identifying and addressing regional priority substances has also sparked interest within OSPAR. We’ve had constructive exchanges of experience on this, as well as on airborne inputs of nitrogen and hazardous substances, in cooperation with EMEP.

Related to Pollution Load Compilations (PLC), a recent OSPAR pilot project examined whether the HELCOM PLUS database for monitoring waterborne nutrient inputs, could support OSPAR’s riverine input data needs. The conclusion was that a version of HELCOM PLUS could serve as a strong starting point for OSPAR, drawing on the Baltic Sea region’s experience and good practices.

In maritime spatial planning, while OSPAR does not have a subsidiary body equivalent to HELCOM’s regional MSP group, collaboration is growing between the Baltic and North Sea regions—especially through the Greater North Sea Basin Initiative and projects like eMSP and NESBp.



When it comes to the maritime sector, our cooperation is also strong. Our joint groups on ballast water and biofouling and on non-indigenous species are tackling cross-boundary challenges like invasive species. Together with OSPAR and other Regional Sea Conventions, we also support the implementation of the Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter, and have co-developed guidance such as the recent Biofouling Guidance for Recreational Craft.

Of course, our cooperation is not limited to science and assessments. It extends to marine pollution preparedness and response, through our joint participation in the annual Inter-Secretariat Meetings organized by EMSA. These meetings provide a platform for aligning priorities in pollution response, share operational experiences and strengthen the overall European response framework, among other things.

To conclude, our cooperation is not just about alignment, it is about building a common front against pressures that disregard borders. It is about supporting our Contracting Parties who are members of more than one Regional Sea Convention, making their lives easier through harmonized standards and reduced administrative burdens. It is about ensuring that our protective measures are coherent, continuous and effective across marine regions.

Let me reiterate HELCOM's strong commitment to our partnership with OSPAR, and our belief that by working together, we go further and with greater impact. We look forward to continuing this close and constructive cooperation in the years to come.

Thank you very much!



## OSPAR Ministerial Meeting, 26 June 2025

### BirdLife International Written Statement

BirdLife International is the only global Partnership conserving birds and all life on our planet. We're made up of over 120 worldwide conservation organisations, including Partners in all OSPAR Contracting Party countries, and a Global Team. We work side by side, tackling some of the natural world's most pressing issues. We carry out conservation rooted in regional knowledge, working alongside Indigenous Peoples and local communities to create sustainable change. Together, we are the global authority on birds. Together, we are BirdLife International.

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The triple planetary crisis, comprising pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss, highlights the need for enhanced cooperation and collaboration to tackle these intertwined issues. OSPAR has a key role to play in addressing these issues directly in the North-East Atlantic, and indirectly in the wider Ocean recognising the ecological connectivity of the Atlantic Ocean Flyway<sup>1</sup>. The OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 (NEAES) sets the framework for this collaboration between Contracting Parties and for achieving a clean, healthy, and biologically diverse North-East Atlantic. However, as highlighted by the latest Quality Status Report (2023) there remains significant challenges to achieving this goal. BirdLife International calls on OSPAR Contracting Parties to renew their commitment to implementing NEAES and to ensure that its Tasks are sufficiently resourced.

#### Marine Protection

BirdLife International welcomes the commitment to enhance the effective protection of OSPAR MPAs in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) and to implement collaborative management plans for MPAs in ABNJ as stated in the Vigo Declaration. We stress the importance of this work and the need to maintain the positive momentum to ensure OSPAR's MPAs in ABNJ can achieve their conservation objectives and deliver real benefits for biodiversity. At BirdLife we remain committed to support this work through our science and local-to-global network.

#### *North Atlantic Current and Evlanov Sea basin (NACES) Marine Protected Area*

In relation to OSPAR MPAs in ABNJ we want to highlight the NACES MPA. This site, which was identified from seabird tracking data and originally presented to OSPAR by BirdLife International, is one of the most important concentrations of migratory birds in the Atlantic. We want to recognise and applaud the progress made since the designation of the site at the last Ministerial Meeting in Cascais in 2021. This has included the completion of a two-year Roadmap process that compiled further evidence for the importance of the site and led to the expansion of the

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<sup>1</sup> Morten et al. 2025. Global marine flyways identified for long-distance migrating seabirds from tracking data. *Global Ecology and Biogeography*. 34 (2) e70004

**Ideas that fly.**

**T +44 (0)1223 277318 F +44 (0)1223 277200 E [birdlife@birdlife.org](mailto:birdlife@birdlife.org) [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)**

conservation objectives of the NACES MPA securing holistic protection from the surface to seafloor. We stand proud to have actively contributed to this journey.

We welcome the on-going positive discussions on collaborative management and note the importance of this to enable OSPAR and other relevant Competent Authorities to demonstrate the power of regional cooperation for management of ABNJ. We emphasise the relevance of this work to achieving Strategic Objective 5 of NEAES (S5.O1) and the new Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement), which is expected to enter into force this year. A collaborative management plan for the NACES MPA would provide an exemplar for future sites in ABNJ and put OSPAR at the forefront in this arena, and BirdLife remains committed to support the establishment of effective and collaborative management of the NACES MPA.

### **Regional Action Plan for Marine Birds in the North-East Atlantic 2024-2030 (RAP-BIRD)**

BirdLife welcomes the adoption by OSPAR of the RAP-BIRD and stresses its importance for reversing the fortunes of seabird populations in the OSPAR Maritime Area. OSPAR's Quality Status Report 2023 showed the alarming status of marine birds in the OSPAR Maritime Area with most species not in good status due to pressures from human activities causing mortality and habitat loss & degradation, further exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

The urgency of the situation is exemplified by the latest status assessment of the Iberian guillemot, a focal species of OSPAR<sup>2</sup> and the EU Birds Directive<sup>3</sup>, showing that the breeding population within the OSPAR Maritime Area is now extinct. A main threat to this species, and many other marine birds in the OSPAR region, is the incidental bycatch in fishing gears. The plight of the Iberian guillemot, and marine birds more generally, illustrates the need for enhanced national cooperation and communication between environment and fisheries departments to address threats to species of conservation concern. The BirdLife Partnership is actively contributing to addressing the issue of bycatch by working closely with fisheries to improve data collection and to trial and promote the use of effective mitigation measures.

BirdLife calls on Contracting Parties to reaffirm their commitment to taking ambitious action to reverse the fortunes of marine birds in the North-East Atlantic and ensure that the 11 Actions of the RAP-BIRD are adequately resourced and fully implemented. We are committed to support the implementation of the RAP-BIRD drawing on our expertise and experience of addressing threats to marine birds across the region and globally.

We wish you every success for the 2025 OSPAR Ministerial Meeting and call on governments to action implementation and to draw upon the tools and expertise of Observer organisations.

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<sup>2</sup> OSPAR Threatened and/or Declining Species: <https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/bdc/species-habitats/list-of-threatened-declining-species-habitats/birds/iberian-guillemot>

<sup>3</sup> Annex 1 of the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)

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**T +44 (0)1223 277318 F +44 (0)1223 277200 E [birdlife@birdlife.org](mailto:birdlife@birdlife.org) [www.birdlife.org](http://www.birdlife.org)**





## OSPAR Ministerial Meeting 2025

### EnerGeo Alliance Statement

EnerGeo Alliance wishes to express its gratitude to the distinguished Ministers, OSPAR Contracting Parties, and the OSPAR Secretariat for the continued opportunity to continue to engage as an Observer to OSPAR. Since becoming an Observer in 2019, EnerGeo has represented the energy geoscience sector, leveraging the expertise of companies committed to safe, environmentally responsible activities to explore the subsurface in support of an expanding range of energy types and infrastructure developments.

### *About EnerGeo Alliance*

Founded in 1971, EnerGeo Alliance is the global trade association for the energy geoscience and exploration industry. Our member companies unify to open the gateway to the safe discovery, development, and delivery of energy solutions that meet our growing world's needs. Through reliable science- and data-based regulatory advocacy, credible resources and expertise, and future-focused leadership, EnerGeo Alliance promotes informed government policies that advance responsible energy exploration, production, and operations. We provide our members with educational, scientific, and regulatory tools and information to help enable the exploration and development of mainstay, alternative, and low-carbon energy solutions. As the global energy demand evolves, we believe that all policymakers and energy companies, providing mainstay, alternative, and low-carbon solutions, should have access to reliable data and analysis to support their forward moving efforts.

### *OSPAR Engagement*

EnerGeo participates in:

- Intersessional Correspondence Group on Underwater Noise (ICG-Noise)
- Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee (EIHA)
- Offshore Industry Committee (OIC)

EnerGeo has actively supported the work of ICG-Noise, including authoring an update to the annex on seismic surveys within the 'OSPAR inventory of measures to mitigate the emission and environmental impact of underwater noise.' EnerGeo also continues to support Contracting Parties leading relevant tasks under the Regional Action Plan (RAP) for underwater noise.

### *OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) 2030*

EnerGeo acknowledges and supports the NEAES, actively contributing to several of its strategic objectives, including:

**Strategic Objective 4:** Through the 'Ghost Net Initiative', now the 'Sustainable Seas Initiative,' EnerGeo members remove, report, and responsibly dispose of marine plastic debris, including discarded fishing gear and other materials. Since 2016, members have removed and safely disposed of over 3 million pounds of debris. EnerGeo has also developed industry best practice guidance for the safe handling entangled wildlife during debris recovery and disposal.

**Strategic Objective 5 and 8:** All marine survey operations are conducted in strict accordance with regulatory requirements and industry best practices for the conservation of marine species and habitats. A key aspect of this is the reduction of underwater sound through efficient survey planning and technological developments which limit 'out-of-band' signals, thereby focusing on geological objectives while reducing unnecessary sound in the environment. EnerGeo has been involved in the Sound and Marine Life Joint Industry Programme from the beginning, and this year, launched the Sound, Environment & Aquatic Species Research Program (S.E.A.S.), which is dedicated to addressing critical information gaps, supporting environmental conservation, and informing regulatory decision-making.

**Strategic Objective 12:** Developing solutions such as geological carbon storage is essential for climate change mitigation. EnerGeo members are actively involved in characterising storage locations within the OSPAR area, with a growing number of surveys dedicated to this purpose, as well as long-term monitoring of existing sites (e.g., Sleipner), which has been ongoing for many years.

### *Contact Details*

- Web: [www.energeoalliance.org](http://www.energeoalliance.org), [www.makingenergypossible.com](http://www.makingenergypossible.com)
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/energeo-alliance/>
- Vice President, Global Policy & Government Affairs: Dustin Van Liew – [dvanliew@energeoalliance.org](mailto:dvanliew@energeoalliance.org)
- Director, Global Policy: Dr. Ross Compton – [rcompton@energeoalliance.org](mailto:rcompton@energeoalliance.org)
- Scientific Director: Dr. Alex Loureiro – [aloureiro@energeoalliance.org](mailto:aloureiro@energeoalliance.org)

ICES Observer Statement delivered by  
ICES President, Dr Carl M. O'Brien CBE

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Excellencies, Ministers, Heads of Delegations, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Thank you for the opportunity to offer a few words.

For those that I have not had the opportunity to meet, I am Carl O'Brien, President of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES).

Since 1902, ICES has advanced and shared scientific understanding of marine ecosystems and the services they provide, using this knowledge to generate state-of-the-art advice for meeting conservation, management, and sustainability goals.

OSPAR and ICES have worked together for decades towards the protection and sustainable use of the marine environment and ecosystems of the North-East Atlantic.

Key aspects of our collaboration include:

- Data management services: ICES internationally accredited Data Centre hosts and quality controls data for OSPAR's monitoring programmes including contaminants, sediment, water, and biodiversity indicators.
- Assessment tools: ICES develops tools for assessing the state of the marine environment, including eutrophication and contaminants.
- Joint groups: ICES and OSPAR have established joint expert groups, including JWGBIRD which also involves HELCOM.
- Advice requests: ICES provides advice to OSPAR on key areas including bycatch, biodiversity assessments and benthic habitats.
- Regional cooperation: As scientific advisor to NEAFC and OSPAR, we are working to deliver an ecosystem approach to managing human activities in the OSPAR maritime area.

Going forward, ICES and OSPAR can successfully and efficiently work together on emerging scientific and management challenges including:

- |   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| - Offshore renewable energy               | - Cumulative impacts |
| - Biodiversity protection and restoration | - Climate change     |

Through regular meetings during the year and strong communication between ICES and OSPAR Secretariats, ICES looks forward to a future where we more effectively work together to address the ecosystem and environmental challenges that we collectively face.

Thank you!

## **IOGP STATEMENT (2 MINS) AT THE OSPAR'S MINISTERIAL MEETING 2026, VIGO**

Distinguished Ministers, OSPAR Contracting Parties and Secretariat, thank you for this opportunity to engage with you on behalf of the International Association of Oil & Gas Producers (IOGP).

IOGP has participated as an observer in the OSPAR Convention since 1995. We are committed to sharing our expertise, industry data, good practice and technological advances with OSPAR as fundamentally, IOGP's role is to bring together the collective expertise of the oil and gas sector and raise common industry standards.

In addition, we are an enabling partner for a low carbon future through both working for solutions to decarbonize our industry, and the sequestration of CO<sub>2</sub> in a safe and reliable manner. Indeed, without carbon capture and storage, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) technical report, reaching temperature limiting goals is almost impossible and so with the right policy settings, our Industry will continue to work on advancing this solution.

Going back to its foundations, we know OSPAR was set up in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration, and IOGP is committed to participate in that same spirit, to help protect, restore, enhance and sustainably use the Northeast Atlantic marine environment.

We believe in the established principles of the convention and adhere to the same processes of science and evidence-based decision making with a precautionary approach underpinning a lack of knowledge around environmental risks, and mitigations to those risks.

Decision 98/3 is a prime example of policy from our OSPAR predecessors, which encapsulated those principles. It all at once captured the objective of the treaty around protecting, restoring and enhancing the environment during decommissioning, while accounting for the uncertainty and state of readiness associated with technology and understanding of environmental impacts and/or benefits. It understood the need for a balanced approach to assessing the risks of decommissioning options by using the best information available, to enable a reasoned judgement by the Competent Authority to inform the appropriate decision.

Similarly, we believe that Best Available Technology is important. There are important considerations in determining the appropriate application of BAT, including such things as economic feasibility. It is therefore unsurprising that Decision 98/3 also includes economic feasibility alongside technical feasibility as key elements to be assessed.

The Northeast Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) 2030 contains the principles of using BAT along with knowledge and science in decision making. While the precautionary principle rightly applies in situations where scientific knowledge and risk mitigation is limited, as our knowledge grows and new evidence becomes available, it is appropriate for policy application to evolve accordingly. IOGP strongly supports the use of science and knowledge to reduce uncertainty and to adjust the application of precautionary approaches in a balanced and informed manner.

Above all, we hope that you will continue to ensure that OSPAR's decisions are based on scientific data and evidence continuing to take precedence over political and ideological considerations.

Thank you.

## **Statement for OSPAR Ministerial Meeting 2025**

First of all, I would like to extend my thanks to the OSPAR Commission for the opportunity to speak at this important meeting.

KIMO, or Local Authorities International Environmental Organisation, has represented coastal communities in national, regional and international ocean governance since 1990. During this time, we have experienced the consequences of human pressures on our marine and coastal environments firsthand. But, together with key stakeholders such as the OSPAR Commission, we have also proved the positive impact of partnership.

Since the inception one of KIMO's priorities has been to prevent and reduce pollution from marine litter and hazardous substances. In doing so KIMO's strength is our insight into the challenges faced by the 80 municipalities that we represent. We use this knowledge to influence policy, develop best-practices, educate and engage local politicians and citizens in community driven solutions that work in a local context. One example is the Fishing for Litter scheme, which is a simple, effective initiative that has engaged the fishing industry, ports and harbors across 11 countries in collecting and removing marine litter.

But despite dedicated efforts and positive results of KIMO, the OSPAR Commission and many other stakeholders the reality is that we are not there yet. In fact, far from it as marine litter and hazardous substances remain a significant threat to our marine environment. I will not focus on why that is but instead highlight scientific evidence, public awareness, behavior change and regulation as key enablers - none of which have sufficient impact on their own.

That is why KIMO welcomes internationally binding mechanisms that ensure coordinated, holistic and ambitious action – whether that be the recently published European Oceans Pact or the upcoming legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

But even though such instruments are crucial first steps they are just “a step”, and we all have an obligation to make sure that our ambitions are transformed into action on the ground at both regional, national and local levels.

KIMO is thus pleased to see that the Vigo Declaration reaffirms our shared commitment to work together for the benefit of our marine environment, not only emphasizing the need to prevent and eliminate pollution of the marine environment, but also the need for implementation.

The OSPAR Commission has an important role to play, and today's discussions and decisions are an important step in the right direction. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with OSPAR in order to realize the shared goal of a healthy, thriving North-East Atlantic region.

Thank you.

## OSPAR Ministerial Meeting: Intervention of Pierre Bahurel, Director-General of Mercator Ocean International, OSPAR Observer organization

Madame Chair, Ministers, delegates, and colleagues,

It is an honor for me to address you today on behalf of Mercator Ocean International and its 10 shareholders, major operational oceanographic centres from France, Italy, Norway, Spain, and the UK.

As the host of the EU's Copernicus Marine Service, Mercator Ocean provides trusted Ocean monitoring data and information to more than 100,000 registered users around the world delivered through a coordinated network of more than 60 European partner institutions – many of them in OSPAR Member States.

Since becoming an OSPAR observer, Mercator has worked to put these digital Ocean systems at the service of OSPAR's actions. I am proud to announce that a new OSPAR ocean-color product will enter into the Copernicus Marine Service in November of this year, and we commit to continuing our collaborations with OSPAR to generate the Ocean data products you need as a public service.

Public service is at the heart of Mercator Ocean, where we use satellite and in situ data from around the world combined with state-of-the-art numerical models, artificial intelligence, and digital twinning to allow us to monitor the present, understand the past, and explore the future - as a global public service. However, these new digital Ocean technologies and the unprecedented volumes of information they will generate will drive a scientific and societal shift in how we generate, share, access, and validate Ocean data. Addressing these challenges requires international collaboration and governance to deliver and safeguard access to trustworthy Ocean information. And this is why the Mercator International Centre for the Ocean is being established.

Earlier this month at the UN Ocean Conference in Nice, EU Contributing States signed a Declaration to continue their joint efforts towards the creation of the Mercator International Centre for the Ocean, led by France and Norway who signed the international Convention to establish this new intergovernmental organization.

The Mercator secretariat offers its full support to enable your country to join the governance of this new organization, and we look forward to strengthening our collaborations with OSPAR to better serve our common Member States and your actions.



## **OSPAR Ministerial meeting, Vigo 2025**

### **Oceana's oral intervention**

Dear Ministers, distinguished delegates, colleagues

Thank you for offering Oceana the opportunity to make this intervention, here in Vigo, one of Spain's main windows to the Atlantic Ocean, a place highly dependent on the good state of the marine environment for the economy and wellbeing of its community. But the ecological crisis is accelerating, and the climate emergency is getting worse. Time is running out to ensure marine ecosystems are healthy, productive and resilient once again, particularly in light of these impacts. Science has provided many of the solutions and technologies needed to tackle the problems the ocean and our society are facing, but we still lack implementation.

OSPAR has the mission to address these problems, but many targets of the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy are still to be met, and 2030 is approaching fast. The Marine Protected Area network in the North-East Atlantic is expanding, and we applaud the enlargement of the OSPAR maritime area to include the Macaronesian region, known for its valuable marine biodiversity. But the network still needs to improve its ecological coherence - for instance the Arctic region remains a big gap - and it is far from being well-managed. Bottom-fishing continues to be a major threat to benthic habitats and vulnerable species as identified in the last Quality Status Report. Oceana strongly supports the ambition of the '30 by 30' target for marine protected areas and the commitment of OSPAR to it, but this must result in effective biodiversity protection, aligned with international standards on MPA management in particular IUCN Recommendation 2016-102. This means that all environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development should be prohibited in all MPAs. We do not have time for "paper parks" anymore, and we urge OSPAR and its Contracting Parties to adhere to this management principle. We must stop pretending that designation equals protection. Decisions are being taken — or avoided — by fishing authorities, energy regulators, and planning authorities who often act outside this room, unaccountable to the commitments made here.

Furthermore, the facts are unequivocal. Fully and highly protected areas — those free from extractive activities — deliver the greatest ecological and socio-economic benefits. They increase biomass, enhance biodiversity, and create spillover effects needed to support fisheries. They also boost the coastal blue economy such as tourism activities and recreation which thrive in and around these MPAs. And crucially, they make ecosystems more resilient to warming, acidification, and deoxygenation. With 0.03% of the OSPAR MPA network covered with full or high protection levels<sup>1</sup> the designation of science based highly protected areas is a must. Therefore, we encourage OSPAR contracting parties to endorse a policy target on strict protection, inspired by the EU target to reach 10% of EU seas by 2030.

We regret that the updated OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 does not endorse explicitly these asks. We therefore call on OSPAR Ministers to lead by example, to commit to prohibiting destructive activities inside their MPAs, and to expand strict protection in the form of no-take zones

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<sup>1</sup> Roessger, Julia & Claudet, Joachim & Horta e Costa, Barbara. (2022). Turning the tide on protection illusions: The underprotected MPAs of the 'OSPAR Regional Sea Convention'. *Marine Policy*. 142. 105109. 10.1016/j.marpol.2022.105109.

across the OSPAR maritime area. For a long time OSPAR has been a pioneer on MPAs, such as with its High-Sea MPAs. It is key that the lack of effective management of MPAs does not erode its credibility.

This is a moment for action, there is no time to lose in the efforts to reach the targets set for 2030. Oceana would like to thank you once again for this opportunity to participate in the discussion and will look forward to further collaboration.

## OSPAR Ministerial Meeting – 26 June 2025

The Renewables Grid Initiative (RGI) is a unique coalition of European transmission system operators (TSOs) and climate and conservation NGOs. Since 2009, we have promoted collaborative approaches to deploying electricity grids that are both socially acceptable and environmentally responsible, enabling the integration of renewables and contributing to a fully decarbonised energy system.

In response to the pivotal role offshore wind plays in Europe's climate targets, RGI launched the Offshore Coalition for Energy and Nature (OCEaN) in 2020. With over 50 Members spanning TSOs, NGOs, and the wind industry across the North, Baltic, and Mediterranean seas, OCEaN promotes Nature-Positive offshore energy deployment. As of 2024, RGI is also an official observer to OSPAR, contributing expertise on ecosystem-based offshore wind and grid development.

### Tackling the Twin Crises: Climate and Biodiversity

Europe faces the intertwined crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. Offshore wind expansion is central to decarbonisation plans, with EU Member States targeting 86–96 GW of offshore capacity by 2030 and 356–366 GW by 2050. Yet this growth is occurring in marine ecosystems already degraded by decades of unsustainable use.

**The North Sea**, one of the world's most intensively used seas, has seen significant ecological stress. Safeguarding its capacity to provide essential services, such as carbon sequestration and sustainable food production, requires reducing the cumulative impact of human activities. This includes nature-friendly offshore wind and grid deployment and the rigorous application of the **mitigation hierarchy** to protect and enhance marine biodiversity.

### A Call for Ecosystem-Based Planning

Achieving climate and biodiversity targets must go hand-in-hand. The EU's commitment to protect at least 30% of its seas, with 10% under strict protection, and the requirement for national **Nature Restoration Plans** signal the need for integrated marine planning.

**Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP)** and **Strategic Environmental Assessments** are critical tools to align nature conservation, restoration, and energy development. Sensitivity mapping and socio-economic assessments can help identify optimal areas for renewable energy and nature protection, reduce sectoral conflicts, and streamline permitting processes.

In parallel, an enhanced **sea basin strategy** for nature restoration, beyond isolated, project-based efforts, would provide effective and long-lasting ecological benefits. OSPAR is well-positioned to lead in this space by developing a **methodology for cumulative impact assessment** at the sea basin scale, along with practical guidelines for OSPAR Contracting Parties.

## Project-Level Measures and Policy Alignment

At the project level, **proven avoidance and minimisation measures** must be applied throughout the life cycle of offshore wind and grid infrastructure. OCEaN has identified over 80 such measures to reduce impacts on marine ecosystems. Effective deployment requires not only their application, but also the establishment of **monitoring and adaptive management frameworks** to respond to environmental changes.

There is increasing recognition that **healthy ecosystems are not only a prerequisite** for accommodating offshore wind expansion, but also for our wellbeing and overall economy. National policies are beginning to reflect this, and tender procedures now often include **non-price award criteria**, including biodiversity considerations. However, further policy refinement is needed, such as reassessing **decommissioning obligations**, which may not always yield the best outcomes for biodiversity. OSPAR can play a key role here in providing guidance.

## Enabling Nature-Positive Offshore Infrastructure

Industry actors are increasingly committing to becoming **Nature Positive by 2030**, with many testing **Nature Inclusive Design** solutions in collaboration with NGOs and academia (e.g., the Rich North Sea Programme). These innovations should be scaled up and, when results are proven, supported by enabling policy.

**OSPAR can play a key role in providing guidance for environmental monitoring data collection, promoting centralisation and sharing** at national and sea basin levels. In addition, they can play a key role in **harmonising biodiversity metrics** to better assess ecological impacts.

## Final remarks

Building offshore renewable energy infrastructure and protecting nature are not mutually exclusive goals. With science-based tools, cross-sectoral cooperation, and strong political support, we can deliver both.

RGI and OCEaN are committed to fostering solutions which **contribute to decarbonisation and biodiversity recovery**. We call on all OSPAR Contracting Parties to continue leading this transformation through concrete, coordinated, Nature-Positive action.

# Statement by Seas At Risk for the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting 2025 in Vigo

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates,

It is my pleasure to address you on behalf of Seas At Risk, a European umbrella organisation representing 37 marine conservation organisations which have followed and participated in OSPAR's work for almost three decades.

We are all gathered at a critical juncture. The Northeast Atlantic continues to suffer the effects of biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution. The decisions taken here today will shape how this region responds to those pressures.

One important such decision is the welcome inclusion of deep-sea mining in the Vigo Declaration text. Science tells us 99,99% of the deep sea remains unseen by the human eye and that large-scale mining in such areas would likely cause serious and irreversible effects on the marine environment. For any international body which truly upholds the precautionary principle, there is a fundamental obligation not to allow extractive activities with these uncertainties.

This same resolve is needed on the issue of scrubbers on ships. They do not clean, but rather shift pollution from the air to the sea, releasing toxic, acidifying waste directly into sensitive marine environments. OSPAR must not wait for global consensus when urgent regional action is both justified and necessary. Ministers have the opportunity to lead by example by committing to an immediate and region-wide ban.

Finally, OSPAR has a vital role to play in coordinating responses to all present and future human pressures. We therefore stress the urgency of strengthening marine spatial planning across the region, ensuring it is ecologically coherent, participatory, and guided by the best available science. This is particularly relevant regarding the need to ensure implementation of the BBNJ treaty and the Global Biodiversity Framework with a coherent network of Marine Protected Areas, representing 30% of the sea by 2030, with management plans that exclude destructive activities like bottom-trawling. This approach is equally important for the rapid expansion of offshore renewable energy. While crucial for decarbonisation, its cumulative impacts, including in combination with other human activities, must be mitigated through effective cross-border maritime spatial planning and the development of a common assessment methodology.

Ministers, OSPAR was not created to mirror the pace of international processes. It was established to lead. The decisions today must reflect that leadership, by rejecting activities that threaten irreparable harm, by adopting the measures we already know are needed, and by shaping a truly sustainable path forward.

Thank you.

***Simon Holmström, Deep-Sea Mining Policy Officer, Seas At Risk***



## Ministerial meeting of the OSPAR Commission

Vigo, Spain, 26 June 2025

### Engagement opportunity 4

#### Who We Are

WindEurope is the voice of the wind industry, actively promoting wind energy across Europe. We have over 600 members from across the full wind energy value chain: turbine manufacturers, component suppliers, utilities and developers, financial institutions, research institutes and national wind associations.

#### WindEurope's engagement with OSPAR

WindEurope welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the OSPAR 2025 Ministerial Meeting and values our role as an Observer. We see OSPAR as a key platform for coordinating marine environmental protection and advancing sustainability in offshore energy.

WindEurope has been an active participant in the Inter-sessional Correspondence Group on Offshore Renewable Energy Development (ICG-ORED), and we welcome OSPAR's recent decision to create a dedicated task on offshore wind decommissioning. We are ready to contribute practical, evidence-based input from the wind energy sector to support the development of the new guidelines.

We believe offshore wind decommissioning must be sustainable, flexible, and fit for purpose. That means opening the possibility for nature-positive solutions to remain *in situ* after decommissioning when scientific evidence supports the net-positive impacts. Furthermore the regulatory frameworks for offshore wind decommissioning must be harmonised across Europe to reduce uncertainty and cost.

A one-size-fits-all approach based on oil & gas norms is not appropriate for offshore wind. Instead, we call for a clear, EU-level framework that reflects the specific realities of our sector and helps unlock circularity, biodiversity enhancement, and technically feasible end-of-life strategies.

#### Offshore Wind: A Pillar of Europe's Energy Future

Offshore wind is a cornerstone of Europe's strategy to deliver clean, secure, and competitive energy. It plays a critical role in meeting the EU's climate targets, strengthening energy security, and driving re-industrialisation of coastal communities. The industry has delivered major cost reductions in recent years and continues to innovate. With the right regulatory environment, offshore wind can become a main pillar of Europe's electricity system and support high-value jobs across the continent.

Offshore wind development also offers a unique opportunity to integrate sustainability and biodiversity objectives from the outset. Planning, installation, operation, and decommissioning phases must continue to be aligned with marine protection goals.

#### The Challenge of Offshore Wind Decommissioning

Europe's offshore wind fleet is maturing. 3.2 GW or 8.7% of offshore wind turbines installed in Europe are 15 years or older. Of which 844 MW or 2.3% is older than 20 years. Over the next decade, these offshore turbines will reach the end of their operational life. Sustainable offshore wind decommissioning is therefore a priority for the European wind industry. But the regulatory frameworks is too fragmented and not yet adapted to the specific realities of offshore wind.



Decommissioning must be sustainable, predictable, and aligned with broader EU goals on circularity, biodiversity, and climate neutrality. Offshore environments are complex ecosystems, and wind infrastructure can become habitat over time. A “one-size-fits-all” approach, especially one based on oil & gas norms, may not always be appropriate.

### **Our Position: Towards Harmonised, Sustainable Decommissioning**

WindEurope calls for a harmonised EU-level framework for offshore wind decommissioning that:

- Clarifies roles, expectations and procedures, reducing regulatory uncertainty;
- Embeds sustainability across environmental, technical, circularity and socio-economic aspects;
- Enables site-specific flexibility, based on robust case-by-case assessments.

### **Key Considerations:**

- *Biodiversity enhancement:* Foundations and scour protection often act as artificial reefs. Removing them may disrupt marine ecosystems.
- *Selective removal:* Partial decommissioning (e.g. leaving foundations) may offer the best environmental outcome in some cases.
- *Technical feasibility and costs:* Full removal of deeply buried components (e.g. monopiles or cables) may not be technically or environmentally justified.
- *Public interest:* Maritime stakeholders and environmental groups may support nature-based retention if properly assessed.

### **Policy Ask**

We call for guidance under the OSPAR framework that allows for partial or alternative decommissioning strategies when they deliver net environmental benefits. Policies should evolve beyond the principle of “zero impact” to enable *nature-positive outcomes*, where justified.

A harmonised yet adaptive approach should:

- Provide a clear decision-making structure applicable across jurisdictions;
- Allow case-specific flexibility in sensitive marine areas;
- Promote high circularity standards and responsible materials management;
- Enable nature-based decommissioning alternatives where supported by science.

### **Conclusion**

WindEurope supports the sustainable growth of offshore wind development and decommissioning in harmony with Europe’s marine ecosystems. We welcome the progress made by OSPAR in recognising the specific needs of offshore renewables and look forward to contributing to the development of tailored, forward-looking guidance for offshore wind decommissioning.

We stand ready to collaborate with OSPAR, national governments, and other stakeholders to ensure that guidance reflects the best environmental, technical, and social practices available.

**Our vision is of a clean, healthy and biologically diverse  
North-East Atlantic Ocean, which is productive, used sustainably  
and resilient to climate change and ocean acidification.**

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OSPAR Secretariat  
The Aspect  
12 Finsbury Square  
London  
EC2A 1AS  
United Kingdom

t: +44 (0)20 7430 5200  
e: [secretariat@ospar.org](mailto:secretariat@ospar.org)  
[www.ospar.org](http://www.ospar.org)

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