



DG ENVIRONMENT

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Acting Director General

**Convention for the protection of the marine environment of the
North East Atlantic (OSPAR)
Ministerial Meeting
(Vigo/Spain, 26 June 2025, 09:00)**

SPEECH

Dear **Vice-President Sara Muñoz**,

Dear Ministers,

- I am honoured to participate in this important OSPAR event for (protecting) the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. I would like to thank Spain – Vice-President **Muñoz** - for bringing us together in this beautiful city that bears testimony to human interaction with the sea.
- OSPAR can be proud of its **many achievements in improving the marine and coastal environment of the North-East Atlantic**.
- While much progress has been made, there is **still a long way to go to fully protect the marine environment** of the North-East Atlantic (as the latest Quality Status Report illustrates).
- Today we are delivering **important milestones** towards achieving this shared goal.

First, I am delighted we are welcoming into the Convention Madeira and the Canary Islands respectively of Portugal and Spain

- This brings into OSPAR a vast ocean area with diverse ecosystems hosting a rich variety of marine species. Importantly, bringing the whole of Macaronesia into OSPAR strengthens these regions' marine protection – which becomes our shared responsibility as contracting parties to the OSPAR convention.

Second, we are delivering a set of important measures to free our seas from pollution.

- Our measures restricting **emissions from scrubbers on ships** are good for the marine environment, and they also create a level playing field and certainty for the shipping industry.
- Our decision to **prevent the spread of plastic litter from floating devices at sea** is an important measure to reduce plastic pollution.
- Our **action plan on underwater noise** constitutes an important commitment to reducing this substantial source of harm to marine life.

Third, we are addressing important global challenges together within OSPAR:

- In **protecting the Arctic**, by agreeing on the way to designate protected areas in the Arctic, in cooperation with other international organisations;
- In **removing offshore oil and gas platforms** after their decommissioning by endorsing a roadmap towards this aim;
- In **protecting marine biodiversity** in areas beyond national jurisdiction, by working with international partners on management plans for the marine protected areas in the North-East Atlantic. This supports the implementation of the UN agreement for the protection of biodiversity in high seas.
- From our side we are fully committed to playing our part in translating all these decisions and action plans into reality.

Ministers,

- **OSPAR** is the beating heart of our regional collaboration in this marine region. Our evaluation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive pays tribute to this – and I would like to assure you that we **will continue supporting OSPAR work**.
- We remain **fully committed to protecting the marine environment** and reducing pollution at source.
- Earlier this month the European Commission adopted **the Water Resilience Strategy** in which we reiterate our determination to apply a **source to sea approach**; tracking pollution pathways and further reducing pollution in our seas by targeted upstream measures.
- In our recent **European Ocean Pact**, we chart a framework to tackle marine issues in a holistic manner, addressing hand in hand improving ocean health and a competitive and sustainable blue economy. And strengthening our knowledge of the ocean and enhancing governance. I am confident that this will bring fresh momentum to our work in OSPAR too.
- Both initiatives will foster innovative technical, and nature-based solutions to reduce pollution in our fresh and marine waters; and underline the importance of **strengthening regional governance, in cooperation with the Regional Seas Conventions**.
- We need to act altogether, and across the board – in reducing pollution, in addressing unsustainable fishing and other extractive industries, in reducing the pressures on the ocean, to protect and restore our marine ecosystems, based on an ecosystem-based approach. Quite a tall order!
- Today we **achieve another milestone in our history of joint successful efforts**. Let us continue working together, united in our shared objective of a clean, healthy and resilient North-East Atlantic!

Thank you