

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues,

In 2021 I attended the last OSPAR Ministerial Meeting in Cascais, Portugal, where I participated in the adoption of our joint North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy.

That was my first opportunity to see the work of OSPAR at first hand. I remember lively discussions at technical and political level. But I also recall the spirit in the room and the tacit agreement that we needed compromises in order to jointly enhance the protection of the North-East Atlantic.

For this reason, I very much regret not being able to join you today to further advance the work of OSPAR and for the review of the Environment Strategy. My sincere thanks to Spain for its hospitality – Minister Schneider very much regrets that he cannot attend the meeting. He sends his greetings and best wishes for a successful meeting.

The last Ministerial Meeting in 2021 took place under the difficult conditions of the COVID pandemic. Since then the crises have not let up. If we are to overcome the current crises, multilateralism is an absolute must. But multilateralism itself is under threat. It is precisely because of these choppy waters that we cannot lose sight of ‘our’ crisis – the crisis of the global ocean.

The third UN Ocean Conference in Nice, which concluded a few days ago, sent a clear signal for the protection and conservation of the ocean and development of a sustainable blue economy. Federal Environment Minister Carsten Schneider reiterated in Nice that we, individually as states and jointly as the international community, must work more quickly and effectively to improve ocean protection.

Today's OSPAR Ministerial is pursuing that very goal.

- Germany expressly welcomes the extension of the OSPAR Maritime Area. Many thanks to Portugal and Spain for this initiative. This shows that transboundary cooperation works very well in OSPAR. The OSPAR community is countering the unilateral withdrawal from multilateral agreements by extending its joint area of responsibility.

Cooperation within OSPAR is particularly valuable precisely because of the interactions between the local, regional and international levels. In OSPAR we make use of the option of implementing very concrete measures at regional level.

- With regard to ship scrubbers, we are seeking an ambitious regional measure which minimises inputs into national territorial waters, while focussing on international shipping. We thank Sweden and France for overseeing the technical work on this.

The current challenging problems and times demand that we advance even more resolutely. That is why

- why we are aiming for a mandate on which we can build to make the OSPAR Convention fit for the future and able to deal with increasing uses and pressures.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite all the challenges - let us consider how we can achieve the ambitious but indispensable goals of the OSPAR Environment Strategy by 2030.

With this in mind, I wish you all a successful meeting on Spain's breathtaking Atlantic coast. I hope to see you again in 2030, when I hope we will have achieved at least key aspects of our goal.

Our motto till then, to borrow a metaphor from shipping, one of the main uses of the seas and oceans: Full speed ahead and smooth sailing!

Thank you!