



OPENING STATEMENT from SPAIN

Spanish Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge:

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INTRODUCTION

1. Dear President of the Port Authority, thank you very much for hosting this OSPAR meeting in the Port's premises with views to our dear Atlantic Ocean, the waters we want to preserve.

Also thank you for the excellent cooperation during the last few weeks.

2. Distinguished representatives from OSPAR countries and the Commission, Minister, State Secretaries, Ambassadors, Director-General (COM), Chair of the Convention, Executive Secretary:

- Welcome to Vigo for this OSPAR Convention Ministerial Meeting.
- I hope last evening's welcome dinner and the visit to the oceanographic vessel provided you with all the energy and inspiration required for the intense working day ahead of us.

3. During today's meeting we will see the outcome of the work carried out during months under the OSPAR Convention, adopting new agreements that will support our further commitment to:
 - Protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic;
 - Prevent and eliminate marine pollution; and
 - Conserve and restore the marine ecosystems.

4. I would like to highlight two important issues:
 - (Firstly) The relevance of OSPAR's work during the past years;
 - (and secondly) The opportunities to continue making progress during this meeting.

IMPORTANCE AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF OSPAR

5. In the past few days, I have had the opportunity to look more closely on how OSPAR works.

I feel honoured to open this Ministerial meeting and I would like to congratulate you all for your work.

6. The 15 countries bordering the North-East Atlantic and the European Union, are all represented today, many joining in person and some

online, but all with the overall aim to make progress in the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic.

7. In a world with growing geopolitical pressures, this forum is based in two principles:

- The enormous diversity between the Arctic and Macaronesia, show that we have more things in common than differences,
- The global dimension of the environmental agenda requires the existence of solid and multilateral fora such as this one.

8. Without any doubt we can confirm that OSPAR is the most advanced convention to protect regional seas in the planet.

Among the many successes achieved in the last decades, I would like to highlight three which are of special relevance in our seas and coasts:

- development and implementation of the Regional Action Plan on marine litter, including measures on fishing for litter and sustainability education programmes for fishers, which complements other measures in relation to pollution from land-based sources (substances, nutrients);
- The prioritisation of measures to protect and conserve the marine biodiversity (with specific action programmes for species and habitats and the consolidation of OSPAR's network

of marine protected areas, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction); and

- the policies to decommission and recycle offshore oil and gas installations in a sustainable way and with legal certainty.

9. We reaffirm the commitments signed at the last Ministerial Meeting in Cascais (Portugal, 2021) where the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) 2030 was adopted. I hope we can agree on specific actions to fully implement the Strategy and address the new challenges that our seas are facing.

PERSPECTIVES OF OSPAR 2025

10. In Vigo we will make progress in very relevant milestones:

11. First of all, the variety of different regions in the OSPAR Maritime Area, from the Arctic to the deep Atlantic including the Celtic Seas, the North Sea, the Bay of Biscay and the Iberian Coast, is enlarging to cover the waters of the Macaronesia region of Spain (Canarias) and Portugal (Azores, Madeira) and the corresponding international waters; enriching even more this Convention.

12. With this enlargement, Spain will contribute to OSPAR's list of Marine Protected Areas, with 25 national protected areas. The waters of the Macaronesia region have a very rich marine biodiversity and play a

decisive role on the protection of species such as cetaceans, marine turtles and seabirds.

13. Secondly, and following the intermediate review of the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES), we can update and specify the roadmap of our future collective work for the next 5 years.
14. We are increasing our ambition with new milestones in our roadmap:
15. - By 2027: develop guidelines for the decommissioning of offshore renewable energy installations and consider how to be more efficient in governance issues to manage human and economic resources.
16. – By 2030: the adoption of amendments to cover new, emerging and increasing activities (such as offshore renewables energies, aquaculture, geoengineering, navigation and space launch vehicle debris).
17. Lastly, we will adopt technical measures to improve the management of environmental risks in this area of the Atlantic Ocean.

I hope we manage to make progress in the following issues which also contribute to other multilateral efforts:

- Prevention and elimination of plastic pollution from pontoons and buoys;
- Adoption of best practices to reduced marine litter,
- Reduction of discharge water from Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems on board ships, etc.

18. Of great importance is our commitments to protect the Arctic (Marine Protected Areas) and to adopt regional action plans for the benthic habitats and to reduce the underwater noise.

19. With a view in the future, we must keep monitoring emerging issues that need our attention such as the offshore renewables energies, aquaculture, space launch vehicle debris, carbon dioxide capture and storage and the production and storage of hydrogen.

20. We must continue progressing together, and for that, the OSPAR Convention is an excellent framework to make a collective effort and to achieve specific objectives.

CLOSE

21. In the long term, our oceans will be impacted by climate change. If we lose or continue to weaken our waters, the next generations will suffer the consequences. This is why we must act promptly.

22. In today's session, I encourage you to pursue ambition goals which can make a difference.

23. I would like to conclude this speech, not with words but with images of the beauty and biological richness of the Macaronesia region. The best way to protect something, is by knowing it and enjoying it.

Thank you for the good work. I look forward to following its outcomes.