

Dear Ministers, distinguished colleagues, delegates, and observers,

Let me begin by extending my warm thanks to Spain and Minister Aagesen Muñoz for hosting this OSPAR Ministerial Meeting. It is a pleasure to be here in beautiful Vigo.

This meeting is both timely and necessary. The recent UN Ocean Conference in Nice highlighted the immense challenges facing our ocean, while also demonstrating growing global momentum for marine protection. The health, resilience, and productivity of our coastal and marine ecosystems are essential. The urgency of action has never been greater.

OSPAR must answer this call for urgent action with ambitious measures—and I am encouraged by the strong package of proposals before us today.

The North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy continues to guide our work towards 2030. It's reassuring to see that the 2021 strategy remains relevant and largely on track—reflecting both OSPAR's ambition and the dedication of our experts and delegates. I particularly welcome the development of more targeted measures, often shaped in close collaboration with stakeholders, such as the regional action plan on underwater noise.

With only five years left to achieve our shared objectives, we must take concrete steps. This is why Sweden's position is clear: we must stop polluting our ocean with scrubber discharges. From July 2025, discharges from open-loop scrubbers, and from 2029 discharges from all types of scrubbers, will be banned in Swedish waters. We've coordinated with Denmark and Finland to ensure clarity for

the industry. The industry has been a key supporter in this process.

While global regulation through the IMO is desirable, we cannot wait. Sweden is of the view that an OSPAR decision to ban scrubber discharges in territorial seas is the most effective and appropriate measure to protect the marine environment and harmonize regional rules. It would also send a strong signal internationally and should encourage progress in the IMO.

This will again place OSPAR at the forefront—as a regional platform that not only facilitates progress but inspires it.

For example, OSPAR's work on marine litter has helped shape both EU and global policies. As we move into the next round of global plastics treaty negotiations, we must ensure the agreement addresses the full life cycle of plastics. We strongly welcome OSPAR's decision to prevent the release of foamed plastics from pontoons and buoys.

OSPAR's leadership in marine protection is equally important. Our experience in designating MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction positions us to support the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement—likely to enter into force soon, following the momentum from the UN Ocean Conference.

Colleagues,

The North-East Atlantic, including Arctic waters, is warming at an alarming rate. The past three years have seen record sea surface temperatures—disrupting ecosystems and accelerating ice loss. To strengthen ecosystem resilience to

climate change and ocean acidification, we must continue to develop OSPAR's network of Marine Protected Areas.

As an Arctic nation, Sweden values OSPAR's work in Region I and supports stronger cooperation with the Arctic Council, which is the leading forum for international cooperation in the Arctic. We also strongly support the meaningful engagement of Indigenous Peoples' Organisations and look forward to this important step for OSPAR.

Regional cooperation and the implementation of the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy are key to delivering EU Marine Policy. We welcome the European Ocean Pact's strong recognition of regional seas cooperation.

Looking ahead, new and increasing pressures on the marine environment continue to emerge. It is essential that OSPAR is properly equipped to address these challenges to fully achieve the objectives of the Strategy.

Our goals are ambitious. All OSPAR Parties must strive to contribute with the necessary expertise and resources to implement both shared and national measures.

To accelerate national efforts, Sweden recently adopted a new Marine Environment Bill—a significant step toward integrated marine management. It includes measures to reduce eutrophication, enhance marine protection, and promote sustainable fisheries, including a general ban on bottom trawling, with the possibility of limited exceptions, in coastal MPAs.

Finally, I would like to warmly welcome the Macaronesian region into OSPAR and congratulate Spain and Portugal on this important development.

Let me close by thanking all OSPAR delegates, the Chair and the Secretariat for your efforts to find common ground and bring this package of ambitious deliverables to this meeting for adoption.

Thank you.