

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

**UK Statement**

**OSPAR Ministerial  
JUNE 2025**

**DELIVERED BY:**

**H.E. EMMA HARDY, MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State; Minister for  
Water and Flooding**

**26 June 2025**

### UK Opening Ministerial Statement – 5-minutes

770 words – based on 150 words per minute

- Minister Aagesen Muñoz, your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen.
- I would like to start by thanking the Spanish Government and the OSPAR secretariat for hosting and organising this event.
- It is a pleasure to make a statement on behalf of the United Kingdom. I am only sorry I am unable to join you in beautiful Vigo, Galicia.
  
- The science is clear, but I don't need to tell you that our ocean is dying.
- Globally, over 75% of coral reefs have been impacted by the Fourth Mass Global Bleaching event.
- A third of marine mammals are threatened and half of the world's seabird species are already affected.

- In the OSPAR maritime area only one of 18 threatened and declining habitats are showing good status.
- But, this isn't only about marine life – it's about people too. It's also about the livelihoods of our coastal communities that face the worst impacts.
- That's why deepening our scientific understanding is vital – to deliver on our commitments and drive real, sustainable ocean action. The work that we do in collaboration, through mechanisms like OSPAR have never been more important.
- Through international cooperation we've made huge strides. I was at the recent United Nations Ocean conference, where we spoke of the progress already made and outlined significant new announcements.
- In 2023, the global community came together to adopt the Agreement under the United Nations

Commented [CM1]: Mention what was agreed or done or said at UNOC last week here?

Commented [EW2R1]: Done

Convention on the Law of the Sea on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, the BBNJ Agreement.

- Before that, we reached a major milestone with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including the global target to protect at least 30% of the ocean by 2030.
- I am proud the UK is championing this work through the Global Ocean Alliance and High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, as well as the BBNJ High Ambition Coalition.
- The UK is completely committed to ratification of the BBNJ Agreement.
- And noting the need for urgent action, we commit to introducing the legislation by the end of the year.

- I am also pleased to share that we recently published a report on future sites to be developed into Area Based Management Tool proposals under the BBNJ Agreement,
- and we will be contributing to the voluntary trust fund to support the vital work on the BBNJ Clearing House Mechanism;
  
- We also agreed the Commonwealth Ocean Declaration and strengthened sustainable fishing practices.
- Now, as we continue negotiations on a Plastics Pollution Treaty, we must seize this once in a lifetime opportunity to secure agreement in August, to prevent the amount of plastic entering our ocean tripling by 2040.
  
- This is action we urgently need but more must be done. OSPARs North East Atlantic Environment Strategy 2030 was a hugely ambitious undertaking

to tackle the triple challenge facing the ocean:  
biodiversity loss, pollution, including marine litter,  
and climate change

- At this ministerial we acknowledge the vital importance of this but also recognise the challenge ahead – up to 2030 and beyond.
- Balancing these existential threats with the need for new renewable energy and other marine industries is key.
- That is why we believe the amendment to the OSPAR convention are needed. We must continue to adapt and recognise that the world around us is changing and ever more uncertain.
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- We all recognise the importance of area-based protection and Spain and Portugal's proposal to expand the OSPAR maritime area by more than 2.5 million square kilometres should be seen as an opportunity.

- The importance of this area, it's biodiversity and habitats are clear from the Marine Protected Areas already designated there.
- MPA's are pivotal to our ambitions to protect and improve our seas. The UK has a comprehensive network of MPAs covering 40% of English waters.
- Earlier this month, we announced the launch of a consultation on byelaws to prevent damaging fishing in more of our MPAs.
- We're also stepping up efforts to tackle Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing - as a founding member of the IUU Fishing Action Alliance, and through our commitment to implement the recent OECD Recommendation to eliminate government support for IUU fishing;
- And I'm proud to announce our impending ratification of the International Maritime Organisation Cape Town Agreement, a crucial

treaty for fishing vessel safety and combatting IUU fishing.

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- Our ocean is suffering. But we can turn the tide and I believe OSPAR is a piece of the puzzle.
- We've made considerable progress since Cascais. If we stay focused and united, I believe we can make it happen.
- I thank you.
- [ENDS]