

---

# DISPOSAL OF DISUSED OFFSHORE INSTALLATIONS

## Summary:

It is 27 years since the adoption of OSPAR Decision 98/3 on the Disposal of Disused Offshore Installations, and it is considered that a re-affirmation of the intent of the Sintra Statement, simultaneously adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of the OSPAR Commission in 1998, is in order to ensure that all Contracting Parties reconfirm their commitment: -

- TO PREVENT the sea being used as a dumping ground for waste, whether from the sea or from land-based activities.
- TO STRIVE to avoid using such derogations for footings of steel installations by returning to land for recycling and disposal all steel installations where it is safe and practicable to do so.
- TO REVIEW Decision 98/3 from time to time with the aim of reducing as fast and as far as possible the cases for which derogations from the general ban on sea disposal may be considered.
- TO PROMOTE the research and development by industry and relevant Contracting Parties on techniques for improving reuse potential, when appropriate, and removing disused offshore installations and returning them to land for refurbishment/reuse or recycling for final disposal.

## Background:

In the OSPAR Maritime Area, as of 2021, more than 700 offshore oil and gas installations and 1100 subsea facilities (OSPAR database 2021) have been installed to date, many of which have already or will reach their end of life in the coming decades.

The dumping, and leaving wholly or partly in place, of disused offshore installations within the OSPAR Maritime Area is prohibited under OSPAR Decision 98/3, which is regarded as one of the prime OSPAR Decisions made to date. The Decision does however recognise that in exceptional circumstances there may be significant reasons for leaving part or all of an installation in place and sets out a framework for permitting a derogation from the Decision. These are only available for certain categories, including the footings of heavy steel jackets of >10,000 tonnes installed before 1999 and Concrete Gravity-Based Structures (CGBSSs).

All post 1999 installed facilities are to be removed, meaning that approximately 11% of the 2021 OSPAR offshore database inventory are potential derogation applicants. The majority of these installations are located in the deeper waters of the UK and Norway continental shelves.

Approximately 140<sup>1</sup> installations have been decommissioned to date. Whilst the majority are being removed to shore, the removal of footings of larger steel and concrete installations (around 15% of pre-1999 installed platforms) has proven to be more challenging.

A total of 10 permits have been granted for derogation from the full removal requirement by Contracting Parties to date, including 5 concrete installations and 5 relating to the footings of large steel installations. That leaves around 20 concrete installations and around 45 steel jacket installations weighing more than 10,000 tonnes as potential future derogation applicants. (OSPAR Installation Database 2021 query output)

<sup>1</sup> The number of installations reported (170) to have been decommissioned at the 2021 Ministerial Meeting and in the QSR 2023 included installations and subsea structures.

# DISPOSAL OF DISUSED OFFSHORE INSTALLATIONS

## Progress and Outlook:

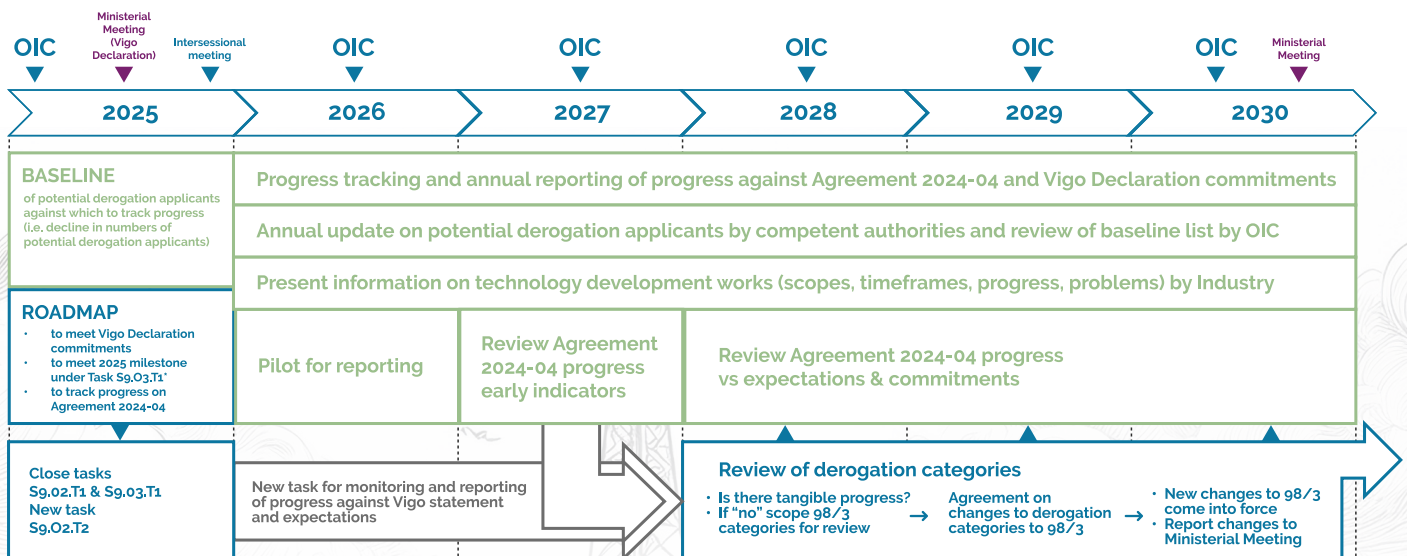
Experience, technological development and improved offshore safety across the oil and gas industry has created opportunities to remove more infrastructure from the sea. OSPAR wants to encourage industry to use its learnings and experience and reduce the number of permitted derogations in the OSPAR region, thus delivering on agreed Sintra commitments.

Over the last few years, OSPAR has taken a number of steps to drive forward this change. This includes:

- Decision 24/01 that amended the definition of concrete installation to clarify that cell contents within the substructure are not part of the installation, are outside the scope of OSPAR Decision 98/3 and are covered by Annex III Art 5 Para 2 of the OSPAR Convention.
- and
- Agreement 2024-04: Guidance on the application of OSPAR Decision 98/3 on the Disposal of Disused Offshore Installations which provides international guidelines on the application of Decision 98/3 Annex 2 to ensure full removal is the primary decommissioning objective, supported by the development and application of the appropriate technology, before considering any alternative disposal options.

OSPAR is optimistic that the Vigo Declaration and Agreement 2024-04: Guidance on the application of OSPAR Decision 98/3 on the Disposal of Disused Offshore Installations will provide the international commitment and operational process to significantly reduce the number of derogations in the OSPAR region.

OSPAR will track progress against this aspiration over the next five years as reflected by the roadmap. Regular updates will be provided by Competent Authorities and industry to OSPAR's Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) and based on progress OIC will deliver further interventions as appropriate by 2028 including a potential review, reduction, or removal of derogation categories from Annex 1 of Decision 98/3.



For more information,  
please visit [ospar.org](https://ospar.org)