



OSPAR Statement at the BBNJ PrepCom II on Item 5: Arrangements to enhance cooperation with relevant legal instruments and frameworks and relevant global, regional, subregional and sectoral bodies (Cluster I: Issue 6)

Wednesday, 20 August 2025

Thank you, Madam Co-Chair and Mr. Co-Chair, for giving me the floor and for allowing me the opportunity to present OSPAR's mandate and experience in relation to agenda item 5.

[OSPAR](#) is the regional sea convention for the North-East Atlantic and is the mechanism by which 15 Governments¹ and the European Union cooperate to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. Importantly, in the context of the BBNJ Agreement, [OSPAR's maritime area](#) includes not only the waters over which its Contracting Parties have jurisdiction but also Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ), which cover approximately 40% of the OSPAR maritime area. In the language of the BBNJ Agreement, OSPAR is a "relevant regional body".

OSPAR's mandate is set out in the [OSPAR Convention](#), which entered into force in 1998. The Convention places a general obligation on its Contracting Parties to take all possible steps to prevent and eliminate pollution and to protect the OSPAR maritime area against the adverse effects of human activities so as to safeguard human health and to conserve marine ecosystems and, when practicable, restore marine areas which have been adversely affected.

The mandate includes the identification and assessment of specific areas in need of protection within OSPAR's maritime area, including in ABNJ. In response to this, OSPAR agreed in 2003 to establish an OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas that is ecologically coherent and well managed. The OSPAR MPA network now includes 612 MPAs covering an area of nearly 1.5 million km². It includes 12 MPAs in ABNJ of which 8 have been collectively designated through OSPAR Decisions.

OSPAR has long recognised that cooperation is the cornerstone of effective protection and sustainable use of the ocean, and that cross-sectoral and interregional cooperation and collaboration are fundamental to achieving these goals. OSPAR Decisions and Recommendations are applicable to OSPAR Contracting Parties and OSPAR does not have a mandate to manage all human activities that may impact the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. Cross-sectoral cooperation with those international organisations that do have the mandate to control human activities is therefore needed to develop collaborative management plans that support the achievement of the MPA's conservation objectives.

Recognising the complementary nature of its competences, OSPAR has long sought to cooperate with other international organisations and competent bodies to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. An example of this is the [Collective Arrangement](#), adopted in 2014 by the OSPAR Commission and

¹ The 15 governments are: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom.



the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC). This formal agreement between legally competent authorities managing human activities in ABNJ in the North-East Atlantic ([OSPAR Agreement 2014-09](#)) aims to provide a regional platform to facilitate cooperation and coordination on area-based management. The secretariats of other competent international organisations with a mandate to protect the marine environment or to manage human activities in the North-East Atlantic are invited to take part in the annual meetings of the Collective Arrangement.

The BBNJ Agreement has highlighted and strengthened the need for such cooperation and coordination. OSPAR and NEAFC adopted a [joint narrative](#) in 2024 that sets the basis to further develop cooperation between the two organisations on area-based management measures. One of the main outcomes is the identification of collaborative actions that can help ensure a more comprehensive and coherent network of area-based management measures in the North-East Atlantic.

While recognising that any arrangements may need to reflect regional and organisational differences, OSPAR's and NEAFC's experiences and lessons learnt from collaborating over the last decade or so, could be useful in helping to address some of the guiding questions posed by the Co-Chairs.

At its 2025 Ministerial Meeting in June, based on a proposal from Portugal and Spain, OSPAR welcomed Macaronesia, enlarging the OSPAR Maritime Area by more than 2.5 million square kilometres of ocean. Of this, nearly 1.7 million square kilometres are international waters. At this Meeting OSPAR Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to enhance the effective protection of OSPAR MPAs in ABNJ, to continue efforts to work with relevant international organisations to develop collaborative management plans and to promote the objectives of the BBNJ Agreement. OSPAR Contracting Parties believe these commitments are consistent with the objectives of the BBNJ Agreement and look forward sharing their experiences and lessons learnt and cooperating with others to help ensure the successful conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Thank you.

Dominic Pattinson

Executive Secretary, OSPAR Commission