

Overview of OSPAR's activities with relevance to the ocean affairs and UN Law of the Sea 2013 – 2014 .

Executive Summary

The OSPAR Convention is the legal instrument guiding international cooperation on the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. Work under the Convention is managed by the OSPAR Commission, made up of representatives of fifteen Governments and the European Commission, representing the European Union.

In 2014 OSPAR adopted its Marine Litter Regional Action Plan. The Plan addresses the key marine litter problems for the North East Atlantic and contains actions to be taken forward collectively at the regional level and actions that Contracting Parties will consider to take up at the national level. In 2013/14 OSPAR also adopted 28 recommendations under its work to protect and conserve species and habitats on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats.

OSPAR has continued its work with HELCOM Maritime on implementation of the guidelines developed jointly to grant exemptions under the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention. The OSPAR Secretariat is also involved in cooperation with the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) on issues related to the implementation of the Offshore Protocol and in modelling risks to support emergency response under the Bonn Agreement. OSPAR is also seeking to develop work under its Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2013 with the Abidjan Convention; The Convention for the Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region.

OSPAR 2014 adopted a new Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (2014-2021) to deliver the assessments needed for marine status indicators and towards OSPAR assessments of the state of the North East Atlantic environment. OSPAR has continued to expand its current suite of marine status indicators, which includes coordination under the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive.

This year OSPAR successfully agreed with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) the Collective Arrangement on cooperation and coordination regarding selected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the North-East Atlantic. This is a sign of the ever more practical cooperation across sectors operating in our oceans and includes an aspiration that other international marine/maritime organisations will participate Arrangement.

OSPAR and NEAFC are also cooperating on the identification of areas that meet the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Environmentally or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA) criteria in the North-East Atlantic. Contracting Parties of both NEAFC and OSPAR are currently continuing their consultations concerning the possible submission to CBD of scientific and technical information and experience related to the application of the EBSA criteria.

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The OSPAR Convention is the current legal instrument guiding international cooperation on the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic. Work under the Convention is managed by the OSPAR Commission, made up of representatives of fifteen Governments and the European Commission,

representing the European Union. The OSPAR Commission is the mechanism by which the Contracting Parties can reach consensus on the issues of concern and develop binding measures to deal with them. The fifteen Governments are Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. OSPAR's maritime area covers both areas within national jurisdiction and areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Regional work

OSPAR continues to demonstrate regional collaborative governance of the marine environment, harnessing its unique Contracting Party-driven process to deliver innovative approaches to stand alongside national, European and global environmental protection initiatives. OSPAR's work focuses on the specifics of its regions (Arctic Waters, the Greater North Sea, Celtic Seas, Bay of Biscay/Iberian Coast and the Wider Atlantic) in terms of bio-geographic and ecosystem characteristics. Over the last year, OSPAR has continued to make progress in taking forward the North East Atlantic Environment Strategy, including regional coordination for the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (<http://www.ospar.org> NEA Strategy).

The 2014 OSPAR Commission meeting adopted its new flagship joint activity, the Marine Litter Regional Action Plan, as a basis for development of actions and measures under a detailed implementation plan for the next year onwards. The Regional Action Plan was developed by OSPAR Contracting Parties, with close involvement of stakeholders. This Plan addresses the key marine litter problems for the North East Atlantic from both land-based and sea-based sources. It contains actions to be taken forward collectively at the regional level and actions that Contracting Parties will consider to take up at the national level.

OSPAR has continued its work with HELCOM Maritime in the Baltic Sea on the development and adoption of Joint Guidelines on the granting of exemptions from the IMO Ballast Water Management Convention. Such activity highlights OSPAR's ability to work with neighbouring regional seas and in developing the practical regional application of regulation developed under the competence of another organisation, such as the International Maritime Organisation. The focus of this work has now moved to the practical implementation of the guidelines. On issues related to shipping, the Bonn Agreement, which has common secretariat staffing with the OSPAR Commission, is currently developing a risk assessment for accidental oil spills and spills of other hazardous liquids in the North Sea and Celtic Seas. This EU co-funded work aims to bring together modelling on risks of accidents and sizes of spills with assessments of social and economic sensitivity to spills and environmental sensitivity to spills of the coastlines surrounding these seas. Bringing the risk and sensitivity aspects together will enable Bonn Agreement contracting parties to consider national priorities and resources related to emergency response to such spills. The OSPAR Secretariat is further involved in sharing good practice with another regional emergency response organisation, the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC). In this case OSPAR has been sharing its experience in regulation of offshore oil and gas activity with REMPEC as it develops a draft Regional Plan for the implementation of the Barcelona Convention Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (Offshore Protocol).

Under its work on indicators to assess the state of the environment, including a coordination function for the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive, OSPAR has continued to expand its current suite of marine status indicators. These include indicators on biodiversity, litter and noise. This is another area that OSPAR is cooperating with its sister organisation, HELCOM, in trying to share workload on biodiversity status indicators in the Atlantic and Baltic. This year OSPAR adopted a new Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (2014-2021) to deliver the assessments needed for indicators and towards an intermediate and the regular OSPAR assessment of the state of the North East Atlantic environment (the Quality Status Report). This year's Commission also adopted a Science Agenda which will set out OSPAR's top needs in order to act as a clear focus for scientists and scientific organisations to develop knowledge to support our work.

As was reported last year, OSPAR has continued its work in developing recommendations in order to protect and conserve species and habitats on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats (http://www.ospar.org/content/content.asp?menu=00180302000014_000000_000000). In 2013 OSPAR agreed a suite of 12 recommendations and an accompanying *Statement on the Common understanding of the Recommendations on species and habitats*. This year the OSPAR Commission adopted a further 16 recommendations. Significantly, OSPAR also agreed terms of reference for a dedicated OSPAR working group to help take forward the implementation of the Recommendations.

This year OSPAR successfully agreed with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission (NEAFC) the Collective Arrangement on cooperation and coordination regarding selected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction in the North-East Atlantic. This arrangement describes how OSPAR and NEAFC, within the framework of their respective mandates, competences, principles and rules, will coordinate and cooperate in relation to areas where each organisation has developed area-based measures. These areas are to be listed in the agreement. The aim is that OSPAR and NEAFC will keep each other informed on new information and assessments related to the areas, including any changes in human uses, and consult annually on their respective objectives in relation to the areas. This is a sign of the ever more practical cooperation that we are seeking across sectors operating in our oceans.

The agreement with NEAFC on the Collective Arrangement is a first step and is to be followed by engagement with other sectoral international marine/maritime organisations with a view to their participating in the Arrangement. In the meanwhile, OSPAR and NEAFC are following up the agreement by starting to implement the cooperation in practical terms.

Another area of cooperation between OSPAR and NEAFC is on the identification of areas that meet the Convention (CBD) on Biological Diversity Environmentally or Biologically Significant Areas (EBSA) criteria in the North-East Atlantic. While the difference in organisational perspectives has not been a barrier in approaching this process jointly, several Contracting Parties of both NEAFC and OSPAR are currently continuing their consultations concerning the possible submission to CBD of scientific and technical information and experience related to the application of the EBSA-criteria, including details of areas that meet the EBSA criteria in the North-East Atlantic. Nevertheless OSPAR and NEAFC Secretariats were able to pass on to the Subcommittee on Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA) the advice that both organisations had jointly requested from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). This was provided for information to SBSTTA 18 without prejudice to the on-going process within the North East Atlantic.

Cooperation with coastal African States

In September 2013 OSPAR signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Abidjan Convention; The Convention for the Co-operation in the Protection and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the West and Central African Region. The MOU aimed to enhance exchange of experience, including mutual observership at commission meetings. In 2014 we now have an opportunity to deepen this relationship and at the same time extend the good experience of cross-sectoral work between OSPAR and NEAFC. OSPAR and NEAFC secretariats are hoping to join an initiative under United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organisation, with Norwegian Government funding, working together with regional fisheries and environment colleagues in West Africa. This will aim to help develop capacity in regional fisheries management and regional marine environment protection through exchange of experience and expertise.