

OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic

OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in the North-East Atlantic

Summary:

OSPAR Ministers had highlighted in 2010 the importance of the problem of marine litter, stating that in many areas of the North-East Atlantic levels of litter were unacceptable. OSPAR's Strategy for the protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic for the years 2010-2020, set out an objective to "to substantially reduce marine litter in the OSPAR maritime area to levels where properties and quantities do not cause harm to the marine environment". The OSPAR objective, and the Regional Action Plan subsequently adopted in 2014, support the marine debris reduction objectives under Goal 14 of "Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development".

OSPAR's Regional Action Plan (RAP) sets out the policy context for OSPAR's work on marine litter and describes the various types of actions that OSPAR is working on to combat the problem over the coming years. The Regional Action Plan is set out in four sections.

- **Section I** sets the objectives, the geographical scope, principles and approaches that should frame implementation.
- **Section II** presents the actions to be implemented. The actions have been grouped in four themes: A. the reduction of litter from sea-based sources and B. the reduction of litter from land-based sources, C. the removal of existing litter from the marine environment and D. education and outreach on the topic of marine litter.
- **Section III** describes the necessary monitoring and assessment process.
- **Section IV** outlines how the plan will be implemented and followed up by OSPAR. Annexes to the plan set out the detail of the individual measure development and adoption process, as well as reporting formats for OSPAR's Contracting Parties. The Implementation plan is being updated annually, based upon progress.

Current implementation activity is also linked to the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive, with alignment of marine litter indicators to also support reporting under the Directive's requirements for those Contracting Parties who are EU Member States.

See: <http://www.ospar.org/work-areas/eiha/marine-litter/regional-action-plan>

OSPAR Action on Marine Litter: The OSPAR Regional Action Plan for Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in the North-East Atlantic.

OSPAR Ministers noted in 2010 that quantities of litter in many areas of the North-East Atlantic were unacceptable, and that reduction measures should be developed towards reduction targets for 2020. The OSPAR objective with regard to marine litter, as laid down in the Strategy for the protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic for the years 2010-2020, is “to substantially reduce marine litter in the OSPAR maritime area to levels where properties and quantities do not cause harm to the marine environment”. The OSPAR objective and the Regional Action Plan subsequently adopted in 2014 support the Rio+20 global commitments, UNGA resolutions A/RES/68/70, A/RES/69/245, and now A/Res/70/1; Goal 14 in “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

OSPAR’s Regional Action Plan (OSPAR Agreement 2014-1, (see <http://www.ospar.org/work-areas/eiha/marine-litter/regional-action-plan>) addresses marine litter, defined as any solid material which has been deliberately discarded, or unintentionally lost on beaches and on shores or at sea, including materials transported into marine environment from land by rivers, drainage or sewage systems or winds. It includes any persistent, manufactured or processed solid material originating from different sea- and land-based sources. One focus of the action is on plastics, given these are the predominant material in marine litter.

OSPAR is addressing marine litter not just as an aesthetic problem, but one that incurs socioeconomic costs, threatens human health and safety and impacts on marine organisms. It is broadly documented that entanglement in, or ingestion of, marine litter can have negative consequences on the physical condition of marine animals and even lead to death. Ingestion of micro plastics is also of concern as it may provide a pathway for transport of harmful chemicals into the food web. Additionally, marine litter is known to damage and degrade habitats (e.g. in terms of smothering) and to be a possible vector for the transfer of alien species.

9. The Regional Action Plan aims to deliver the following elements:
 - a. a focus on specific sources or items of marine litter that are of most concern in each OSPAR region or the OSPAR maritime area as a whole;
 - b. the development of regional measures, taking into account the socioeconomic aspects including cost effectiveness, for reducing the input of marine litter from sea-based and land-based sources, and for removing litter from the marine environment.
 - c. regionally coordinated reduction/operational targets, including those linked to sources, taking into account the MSFD targets submitted by EU Member State Contracting Parties to the European Commission;
 - d. monitoring and necessary arrangements required to assess progress towards reaching the targets;
 - e. cooperation with other relevant regional and international organisations, including Regional Seas.

13. The OSPAR Regional Action Plan has been adopted by OSPAR Contracting Parties as an OSPAR Other Agreement. It applies to the whole OSPAR maritime area and is designed as a flexible tool providing a set of actions to address marine litter. The key principles applied are the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle. The Plan contains actions requiring collective activity within the framework of the OSPAR Commission through, where applicable, OSPAR measures (i.e. Decisions or Recommendations) and/or other agreements such as guidelines. Other actions are also listed in the Plan for consideration by Contracting Parties in their national programmes of measures, including under the EU’s Marine Strategy Framework Directive. In this respect the Plan provides guidance to Contracting Parties and a framework for

regional cooperation. A third category of actions are those that fall under the competence of other international organisations and competent authorities

Objectives and role

16. The main objectives of the RAP are to:

- Prevent and reduce marine litter pollution in the North-East Atlantic and its impact on marine organisms, habitats, public health and safety and reduce the socioeconomic costs it causes;
- Remove litter from the marine environment where practical and feasible;
- Enhance knowledge and awareness on marine litter;
- Support Contracting Parties in the development, implementation and coordination of their programmes for litter reduction, including those for the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- Develop management approaches to marine litter that are consistent with accepted international approaches

17. The role of the RAP ML is to:

- Coordinate work to improve the evidence base on the impacts of litter on the marine environment;
- Establish a range of measures and actions, identifying gaps and opportunities where OSPAR can add value through its marine focus;
- Be a framework for Contracting Parties to identify added value for a regional approach;
- Promote reporting by Contracting Parties to OSPAR and under the EU's Marine Strategy Framework Directive, where relevant.

The Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter is being implemented in close cooperation with other relevant regional and global organisations and initiatives, including UNEP and other Regional Seas Conventions, the International Maritime Organisation, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the European Union, Fisheries Regional Advisory Councils, North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission and River and River Basin Commissions. Partnerships with the private sector and with non-governmental organisations are also a part of the working approach.

Themes and Actions

The Regional Action Plan does not determine which of the “OSPAR actions” should ultimately take the form of OSPAR measures (Recommendations, Decisions) or other agreements, including guidelines adopted within the framework of the Convention. However the Implementation Plan is being updated on a regular basis to show progress delivered by the assigned country leads, following the accepted OSPAR procedure.

OSPAR Collective Actions

28. Contracting Parties, acting collectively within the framework of the OSPAR Commission, are developing and implementing the actions outlined below. In addition, regionally coordinated SMART reduction/operational targets are being developed.

Theme A: Actions to combat sea-based sources of marine litter

- Port reception facilities
- Effective Implementation/Enforcement of international legislation/regulation
- Incentives for responsible behaviour/disincentives for littering
- Develop best practice in relation to fishing industry
- Fines for waste disposal offences at sea

Theme B: Actions to combat land-based sources of Marine Litter

- Improved waste prevention and management
- Reduction of sewage and storm water related waste
- Incentives for responsible behaviour/ Disincentives for littering
- Elimination, change or adaptation of products for environmental benefits
- Development of sustainable packaging
- Zero pellet loss

Theme C: Removal Action

- Application of Fishing for Litter activities
- Cleaning environmental compartments and keeping them clean
- Reduction of abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG)

Theme D: Education and outreach

- Education
- Outreach

Contracting Party Actions

Contracting Parties are considering the following actions:

Theme A: Actions to combat sea-based sources of marine litter

- Enforcement of international legislation/regulation regarding all sectors
- Incentives for responsible behaviour/disincentives for littering

Theme B: Measures to combat land-based sources

- Improved waste prevention and management

Theme C: Removal measures

- Application of Fishing for Litter activities
- Reduction of abandoned, lost and otherwise discarded fishing gear (ALDFG)

Theme D: Education and outreach

- Education
- Outreach

Monitoring and Assessment, Implementation and Reporting

Assessment of the quality of the marine environment is central to OSPAR's remit. In doing so OSPAR aim to coordinate monitoring programmes where possible, to adopt consistent methodologies for data. A beach litter indicator operates in the OSPAR area with an indicator for plastic particles in fulmar stomachs operating for the North Sea. They allow identification of different categories of litter, providing information on potential origin and an analysis of trends in individual items. In the case of the fulmar, an Ecological Quality Objective is applied.

OSPAR has developed and is developing indicators, with a particular focus on EU MSFD requirements covering the following issues:

- beach litter
- plastic particles in biota
- seabed litter
- micro plastics

Marine litter will be considered under OSPAR's Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme (JAMP). Any operational or reduction targets developed in relation to specific actions or measures produced under the framework of the RAP will be assessed through the JAMP and based upon the monitoring for the common indicators, where applicable. The next OSPAR Quality Status Report should assess the effectiveness of the

plan in achieving the aims of the North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy. OSPAR's upcoming Intermediate Assessment in 2017 will also include reporting on indicators on marine litter status.

The overall OSPAR Regional Action Plan on Marine litter is implemented through Agreement 2014-1. Contracting Parties will use the implementation reporting process to update OSPAR on their national progress in implementing the plan. However, individual actions recommended above, particularly those which have a regional focus, may also be implemented through guidelines, recommendations or decisions, depending upon their topic.

The OSPAR Regional Action Plan is being implemented during the period 2014-2021, after which time it shall be reviewed and updated in accordance with the outcomes of the Quality Status Report 2021, the new OSPAR Strategy, and assessments under the EU MSFD. Current work, progressing each of the actions in the Plan, is being carried out under the supervision of an OSPAR marine litter intersessional working group, as well as consideration by the main OSPAR Committees and the annual OSPAR Commission meeting.