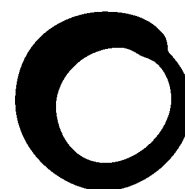




Marine Information Network

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**Friends of
the Earth**

**Report on OSPAR Ministerial Conference,
Bergen, Norway, 20th to 24th September 2010.**

The Nature of OSPAR.

OSPAR, the Oslo-Paris Convention, is an inter-governmental organisation comprising the countries bordering the North East Atlantic (including Switzerland and Luxembourg) and its charter is to protect and conserve the seas of the NE Atlantic. Its charter enables it to engage directly, via the actions of its member countries, in the formulation of strategies to reduce climate change and CO₂ emissions, eutrophication, hazardous substances, radioactive substances, pollution from the oil and gas industry, the impact of renewable energy and other human activities, and to engage in the protection of biodiversity and the promotion of the ecosystem-based approach to marine management. The charter does not permit action on fisheries, this being left to other authorities (i.e. the European Union and its Common Fisheries Policy), but it is able to assess and advise on the impact of fisheries, both in terms of the health of commercial fish stocks and the general state of the marine ecosystem.

OSPAR has a website www.ospar.org and the OSPAR Commission produces every ten years a Quality Status Report (QSR) which evaluates the condition of the NE Atlantic against the parameters listed above. At the Ministerial Conference in Bergen, OSPAR issued its 2010 Quality Status Report which records the changes since its QSR in 2000. The 2010 QSR may be viewed in detail on the QSR 2010 website http://qsr2010.ospar.org/en/terms_of_use.html

Importantly, OSPAR allows observers (NGOs and other representative organisations) to participate in its work, and this has permitted MARINET to actively represent FOE EWNI, and to advance the case for strengthened management and intervention to protect the marine environment.

Purpose of the Ministerial Conference.

The Ministers of the member countries of OSPAR met at Bergen, Norway, in order to renew the Convention's charter for a further ten years (until 2020) and to set out, via a Ministerial Statement, the agenda for its future work. The Ministerial Statement declares:

- **A belief in a shared vision of a clean, healthy and biologically diverse North East Atlantic ocean, used sustainably.** This vision recognises that the cost of taking no action may actually be substantially greater than the cost of remedial action, and emphasises that in taking such remedial action shared scientific knowledge and understanding about the state of the marine environment is crucial, and that the OSPAR Quality Status Report 2010 is an essential component of this approach.

- **The need to apply the ecosystem-based approach to marine management.** OSPAR has reaffirmed its belief that the ecosystem approach is the overarching concept and basis for its work. OSPAR defines this concept as “*the comprehensive integrated management of human activities based on the best available scientific knowledge about the ecosystem and its dynamics, in order to identify and take action on influences which are critical to the health of marine ecosystems, thereby achieving sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services and maintenance of ecosystem integrity.*” MARINET has prepared for OSPAR a simple, detailed explanation of the ecosystem approach and how it should operate in practice : <http://www.marinet.org.uk/eatmm/definition.pdf> OSPAR has developed ecological quality objectives (EQOs) for the North Sea, and operates an extensive Assessment and Monitoring Programme of human activities and the condition of the marine environment in support of the ecosystem approach. The QSR 2010 is the product of this assessment and monitoring programme.

- **Facilitating the co-ordinated implementation of the EU’s Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).** OSPAR supports the MSFD’s objective of achieving “good environmental status” (GES) for the marine environment by 2020, and OSPAR has established a Road Map for the MSFD’s implementation and OSPAR aims to assist member countries establish their marine strategies which are required by the Directive. For this purpose, OSPAR has revised its working structure.

- **Protection of the NE Atlantic from pollution and other adverse impacts of human activities.** The areas of specific action are:

- A continued effort to reduce eutrophication so that man-made eutrophication does not occur.
- Assess the rising contribution of NOx emissions from the shipping sector to eutrophication, with a proposal to possibly link action with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in order to create a NOx Emission Control Area in the North Sea.
- Given that most priority hazardous chemicals are still being released into the marine environment (see QSR 2010 http://qsr2010.ospar.org/en/media/chapter_pdf/QSR_Ch05_EN.pdf) work continues to be required to move to the target of the cessation of these releases by 2020. This work will promote the banning of the production, use and trade in Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), and strive to achieve major reductions in the discharges of emissions of mercury and other substances of priority concern within the UN framework.
- A commitment to ensure that discharges and emissions of radioactive substances are reduced, so that by 2020 additional concentrations of radionuclides in the marine environment are as close to zero relative to historic levels.
- Given the Deepwater Horizon oil-spill in the Gulf of Mexico, there is a commitment to take all possible steps to prevent and eliminate pollution from offshore oil and gas activities. Member countries of OSPAR are therefore reviewing all existing frameworks, including the permitting of drilling activities in extreme conditions.
- Marine litter is recognised as a significant problem, and member countries are committed to the development of ambitious reduction targets and associated measures.
- The introduction of non-indigenous species and pollution from energy, particularly in the form of underwater noise, are recognised as significant problems, and efforts to combat them will be strengthened.

- **Protection of marine areas, species and habitats.** The goal of significantly reducing by 2010 the loss of biodiversity has not been achieved. Therefore the following policies will be pursued:

- Recognition is given that the competent authorities (e.g. EU and non-EU members) are attempting to develop sustainable fishing practices based on the ecosystem approach, however OSPAR notes that overfishing and destructive fishing practices still have significant adverse impacts on marine biodiversity, including the practice of by-catch and discard related problems. Progress needs to be made towards the development of long-term sustainable fisheries management in the deep ocean based on United Nations resolution 64/72 and the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation's international guidelines for the management of deep-sea fisheries in the high seas.

- A commitment to halt the decline of species and habitats, and a commitment to restore threatened declining species and habitats before 2013 by establishing measures which will protect these species/habitats from the pressures of human activities (see OSPAR QSR 2010 Report for the full list of listed threatened marine species and habitats in the NE Atlantic, Table 10.2 (species) and Table 10.3 (habitats) http://qsr2010.ospar.org/en/media/chapter_pdf/QSR_Ch10_EN.pdf). Such protection measures have so far been adopted for the common skate, the white skate, the angel shark and the basking shark, and for *Lophelia pertusa* reefs [deep-sea cold-water coral], coral gardens, deep-sea sponge aggregations, sea-pen and burrowing megafauna communities, and *Hoplostethus atlanticus* [the deep-sea fish, Orange Roughy]. There are currently 43 species on the OSPAR Threatened Species list (Table 10.2), and 16 habitats on the OSPAR Threatened Habitats list (Table 10.3).

- The commitment to establish an ecologically coherent network of marine protected areas (MPAs) in the NE Atlantic by 2010 has resulted in 3.1% of the OSPAR maritime area so far being protected (see OSPAR QSR 2010 Report for further details of the network of MPA sites (Figure 10.2), and for the MPAs nominated by OSPAR member countries (Table 10.4 and Figure 10.3) http://qsr2010.ospar.org/en/media/chapter_pdf/QSR_Ch10_EN.pdf). This commitment is reaffirmed by OSPAR so that by 2012 a representative MPA network will be established in accordance with the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

- A commitment to establish and manage Marine Protected Areas in those parts of the NE Atlantic which are beyond national jurisdiction (i.e. in the high seas) and an acknowledgement that this process is currently in the process of development (see OSPAR QSR 2010 [Figure 10.4] for further details of these sites http://qsr2010.ospar.org/en/media/chapter_pdf/QSR_Ch10_EN.pdf

- **Respond to the challenges of a changing climate.** OSPAR recognises the profound impacts on marine ecosystems that may arise from climate change and ocean acidification, and recognises that research into these impacts will have to be integrated into all aspects of its work. As such, it will work in collaboration with other international organisations monitoring and investigating these impacts and, at the same time, OSPAR will provide sound regulation under Annex II and Annex III of its Convention of the geological storage of carbon.

The Ministerial Statement was agreed by the member countries of OSPAR at the Ministerial Conference in Bergen on 24th September 2010 in Bergen, Norway.

The fifteen member Governments are Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom. Finland is not on the western coasts of Europe, but some of its rivers flow to the Barents Sea, and historically it was involved in the efforts to control the dumping of hazardous waste in the Atlantic and the North Sea. Luxembourg and Switzerland are Contracting Parties due to their location within the catchments of the River Rhine.