

Contributions to the 14th Informal Consultative Process, Session on Ocean Acidification impacts on the Marine Environment

Note to the United Nations from the OSPAR Secretariat on behalf of the OSPAR Commission for the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic.

Progress on Ocean Acidification at OSPAR

OSPAR in its 2010 Quality Status Report presaged ecosystem-wide effects of ocean acidification by 2050. The report stated that *“rising sea temperature and acidification represent major threats to marine ecosystems in the OSPAR area”*. Ministers of OSPAR Contracting Parties responded by highlighting the issue in The Bergen Statement (2010), in particular:

“31. We note with deep concern the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification, which are predicted to profoundly affect the productivity, biodiversity and socio-economic value of marine ecosystems. We emphasise that research into and considerations of these effects, as well as the need for adaptation and mitigation, will have to be integrated in all aspects of our work. We affirm that there is a role for the OSPAR Commission, in collaboration with other international organisations, in investigating, monitoring and assessing the rate and extent of these effects and considering appropriate responses.”

Several of OSPAR’s Contracting Parties are already involved in ocean acidification monitoring. Steps have been taken at OSPAR towards the ultimate inclusion of chemical ocean acidification in OSPAR’s Common Environmental Monitoring Programme. In order to do this, OSPAR and the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea decided in 2012 to include in the Work Programme for 2013 the establishment of a Joint OSPAR- ICES Study Group on Ocean Acidification (SGOA). Terms of reference include:

- seek information from relevant international initiatives on Ocean acidification;
- consider the strategy that would be required for an assessment framework appropriate for long term assessment of the intensity/severity of the effects of ocean acidification, including any assessment criteria required;
- to inform the development of biological effects indicators for ocean acidification, including the identification of suitable species and key areas
- report a first assessment of all available data in the OSPAR maritime area.”

Matters which need further consideration at international levels.

At a recent OSPAR Co-ordination Group meeting Contracting Parties highlighted the need for further work on common methods for monitoring. Furthermore the need to understand impacts of ocean acidification on biology and the links to how effective monitoring can be in order to detect changes were underlined. For more detail, please see CoG meeting 21-22 November 2012 in the OSPAR meetings summary records at http://www.ospar.org/v_meetings/browse.asp?menu=0005050000000_000000_000000.