

Executive Summary

1. 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, consisting of representatives of fifteen Governments and the European Commission, representing the European Union. The Convention covers a vast geographical area that includes Areas beyond National Jurisdiction.
2. This review of OSPAR's activities in 2016-17 reflects, as in previous years, an ambitious programme of work under the OSPAR Ministers' North East Atlantic Environment Strategy. This year, much of the effort has been in preparation of the Intermediate Assessment of the state of the North East Atlantic, published on-line in June 2017. This Assessment can support the implementation of the European Union Marine Strategy Framework Directive for relevant Contracting Parties. It can also support future developments of the UN World Ocean Assessment. The Intermediate Assessment includes sections introducing OSPAR, the assessment and its methodology, describing issues such as climate change, method for conducting cumulative effects analysis in future assessments and social and economic analysis under OSPAR, as well as a section on key messages and highlights. The core of the intermediate assessment consists of a series of indicator assessments based on a suite of indicators of marine status adopted by OSPAR in the previous years. These indicator assessments, along with summaries of some of OSPAR's more regular periodic assessments, inform the reader on the state of knowledge in OSPAR across a broad swathe of pressure and state indicators in the North East Atlantic.
3. The review of activities in 2016-17 also highlights the work under OSPAR's thematic Committees on Biodiversity, Environmental Impacts of Human Activities, Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication, Radioactive Substances and Offshore Industry. These sections include details on marine litter, development of the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas, implementation of recommendations on species and habitats of concern and on the eutrophication status in the OSPAR maritime area.
4. OSPAR continues to evolve its collaboration with important partners, including the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, and now, following the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 The Ocean Conference, a new proposal for cooperation with the Caribbean Environment Programme (Cartagena Convention) is being taken forward.

OSPAR Achievements 2016-2017.

1. This review of OSPAR's activities in 2016-17 reflects an ambitious programme of work under the OSPAR Ministers' North East Atlantic Environment Strategy adopted in 2010. OSPAR continues to take forward activities to support Contracting Parties' national, regional and global aspirations with regard to protection and conservation of the marine environment.

(The two sections below relate to Part XII and XIII of UN Resolution 71/257)

Cross Cutting Issues

Intermediate Assessment

2. This year, the major effort for much of OSPAR's work has been in the preparation and finalisation of the Intermediate Assessment, published on-line in June 2017. This has generally been the highest priority activity for many of OSPAR's intersessional groups and thematic Committees. The assessment has had the benefit of European Union co-financing, in particular on project management. The Intermediate Assessment includes sections introducing OSPAR, the assessment and its methodology, describing issues such as climate change, method for conducting cumulative effects analysis in future assessments and social and economic analysis under OSPAR, as well as a section on key messages and highlights. The core of the intermediate assessment is a series of assessments based on a suite of indicators of marine status adopted by OSPAR in the previous years. These indicator assessments, along with summaries of some of OSPAR's more regular periodic assessments, inform the reader on the state of knowledge in OSPAR across a broad swathe of pressure and state indicators in the North East Atlantic.

3. Compared to previous status reports in OSPAR, the Intermediate Assessment is an entirely new development in being an online only publication. The Intermediate Assessment is available through the online OSPAR assessment portal (<https://oap.ospar.org/en/ospar-assessments/intermediate-assessment-2017/>). Through this portal, the reader can explore both brief and more detailed versions of each of the indicator assessment. In addition the portal allows a download of a 2-page summary of each indicator. The indicator assessments also include links to metadata and data snapshots so that the full detail of how the assessment was produced is available. This online system means that the methodology for the production of the assessments should be fully transparent and accessible in the future.

4. The production of the Intermediate Assessment has been enabled by OSPAR's new Data and Information Management System (the data portal <http://odims.ospar.org/>) that was launched last year at OSPAR 2016. The work on the individual indicator assessments has led in some cases to review and update/correction of historical data on the OSPAR system by Contracting Parties. This has been a retrospective benefit of the huge effort that has gone into the production of the Intermediate Assessment by the Contracting Parties. OSPAR is now undertaking a review to draw lessons from the process to produce the report. It is hoped that such a review would help develop a less resource intense approach for future assessments, with the possibility of adopting a rolling process for individual indicator assessments.

5. For Contracting Parties that are Member States of the European Union, the Intermediate Assessment can be used to help provide information on the state of the marine environment in the North East Atlantic as the regional context for national marine status reporting under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive. It is also available to be used as regional context to supplement national reporting under the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and to inform the UN World Ocean Assessment.

6. While the OSPAR data portal, the OSPAR Data and Information Management System, was launched in 2016, a new stage of the Data and Information Management Strategy, running to 2020 was adopted in 2017. This is to continue the development of the system to make sure all of the data used by OSPAR is available via an online tool and supports repeatable, accessible and transparent assessments and periodic reports.

International Cooperation

7. While a lot of the focus of work in OSPAR has been internal with the production of the assessments, this year has also seen continuing engagement internationally to serve OSPAR's global vision. A major international oceans event this year has been the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14. OSPAR has been active in highlighting the added value of regional cooperation in supporting national implementation of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, through interventions in the Conference and its preparatory meeting as well as

through several side events including those held by its Contracting Parties. The Ocean Conference has provided further impetus to region-to-region cooperation, with a commitment to exploration of potential cooperation initiated by the secretariats of OSPAR and the Cartagena Convention (Caribbean Environment Programme).

8. Intersectoral cooperation has been highlighted not only by the continuing cooperation between OSPAR and the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission under the collective arrangement, which had its third meeting in May 2017, but in the wider context of the Sustainable Ocean Initiative Global Dialogue. The Global Dialogue, sponsored by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Republic of Korea was held in Korea in September 2016. The meeting brought together 15 regional seas organisations with 15 regional fisheries management bodies, with OSPAR-NEAFC cooperation being held up as an exemplar of the process to work together on shared objectives.

9. OSPAR is happy to record that at this year's Fairbanks Ministerial, the Arctic Council granted observership to the Commission. This marks a further step in the evolving relationship and an increased engagement with the Arctic Council and its working groups.

(Sections below relate to Part IX, X and XI of UN Resolution 71/257)

Biodiversity Committee

10. A total of 22 biodiversity indicator assessments have now been produced by the work by experts under the biodiversity committee. This represents a significant step forward in developing a regular assessment approach on biodiversity, which remains a new and challenging area of OSPAR's work on assessment and monitoring. Further progress on foodwebs and habitats assessment was made through an EU co-financed project, engaging more than 40 experts from across the region working on some of the most challenging areas of marine biodiversity assessment.

11. Another major work area during 2016/2017 has been the development of the Plan for the implementation of collective actions within the Recommendations for the protection and conservation of OSPAR listed Species and Habitats. The plan brings together the commitments in the recommendations that need to be implemented collectively by OSPAR into 46 specific actions. The newly adopted Plan marks a new phase in OSPAR on protection of threaten and/or declining species and habitats with a focus on implementation.

12. The Report on the Status of the OSPAR Network of Marine Protected Areas for 2016 was published by OSPAR in 2017. This reports on an increasing network, with 448 MPAs, now covering 5.9% of the total OSPAR maritime area, compared to 159 MPAs and 1% coverage in 2010.

Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee

13. Initial discussions on a potential role for OSPAR in the regulation of Deep Sea Mining in areas within national jurisdiction were held in the Committee. A background document will be developed in 2018 to consider the issues further and identify where OSPAR may need to take action.

14. On a separate issue, OSPAR 2017 has agreed that disposal at sea of mine tailings should principally be covered by Annex I of the Convention and is developing a background document for 2018 as a basis for any future OSPAR measures to be taken.

15. The Committee is continuing to implement OSPAR's Marine Litter Regional Action Plan. As part of the Plan, dialogue has been ongoing with the cosmetics industry to follow up on voluntary agreement by the members of Cosmetics Europe to phase out the use of microbeads in wash off products by 2020. Given the OSPAR Commission's concern about the pollution of the North East Atlantic by microplastic particles, including those from cosmetics and personal care products, and noting that several Contracting Parties are taking regulatory steps to phase out the use of microplastics in these and other products, further impetus was agreed in order to ensure a harmonised approach and level playing field for industry. States that are Parties to OSPAR therefore called on the European Union to introduce legal measures to achieve a 100% phasing out of microplastic particles in personal care and cosmetic products in line with Action 47 of the OSPAR Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

16. There are also a large number of actions on marine litter, on both land-based and sea-based sources, that are currently being developed and will result in outputs in the next meeting cycle. These include a workshop on riverine litter and marine litter in June 2017 with experts from the International River Commissions and further workshops planned for later in 2017 to hold dialogues with the fishing, shipping and plastics industry (on pre-production plastic pellets).

17. New monitoring is also being developed in the Committee. The funding of the INDICIT project (<https://indicit-europa.eu/description/>) which will support the development of an indicator on plastic particles in turtles' stomachs in the Bay of Biscay and Iberian Coast. Work is also underway to develop a new indicator on the impacts of impulsive noise, with other work developing on microplastics in sediments based on existing contaminants monitoring under OSPAR.

Hazardous substances and eutrophication committee

18. Experts in the Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee produced a suite of common indicator assessments that will contribute to the Intermediate Assessment. Although this work was a heavy burden on top of the Committee's usual business, there were benefits beyond the generation of the common indicator assessments. The Common Environmental Monitoring Programme (CEMP) online tool for assessing contaminants was significantly extended, making future assessments of contaminants more streamlined and automated.

19. A task group of the Intersessional Group on Eutrophication and the Secretariat conducted significant intersessional work to produce the Third Common Procedure Integrated Report on eutrophication status in the OSPAR maritime area. The report (<https://www.ospar.org/work-areas/hasec/eutrophication/common-procedure>) shows that whilst eutrophication status has improved since 1990, it is still observed in 7% of the assessed area.

20. The Working Group on Monitoring and on Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (MIME) has been collaborating more closely with Arctic Council Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP). During 2017/18 MIME and AMAP will work together on: assessment procedures; data extraction and compilation; optimisation of work to better support other (global) initiatives such as Minamata Convention, and; potential method and process for including AMAP's Region I data in the next OSPAR Quality Status Report.

Offshore Industry Committee

21. The Offshore Industry Committee agreed this year to amend the pre-screening scheme for offshore chemicals (OSPAR Recommendation 2016/4). The proposed changes will align the Recommendation with

the European Union's Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation & restriction of Chemicals (REACH) requirements (EC 1907/2006).

22. The Offshore Industry Committee considered the use and discharge of plastic materials in offshore chemicals. However since a clear definition of plastics in the context of offshore chemicals is lacking OIC will look further into this issue in 2018.

23. One issue of public interest at the moment is that of disposal of disused offshore installations, which is prohibited by OSPAR under Decision 98/3. The Offshore Industry Committee agreed to establish an intersessional group which will review all elements of Decision 98/3, in addition to a review of the derogation categories.

Radioactive Substances Committee

24. The Radioactive Substances Committee 2017 is in the process of amending PARCOM Recommendation 91/4 on Radioactive Discharges and the current reporting mechanism (Agreement 2003-04). The aim will be to make the Recommendation to be fit for purpose and apply the Best Available Techniques to minimise and, as appropriate, eliminate any pollution caused by radioactive discharges from all nuclear industries and their associated radioactive waste treatment facilities and decommissioning activities.

25. The Radioactive Substances Committee evaluated potential new areas of work and agreed to prepare a detailed list on international, regional and national instruments for the safe transport of radioactive material within the Northeast Atlantic region to identify possible topics for future work by OSPAR.