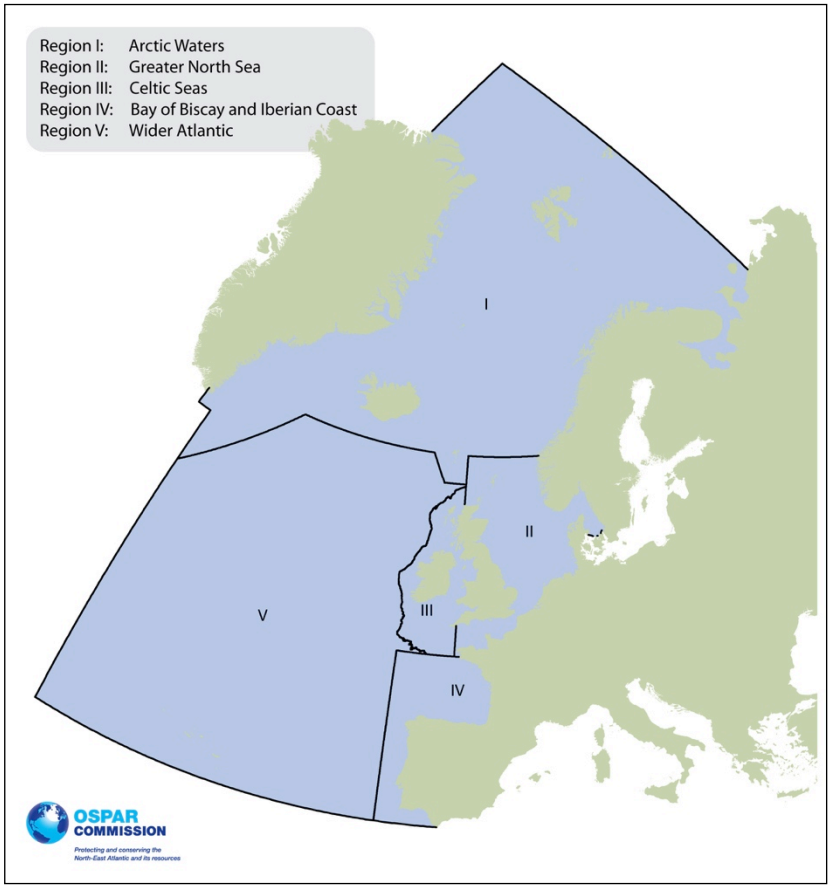
OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic

Information paper on OSPAR work of relevance to Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) working group and the means of collaboration.

Background to OSPAR's Engagement Remit with the Arctic Council.

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, 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 can 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 United Kingdom. OSPAR's maritime area covers both areas within national jurisdiction (territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zones) and areas beyond national jurisdiction. The convention area extends from the western coastline of Europe to the midline of the North Atlantic and in from the North Pole down to the latitude level with the bottom of Spain. See figure below. The OSPAR convention area is divided into five regions, one of which is the (Arctic Region 1)



2. OSPAR demonstrates an effective model of regional collaborative governance of the marine environment. It harnesses its unique Contracting Party driven process to make progress on innovative approaches to manage the marine environment, identify new issues and priorities and to take action, standing alongside national, regional 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, ecosystem and socio-economic characteristics. Over the last year, OSPAR has continued to make progress in taking forward the North East Atlantic Environment Strategy (see our new website www.ospar.org, and in particular http://www.ospar.org/convention/strategy)

3. Given the Convention's responsibilities in Region 1, at the most recent OSPAR Commission meeting in June 2015, an engagement remit (see OSPAR 2015 Summary Record, Annex 17) was agreed in order to advance cooperation and coordination with the Arctic Council, its Secretariat and its Bodies. This would aim to work within the framework of the OSPAR Convention and the OSPAR North East Atlantic Environment Strategy, to enhance knowledge about the impact of human activities and to protect effectively the marine environment in OSPAR Region 1. It would also aim to achieve complementarity and avoid duplication between OSPAR's work and the work of the Arctic Council.

4. This document is based on that engagement remit and identifies information of interest under ongoing work within OSPAR of relevance for OSPAR Region 1 and possibilities for increased coordination and cooperation with the Arctic Council, including PAME.

5. The text below is arranged in terms of the OSPAR North East Atlantic Environment Strategy (roman numerals), setting out activities that OSPAR is doing, or will do more broadly, which include Region 1. Under each Theme are also set out specific issues that a Committee has identified as a priority for collaboration with the Arctic Council. All the objectives have been included in this document even though it is acknowledged some of these are better covered by other Arctic Council bodies.

OSPAR's Radioactive Substances Strategy

6. The OSPAR Commission's strategic objective with regard to radioactive substances is to prevent pollution of the OSPAR maritime area from ionising radiation through progressive and substantial reductions of discharges, emissions and losses of radioactive substances, with the ultimate aim of achieving concentrations in the environment near background values for naturally occurring radioactive substances and close to zero for artificial radioactive substances. In achieving this objective the following issues should be taken into account:

a. radiological impacts on man and biota;

b. legitimate uses of the sea;

c. technical feasibility.

Activity Relevant to Region 1.

(i) OSPAR has developed tools and methods for monitoring environmental concentrations of indicator radionuclides associated with the nuclear and non-nuclear sectors. Environmental concentrations are reported for seawater, fish, molluscs and seaweed where possible in fifteen subdivisions of the OSPAR maritime area;

(ii) OSPAR has developed tools and methods for monitoring and annual reporting on discharges from the nuclear and non-nuclear sectors;

(iii) Information about, and the assessment of, the application of Best Available Technology in nuclear facilities is a fundamental part of the Radioactive Substances Committee work, with RSC currently

dealing with the assessment of the 6th round of implementation reporting of PARCOM Recommendation 91/4.

The Radioactive Substances Committee;

a. Invites exchange of information on a regular basis with the Arctic Council, in particular AMAP, and with the bilateral Norwegian-Russian cooperation programme;

b. Plans that developments in OSPAR Region I (Arctic waters) will be a standing agenda item for the Committee. Contracting Parties are requested to inform the Radioactive Substances Committee on on-going developments in Region I, including under the Arctic Council, of relevance to the Committee on a regular basis.

OSPAR's Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Strategy

7. The OSPAR Commission's strategic objective with regard to offshore oil and gas activities is to prevent and eliminate pollution and take the necessary measures to protect the OSPAR maritime area against the adverse effects of offshore activities by setting environmental goals and improving management mechanisms, so as to safeguard human health and to conserve marine ecosystems and, when practicable, restore marine areas which have been adversely affected.

8. The Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Strategy is implemented progressively, through appropriate actions and measures, with the target:

a. to achieve, by 2020, a reduction of oil in produced water discharged into the sea to a level which will adequately ensure that each of those discharges will present no harm to the marine environment;

b. to have phased out, by 1 January 2017, the discharge of offshore chemicals that are, or which contain substances, identified as candidates for substitution, except where it can be demonstrated that this is not feasible due to technical or safety reasons.

9. The Offshore Oil and Gas Industry Strategy also covers activities to store CO2 streams in geological formations with the objective to ensure that CO2 streams are retained permanently in those formations and will not lead to significant adverse consequences for the marine environment, human health and other legitimate uses of the maritime area

Activity Relevant to Region 1.

(i) To continue to increase knowledge on status and impacts of offshore oil and gas activities in Region 1 as part of the work of the Offshore Industry Committee on overall assessment of impacts;

The Offshore Industry Committee;

a. Will keep Arctic issues on its agenda. In this context the Committee has invited Norway, Iceland and the Kingdom of Denmark in respect of Greenland to keep it informed on relevant activities.

b. Will continue to cooperate with the Arctic Council and aims to improve the exchange of views and information with the Arctic Council working group PAME and EPPR. Norway agreed to act as a link and report back to the Committee

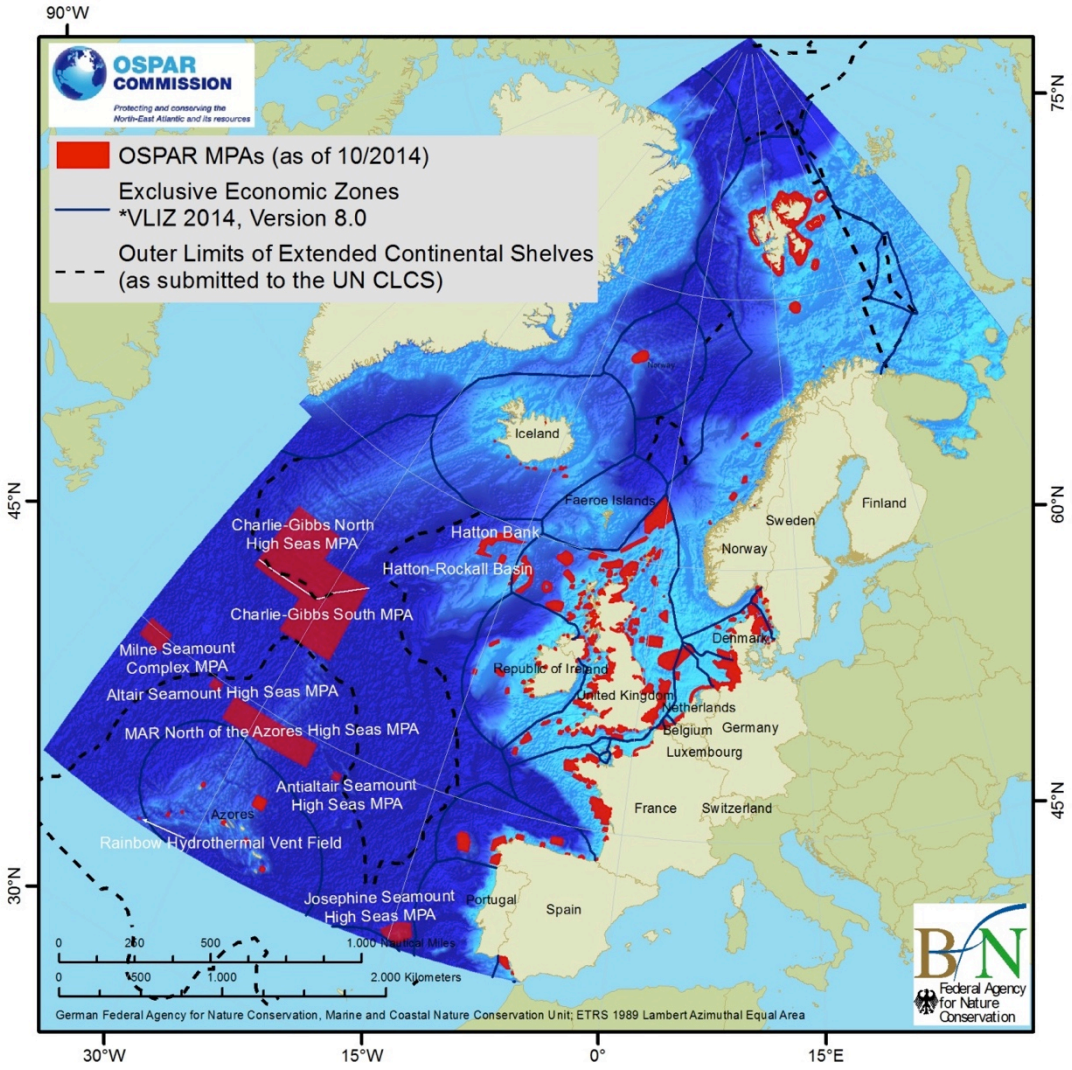
OSPAR's Biological Diversity and Ecosystems Strategy

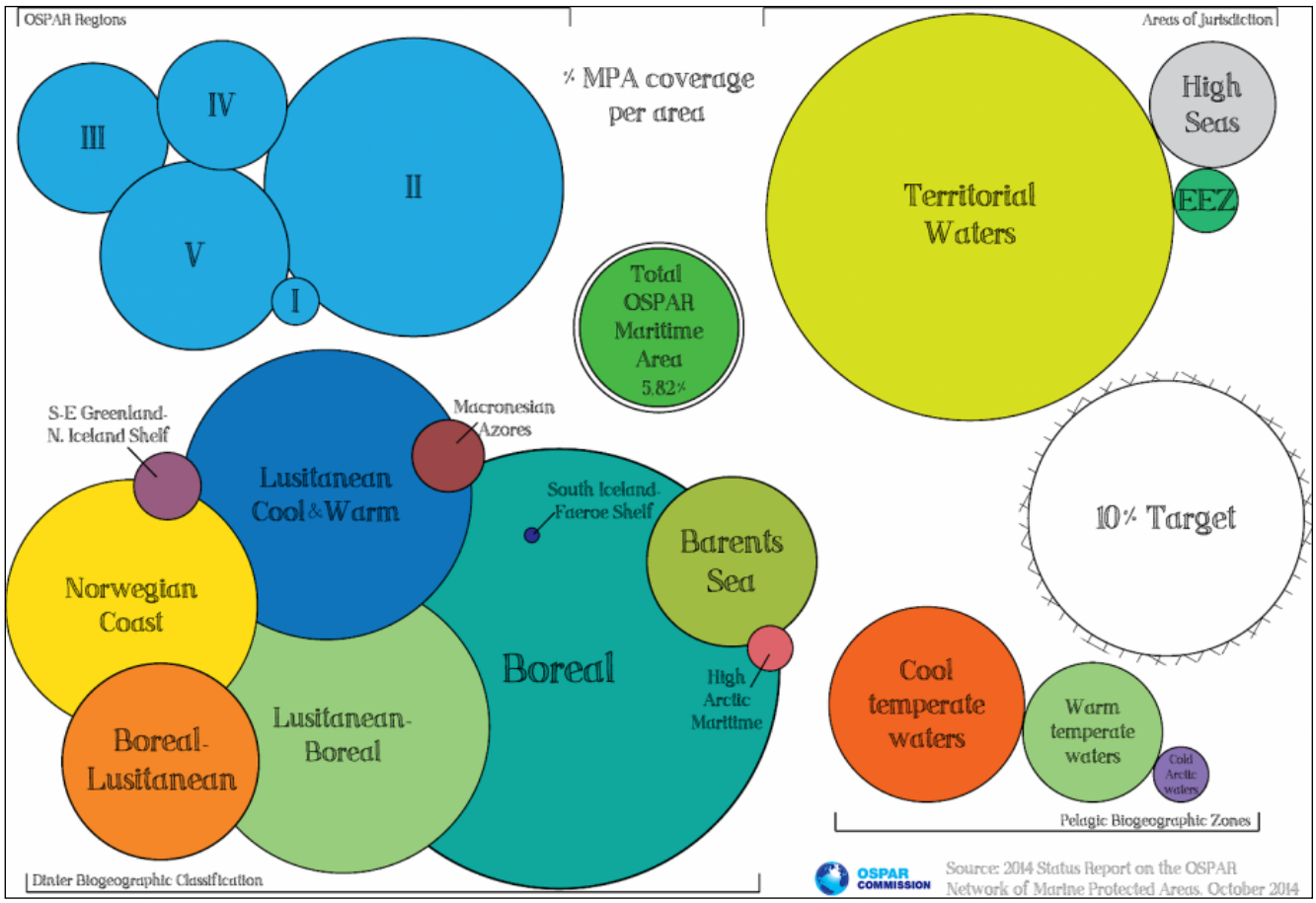
10. The OSPAR Commission's strategic objective with regard to biodiversity and ecosystems is to halt and prevent by 2020 further loss of biodiversity in the OSPAR maritime area, to protect and conserve ecosystems and to restore, where practicable, marine areas which have been adversely affected.

11. To this end, the OSPAR Commission will:

a. improve the status of threatened and/or declining species and habitats, in particular of those on the OSPAR List, and ensure that they are effectively conserved, working, where appropriate, with other competent authorities;

b. further OSPAR's work on marine protected areas with the view of achieving a network of marine protected areas which: by 2016 is well managed, coherent management measures have been set up and are being implemented for such MPAs that have been designated up to 2012 (see http://www.ospar.org/work-areas/bdc/marine-protected-areas);





c. aim to ensure that the effects of human activities and pressures on the marine environment, individually or cumulatively, do not adversely affect species, habitats and ecosystems, in particular those on the OSPAR List of Threatened and/or Declining Species and Habitats;

d. substantially reduce marine litter in the OSPAR maritime area to levels where properties and quantities of marine litter do not cause harm to the coastal and marine environment;

e. endeavour to keep the introduction of energy, including underwater noise, at levels that do not adversely affect the marine environment in the OSPAR maritime area;

f. endeavour to limit the introduction of non-indigenous species by human activities to levels that do not adversely alter the ecosystems.

Activity Relevant to Region 1.

(i) In terms of biodiversity, OSPAR's ongoing work on threatened and/or declining species and habitats, marine protected areas, common indicators as well as identified climate change issues (e.g. ocean acidification, blue carbon) can address the needs in Region I;

(ii) OSPAR's indicators on litter and noise should include adequate coverage of Region I;

(iii) OSPAR will include Region 1 in its assessment of impacts of seismic surveys by its intersessional group on noise.

The Biodiversity Committee:

a. Has prioritised cooperation with the Artic Council. The Biodiversity Committee wishes to explore with the Arctic Council issues related to the conservation and protection of biodiversity. This includes issues identified above, such as impacts of climate change and ocean acidification.

b. Is continuing the development of a proforma for an Arctic Ice High Seas MPA (with relevant parties informing the Arctic Council on progress)

The Environmental Impacts of Human Activity Committee:

a. Identifies potential areas to look for cooperation with the Arctic Council which include nitrogen emissions, marine litter, non-native invasive species, and the emerging experience on implementing the Species and Habitats Recommendations.

OSPAR's Hazardous Substances Strategy and Eutrophication Strategy;

12. The OSPAR Commission's strategic objective with regard to eutrophication is to combat eutrophication in the OSPAR maritime area, with the ultimate aim to achieve and maintain a healthy marine environment where anthropogenic eutrophication does not occur. The Eutrophication Strategy is implemented progressively by making every endeavour, through appropriate actions and measures, to move towards the targets of:

a. that human-induced eutrophication is minimised, especially the adverse effects thereof, such as losses in biodiversity, ecosystem degradation, harmful algae blooms and oxygen deficiency in bottom waters, and finally;

b. achieving and maintaining, by 2020, that all parts of the OSPAR maritime area have the status of non-problem area.

13. The OSPAR Commission's strategic objective with regard to hazardous substances is to prevent pollution of the OSPAR maritime area by continuously reducing discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances with the ultimate aim to achieve concentrations in the marine environment near background values for naturally occurring substances and close to zero for man-made synthetic substances. The Hazardous Substances Strategy will be implemented progressively by making every endeavour, through appropriate actions and measures:

a. to achieve concentrations of contaminants at levels not giving rise to pollution effects, and contaminants in fish and other seafood for human consumption not exceeding levels established by EU legislation or other relevant standards, and finally;

b. to move towards the targets of the cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances by the year 2020.

Activity Relevant to Region 1.

(i) While this is an area of on-going activity with regard to contaminants, Eutrophication has not been identified as a relevant issue for Region 1.

The Hazardous Substances and Eutrophication Committee:

a. Aims to collaborate with the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme as it is preparing an assessment of 'chemicals of emerging Arctic concern'. This includes looking at newer contaminants (in the "red category") and could also include new issues such as impacts of nanotechnology chemicals;
b. Aims to work with AMAP as it identifies sources of Arctic pollution coming from areas south of the Arctic that OSPAR can take action on;
c. Consider current work on guidelines on monitoring contaminants common to HELCOM and OSPAR (such as mercury and POPS). This sort of comparison/documentation of differences and similarities could also be extended to AMAP;
d. The Working Group on Monitoring and on Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (MIME) will conduct a comparison of AMAP and OSPAR guidelines to conduct a high-level broad-brush screening analysis and provide a discussion paper in time for the MIME 2015 (ICES offering support);

e. Proposes that MIME and AMAP expert groups cooperate in work on trend assessments, as and when appropriate.;
f. Consider cooperation related to OSPAR's work on CAMP.

OSPAR's Joint Assessment and Monitoring Programme and cross cutting issues; Climate Change and Ocean Acidification;

Relevant activity to Region 1.

(i) In terms of OSPAR's broader agenda, climate change is identified as a key issue. Developing a better understanding of Blue Carbon is an issue that several of OSPAR's committees have an included in their plans for 2016.

(ii) In addition, adaptation reporting is continuing in OSPAR, understanding Climate Change Adaptation for the marine environment is also a potential area to investigate for collaboration with the Arctic Council.

(iii) OSPAR is currently considering a strategy for monitoring and assessment of ocean acidification. This is an area that means of collaboration with the Arctic Council could also be identified.

(iv) OSPAR understands that AMAP is working on an update to its previous Arctic Ocean Acidification assessment, working towards a 2016 report. This could deliver the Arctic component of an eventual assessment of OA in the OSPAR region. The Chair of SGOA had already noted that future work in ocean acidification should focus on vulnerable areas, such as the Arctic;

Means of Collaboration with the Arctic Council

3. Potential coordination and cooperation with the Arctic Council could include increased information exchange and collaboration between the Council/Secretariat, the working groups and the task forces relevant to OSPAR's work in order to achieve complementarity and avoid duplication between OSPAR's work and the work of the Arctic Council.

4. Secretariat/OSPAR and Committee Chairs/Lead Contracting Parties to seek to engage on this agenda with the current Arctic Council officials/Chair.

Initial suggested activities in 2015/16 (which could be considered an exploratory stage) include:

a. Explore the possibilities for cooperation with the Arctic Council on the issues identified in the Arctic Marine Strategic Plan 2015-2025.

b. Informed by the findings from the Secretariat, key Committees and working groups in OSPAR make contact with working groups with a similar focus in Arctic Council, including to invite attendance to relevant meetings and information exchange, coordination and collaboration on the issues identified above.