

Essentials for OSPAR MMC 1998

In this the International Year of the Ocean 1998, the Environment Ministers of the North-East Atlantic and the Member of the European Commission, meeting within the framework of the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic from 22 - 23 July 1998 in Sintra, Portugal, have the historical opportunity to move marine environmental policy and law an important step forward. The 'Sintra Statement', which is expected to arise from this Meeting, in conjunction with the new OSPAR Objectives and Strategies and a new Annex to the Convention will become a political milestone - provided that they take bold steps to:

- cease and eliminate discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances and/or radioactive substances,
- address the importance of land based (diffuse) sources of toxics and nutrients including the entire catchment and atmospheric sources,
- encompass measures to safeguard offshore and coastal marine species and habitats, and
- reaffirm that any practices of deliberate disposal of any matter at sea which is likely to harm the marine environment including disused offshore installations are to be avoided.

WWF (World Wide Fund For Nature)

**Ministerial Meeting
of the
OSPAR Commission
Sintra, Portugal
22-23 July 1998**

Congratulates all Signatories on the entry into force of the 1992 OSPAR Convention. It is a great advantage to the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic that the Precautionary Principle is anchored in Article 2.2. (a) of this new treaty "... by virtue of which preventive measures are to be taken when there are reasonable grounds for concern that substances or energy introduced, directly or indirectly, into the marine environment may bring about hazards to human health, harm living

resources and marine ecosystems, damage amenities or interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea, even when there is no conclusive evidence of a causal relationship between the inputs and the effects."

Welcomes the Annexes to the OSPAR Convention, now in force, which include strict provisions for the prevention and elimination of pollution by dumping or incineration, eg. prohibition of dumping of sewage sludge by end 1998, as well as pollution from land based and/or offshore sources. The new framework clearly reflects the evolution of precautionary action under the former Oslo and Paris Conventions for the Prevention of Marine Pollution as well as the International Conferences on the Protection of the North Sea (NSC). The same applies to the decisions and recommendations endorsed by the former Oslo and Paris Commissions that remain in force, such as PARCOM Decision 95/1 on the Phasing Out of the Use of Short-Chain Chlorinated Paraffins and PARCOM Recommendation 94/7 on the Elaboration of National Action Plans and Best Environmental Practice (BEP) for the Reduction of Inputs to the Environment of Pesticides from Agricultural Use.

Regrets that the 1992 Ministerial commitment to reduce "*discharges and emissions of substances which are toxic, persistent and liable to bioaccumulate, in particular organohalogen substances, and which could reach the marine environment ... by the year 2000, to levels that are not harmful to man or nature with the aim of their elimination; ... to supplement reduction measures with programmes to phase out the use of such substances*" is now unlikely to be fulfilled.

Is confident that Parties to the OSPAR Convention have learnt the 'organohalogen lesson' of the past and therefore are prepared to develop measures to reduce and eliminate a new wave of endocrine disrupting chemicals released from land based, offshore and shipping sources. Examples of which are known from the following groups of chemicals: organotin compounds, chlorinated and brominated hydrocarbons, alkylphenols, phthalates, polyaromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) and a vast number of agricultural pesticides.

Calls upon Ministers of the Environment and the Member of the European Commission to unanimously adopt the target of the cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances by the year 2020. In this context, particular attention should be paid to chemicals which have been shown or which are suspected to interfere with the body's hormone system, also known as endocrine disruptors.

For information, contact:

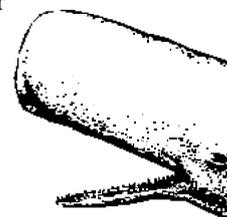
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Welcomes the objective, scope and tenor of the new OSPAR Strategy with regard to Hazardous Substances as a suitable instrument to make the Precautionary Principle operational and to encompass preventive measures on endocrine disrupting chemicals as well as hazardous ingredients in agricultural pesticides which could reach the marine environment.

Expresses concern that certain concepts in the new OSPAR Strategy such as risk assessment could be used to undermine its preventive approach. Any selection and priority setting mechanisms should just be subordinate tools to set priorities for further action. The guiding principle for achieving the OSPAR Objective with regard to hazardous substances must be the Precautionary Principle.

Urges the Parties to the OSPAR Convention to develop programmes and measures on hazardous substances and/or endocrine disruptors identified under the OSPAR List of Chemicals for Priority Action without any delay, with a view to eliminating their discharges, emissions and losses at source and/or phasing out the use of such compounds.

Requests that the Ministerial Meeting should consider specific regional measures to prevent pollution from shipping in the North-East Atlantic, in particular to enhance and accomplish a global ban on the antifouling agent tributyltin (TBT), the most toxic and effective biocide which has ever been used at sea.

Emphasizes the fact that biodiversity cannot be conserved in a marine environment filled with harmful chemicals. Likewise, valuable efforts to eliminate hazardous substances from the marine environment and to avert the toxic threat to marine wildlife may be jeopardised by other human activities which directly deteriorate habitats or cause a decline of certain species and populations.

Recalls that the 1992 OSPAR Ministerial Declaration invited Contracting Parties to encompass measures for the protection of marine species and habitats and the new OSPAR Convention itself provides scope for the protection of the entire marine environment and the ecosystems. Since 1992, WWF has strongly advocated the amendment of the Convention by new provisions for measures to protect marine species and habitats.

Welcomes Ministers' adoption in 1998 of OSPAR Annex V on the Protection and Conservation of the Ecosystems and Biological Diversity of the Maritime Area as a sign of progress.

Calls for an ecologically representative network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) throughout the North-East Atlantic in order to safeguard the diversity of marine wildlife and maintain the natural dynamics of coastal and marine ecosystems.

Highlights the need for precautionary measures related to species, populations, areas or sites. As in the case of marine pollution, it is not enough to defend marine biota against human impacts once they have come under immediate

threat. It is crucial to take a proactive approach to conserve the biodiversity of the Maritime Area in order to prevent potential adverse impacts.

Welcomes those parts of the new OSPAR Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Ecosystems and Biological Diversity of the Maritime Area in particular which support the precautionary and forward looking elements of Annex V.

Fears that in the longer term the Protection and Conservation of the Ecosystems and Biological Diversity of the Maritime Area and the intention to adopt an integrated ecosystem approach will not be possible if the Annex continues to be hampered by the opening clauses with regard to maritime transport and fisheries. The implementation of the related Strategy is unlikely to become fully effective unless key actual or potential adverse effects on species, habitats and ecosystems resulting from fisheries practices such as accidental killing and incidental take of non-target species as well as benthic damage are included in the candidate list of human activities to be assessed.

Recommends seeking close cooperation with neighbouring regional (seas) agreements such as the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS, including AMAP, PAME, CAFF), the Helsinki, Barcelona and Bucharest Conventions.

Encourages the Czech Republic and the Russian Federation to accede the OSPAR Convention as they share a considerable portion of the riverine catchment and/or maritime area of the North-East Atlantic Ocean.

Is committed to continuing and increasing its involvement in the work of the committees and working groups of the OSPAR Commission once full access for NGO observers to these subsidiary bodies will be provided.

WWF's essentials for OSPAR MMC 1998 are focused on:

- **Hazardous Substances** including the emerging issue of endocrine disruption - relating to the OSPAR Strategy with regard to Hazardous Substances (MMC 98/06/01-E), and
- **Ecosystems and Biological Diversity** - relating to the OSPAR Annex and/or Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Ecosystems and Biological Diversity of the Maritime Area (MMC 98/04/01-E; MMC 98/06/04-E).

WWF has produced briefings in order to shed light on the practical importance of these OSPAR Strategies in the field:

- **Effects of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals on Cetaceans**
- **An Evaluation of Pesticides Disrupting the Hormone and Reproductive System**
- **Justification for the Potential Selection of the Celtic Shelf Break as an Offshore Marine Protected Area**