



Sintra + 1 ... Indicators of progress made since OSPAR/MMC 98

briefing

Having made focal submissions and interventions with regard to *Hazardous Substances* and *Ecosystems and Biological Diversity* at OSPAR/MMC, the

World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF)

Welcomed the adoption, by Environment Ministers and the Member of the European Commission, of the related strategies and Annex V as well as the adoption of the OSPAR Strategy to Combat Eutrophication, the Strategy with regard to Radioactive Substances and the OSPAR Action Plan in Sintra 1998.

Welcomes the coming into effect in February 1999 of the OSPAR Decisions on dumping of radioactive wastes, disposal of disused offshore installations, emissions and discharge limits for the vinyl chloride sector and the manufacture of vinyl chloride monomer and concerning the status of previous OSPAR decisions, recommendations and agreements, as adopted in Sintra.

Highlights the Sintra Ministerial commitment to *"promote the establishment of a network of marine protected areas to ensure the sustainable use and protection and conservation of marine biological diversity and its ecosystems"* .

At OSPAR 99, as a matter of priority, Contracting Parties must:

- **agree** on urgent programmes of work to reach the commitment made in the Sintra Statement to *"make every endeavour to move towards the target of cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of hazardous substances by the year 2020"*;

**Meeting of the
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Kingston upon Hull
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- **agree** on the development of measures concerned with the protection of the full range of biological diversity in the North-East Atlantic and the restoration, where practicable, of marine areas which have been adversely affected, in line with international commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity; and
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- **adopt** a new OSPAR Strategy on Environmental Goals and Management Mechanisms for Offshore Activities and **agree** a tight deadline (e.g. OSPAR 2000) by which a programme of work to implement the Strategy will be developed, in order to provide improved management of offshore activities within the North-East Atlantic.

WWF has identified a number of indicators of progress on implementation of key strategies concerned - both at an OSPAR (North-East Atlantic) level and at a national level by Contracting Parties. On the other hand, a number of obstacles have been observed that have hampered progress on the strategies adopted in Sintra.

Hazardous Substances

With regard to the Dynamic Selection and Prioritisation Mechanism for hazardous Candidate Substances, WWF is confident that, at last, any risk assessment philosophy which falls short of the requirements of the marine environment will not be allowed to undermine the precautionary principle. Also, that the mechanism will be strictly orientated to serve the purpose of marine pollution prevention i.e. avoiding inputs of substances with intrinsic hazardous properties into the marine environment.

WWF is extremely concerned at the limited progress that has been made by OSPAR with regard to hazardous substances already identified by OSPAR/MMC 1998 as Chemicals for Priority Action. WWF believes that action taken by individual Contracting Parties merits particular attention, for example, the initiatives undertaken by Denmark in order to phase out the use of phthalates, the Swedish announcement to ban the use of brominated flame retardants and the German ship trials with biocide-free antifoulants.

Sweden is to introduce a national ban on the sale and use of the brominated flame retardants, PBDE and PBB, following a report issued in March 1999 by the Swedish National Chemicals Inspectorate (KEMI). Clearly there is already much international support for the phasing out of brominated flame retardants, but a legal instrument converting these commitments into a concrete timetable and deadline is still required, in the form of an OSPAR Decision. WWF believes that, due to high levels of brominated flame retardants in the marine food web and occurrence in the deep sea environment, the phasing out of these priority chemicals should become a test case for the implementation of the OSPAR Strategy with regard to Hazardous Substances.

WWF regrets that there are no lead countries identified for a number of other priority chemicals. Nor is there, as yet, agreement on programmes of action for any of the priority hazardous



substances. In the light of the important role endocrine disrupting chemicals have played in the preparations for OSPAR/MMC 98, WWF believes it is a matter of great concern that Contracting Parties have not provided additional information on these compounds.

Ecosystems and Biodiversity

WWF is impressed by the momentum OSPAR has been gaining in relation to the Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Ecosystems and Biological Diversity of the Maritime Area since the Meeting in Sintra 1998. WWF particularly appreciates the efforts by the OSPAR Workshop on Marine Protected Areas hosted by Germany, the preparations by the Netherlands and Portugal in order to conduct a second workshop to finalise the criteria for the selection of species and habitats and by the United Kingdom to co-organise a workshop on habitat classification and biogeographic regions.

While WWF feels that work on the development of programmes and measures to implement the new Annex V and related strategy is progressing reasonably well, there is concern that the routes being chosen are going to lose sight of the need to protect the full range of diversity within the North-East Atlantic and of the need to restore, where practicable, those areas that have been adversely affected. WWF also fears that precautionary protection measures e.g. the establishment of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) could be restricted by narrowing down the scope to threatened, endangered or rare species and habitats. WWF underlines the need for further selection of sites which meet wider MPA-criteria (e.g. high biodiversity or high productivity) and the relationship between fisheries boxes / no-take-zones and MPAs.

With regard to the latter, WWF welcomes the measures recently endorsed by the Norwegian authorities in order to safeguard cold water coral reefs of the North-East Atlantic. Spurred by concerns that were raised by the Norwegian Institute of Marine Research (IMR), the Norwegian Ministry of Fisheries with effect of 11 March 1999 has enacted the protection of coral reefs including the following provisions:

- all use of fishing gears that are dragged and may get in contact with the sea floor is forbidden within a defined area.
- all intentional destruction of coral reefs is forbidden throughout Norway, and extra caution is requested while fishing in the vicinity of known reefs.

The Ministry referred to Norway's obligations to conserve biological diversity following international treaties, and that the highest

densities of the largest *Lophelia* reefs are found off Norway. Even though anticipating the entry into force of Annex V to the OSPAR Convention which hopefully will happen in near future this is an excellent example of how to integrate environmental aspects into fisheries management where such concerted action deems appropriate and urgent protection measures are required.

Therefore, WWF points out that, after the coming into force of Annex V and the related Appendix 3 of the OSPAR Convention, it will be necessary to have a mechanism and strategy in place to also draw a fisheries related question or problem to the attention of the EC as an authority competent for that question and/or to cooperate on such a question or problem where action within the competence of the OSPAR Commission is desirable to complement or support action by the EC. WWF emphasises the need to investigate possible means of such mechanism as early as possible.

An overview of WWF's submissions to the 1999 OSPAR Commission Meeting

- Update on Organotin Compounds: Ship Trials with Non-Toxic Antifouling Paints on the German Coast (OSPAR 99/04/16-E*); The Accumulation and Impact of Organotins on Marine Mammals, Seabirds and Fish for Human Consumption (OSPAR 99/04/19-E*(L))
- Comment on the Draft OSPAR Strategy on Environmental Goals and Management Mechanisms for Offshore Activities (OSPAR 99/04/20-E*(L))

In addition, WWF has produced new **briefings** to supplement the briefing edition started in Sintra 1998:

- Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals: Brominated Flame Retardants
- Justification for the Potential Selection of the Sula Ridge as an Offshore Marine Protected Area
- Justification for the Potential Selection of the Waters West of Sylt as an Offshore Marine Protected Area

