

Statement at Plenary at the General Assembly, approximately at 13:30 on Friday 9.00

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

1. The OSPAR Commission for the protection of North East Atlantic is the intergovernmental regional sea organisation for the North East Atlantic. Through the convention, the Contracting Parties, 15 national governments and the European Union cooperate with each other as they seek to conserve and protect the marine environment. Through the Convention, the Contracting Parties aim to maximise achievement of their environmental objectives within the characteristics of the marine ecosystems and the social and economic realities of the North East Atlantic.
2. Such cooperation over OSPAR's 45 year history has delivered comprehensive monitoring and assessment. It has successfully addressed pollution from hazardous substances, heavy metals, eutrophication, radioactive substances and discharges from offshore industry. Nevertheless challenges remain including concerns from new contaminants, from litter and from noise. OSPAR's work on biodiversity includes addressing threats to its list of threatened and declining species and habitats, as well as establishment of a network of Marine Protected Areas throughout the convention area, including in areas beyond national jurisdiction.
3. While reporting on progress on SDGs is primarily for our Contracting Parties as UN Member States. OSPAR can provide supporting monitoring and assessment at the regional level. This allows for an ecosystem-based perspective at the larger ecosystem scale of the relevant sea, which is appropriate for the ocean SDG in particular.
4. I believe SDG 14 and the call for action add extra impetus for us all to achieve the environmental, social, and economic objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals. This implies cooperation between regions and across the globe, cooperation across sectors and organisational structures. OSPAR is already active in this regard, for instance in working closely with the North East Atlantic Fisheries Commission on our respective activities on area based management in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Such work, which we have highlighted through a voluntary commitment is fundamental to delivering an ecosystem based approach across the sectoral divides.
5. OSPAR has over the years cooperated with its sister regional seas in neighbouring regions of the Baltic, Mediterranean and the Atlantic coast of west central and southern Africa. I am pleased to say the Sustainable Development Goal 14 has now provided further impetus for OSPAR and our sister regional sea the Caribbean Environment Programme, Cartagena Convention, to commit to start exploring a cooperation on our common and linked marine environment issues across the Atlantic Ocean, to see how we can support each other, and our respective Contracting Parties, in delivering SDG 14.
6. These on-going activities are consistent with the need to rise to the challenges set out by Agenda 2030 and in particular delivering SDG 14. The regional level of cooperation is necessary as the ecosystems of the oceans do not respect borders. The OSPAR Commission stands ready to support our Contracting Parties in delivering SDG 14 as they cooperate with each other to conserve and protect the marine environment.

Thank you