

Agenda Item 7: Cooperation with IWC, OSPAR, HELCOM and other international Organisations

The "OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic" - The Structure of OSPAR

Submitted by the Secretariat

NOTE FROM THE SECRETARIAT:
IN THE INTERESTS OF ECONOMY, DELEGATES ARE KINDLY REMINDED TO BRING THEIR OWN COPIES OF THESE DOCUMENTS TO THE MEETING

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

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with information from <http://www.ospar.org>

The Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (OSPAR Convention) was opened for signature at the Ministerial Meeting of the Oslo and Paris Commissions in Paris on 22 September 1992.

The Convention has been signed and ratified by all of the Contracting Parties to the Oslo or Paris Conventions (Belgium, Denmark, the Commission of the European Communities, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and by Luxembourg and Switzerland.

The OSPAR Convention entered into force on 25 March 1998. It replaces the Oslo and Paris Conventions, but Decisions, Recommendations and all other agreements adopted under those Conventions will continue to be applicable, unaltered in their legal nature, unless they are terminated by new measures adopted under the 1992 OSPAR Convention.

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In order to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic OSPAR develops strategies with regard to hazardous and radioactive substances, a strategy to combat eutrophication and a strategy on the protection and conservation of the ecosystems and biological diversity of the maritime area. To implement these programmes two committees (PRAM and ASMO) and several Working Groups have been formed. The organisation and structure of OSPAR is depicted in Fig. 1.

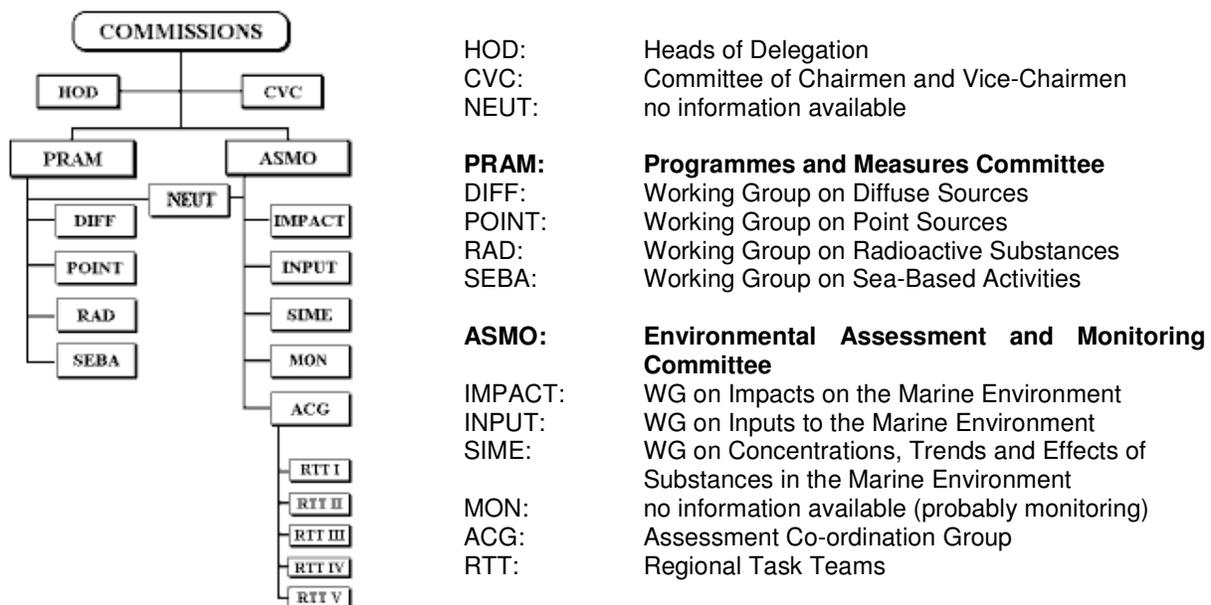


Fig. 1
Structure and organisation of OSPAR

The function of the **Programmes and Measures Committee (PRAM)** is to draw up programmes and measures for the prevention and elimination of pollution of the maritime area and for the control of activities which may, directly or indirectly, adversely affect the maritime area. Four Working Groups have been established to tackle marine pollution from different sources.

The **Working Group on Diffuse Sources (DIFF)** investigates the best available techniques and best environmental practice for the reduction or elimination of inputs to the maritime area of hazardous substances from diffuse sources. Draft Recommendations and Decisions are prepared to prevent and eliminate pollution from discharges/emissions of hazardous substances from diffuse sources. In addition, the WG identifies further substances whose use and disposal may result in pollution of the maritime area for consideration for possible action.

Accordingly, the **Working Group on Point Sources (POINT)** deals with the prevention and elimination of pollution of the maritime area from land-based point sources.

The **Working Group on Radioactive Substances (RAD)** draws up draft programmes and measures for the prevention and elimination of pollution of the maritime area as a result of anthropogenic inputs of radioactive substances, including wastes.

The **Working Group on Sea-Based Activities (SEBA)** aims at the prevention and elimination of pollution of the maritime area from offshore installations, dumping and dredging activities or other sea-based activities.

The function of the **Environmental Assessment and Monitoring Committee (ASMO)** is generally to review the condition of the maritime area, the effectiveness of the measures being adopted, the priorities and the need for any additional or different measures in accordance with Annex IV of the OSPAR Convention, 1992. The ASMO Committee shall interact and co-operate with ICES in all activities of the Committee and shall seek advice from other relevant bodies as appropriate.

The ASMO Committee prepares for publication at regular intervals assessments of the quality status of the marine environment and of its development. A quality assessment of the whole OSPAR maritime area, including estuaries, is planned for the year 2000. Such assessments shall include an evaluation of the effectiveness of measures taken, planned or proposed for the protection of the marine environment and the identification of priorities for action. Moreover, ASMO harmonises, initiates and co-ordinates research programmes required for assessment purposes and develops analytical tools (such as modelling) for assessment procedures. The Committee elaborates techniques for the development of Ecological Quality Objectives and is responsible for the definition, co-ordination and review of the monitoring programme of the Commission. With respect to this task quality assurance and intercomparison of sampling and analytical methods are important issues to ensure satisfactory monitoring exercises.

The **Working Group on Impacts on the Marine Environment (IMPACT)** arranges for the collection of information on human activities, other than those leading to inputs of substances, and on their impact on the marine environment, including species and habitats. IMPACT evaluates this information with regard to the geographical distribution and temporal trends, in particular in order to contribute to the preparation of Quality Status Reports for the maritime area. It also develops the concepts, tools and criteria, such as impact assessment techniques and risk analysis procedures, relevant to evaluation of the information collected and to an overall assessment of the quality status of the marine environment.

Accordingly, the **Working Group on Inputs to the Marine Environment (INPUT)** arranges for the monitoring of inputs of substances from all sources to the marine environment and shall evaluate this information with regard to geographical distribution, temporal trends and the proportion, which is of anthropogenic origin.

The **Working Group on Concentrations, Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (SIME)** is responsible for the monitoring of concentrations and effects of substances in the marine environment. This information is evaluated with regard to spatial differences and temporal trends. SIME develops, in co-operation with relevant international organisations, the guidelines, tools, techniques and quality assurance procedures needed to operate the monitoring programme and to evaluate the data collected (ecotoxicological reference values and natural background concentrations).

The **Assessment Co-ordination Group (ACG)** shall, on the basis of regional and sub-regional reports, co-ordinate the preparation and review of a Convention-wide Quality Status Report for the maritime area. ACG is responsible for co-ordinating the work of the Regional Task Teams by the establishment of a general framework, guidelines and timetables for the preparation of regional or, where appropriate, sub-regional Quality Status Reports.

For the preparation of the regional Quality Status Reports for the five regions identified by the Commission **Regional Task Teams (RTTs)** have been established. The RTTs further define and review the "Monitoring and Assessment Matrix" as established by ASMO, in order to identify the need for data and information to carry out assessments for their respective regions. They organise the gathering of data and information from national sources not available in the framework of the Commission(s) and prepare regional Quality Status Reports, taking into account the general framework, guidelines and timetables as developed by ACG.