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| |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | Annex 18 |   OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic |
| Meeting of the Biodiversity Committee (BDC) |
| Oslo (Norway): 18-21 March 2024 |

# Terms of Reference for the Intersessional Correspondence Group on Marine Protected Areas (ICG-MPA) in 2024/2025

**Participants**

1. ICG-MPA will be convened by Germany (Janos Hennicke, German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN)) and is open to all Contracting Parties and Observers, in accordance with the OSPAR Rules of Procedure. A contact list of experts nominated by Contracting Parties and Observers is maintained by the Secretariat to facilitate information exchange between participants. In addition, and as in former years, ICG-MPA may actively seek assistance and contributions by the scientific community on specific tasks.

**Organisation of Work**

2. Besides working through correspondence, ICG-MPA will have one meeting in the 2024/2025 meeting cycle. The meeting will take place from (provisionally) 12 – 15 November 2024 at the kind invitation of Ireland. Additional meetings outside of the main ICG-MPA meeting will be arranged as required for the relevant tasks.

**Scope of Work**

ICG-MPA will aim to carry out the following tasks in the period up to the Biodiversity Committee meeting (BDC) 2025:

*North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy (NEAES) 2030 implementation plan*

3. Ensure implementation and reporting of tasks adopted within the NEAES implementation plan and consider the need to develop additional tasks as appropriate.

Table 1: Table of the association between selected NEAES operational objectives, being of particular relevance to ICG-MPA, and the main themes of work of ICG-MPA. Cells marked with a cross indicate association between operational objectives and work themes.

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|  | Work themes | | | |
|  | Development of the OSPAR Network of MPAs – spatial coverage | Ecological coherence of the OSPAR Network of MPAs | Management of MPAs | Climate change - how MPAs can contribute to climate adaptation and mitigation |
| **S5.O1:** By 2030 OSPAR will further develop its network of marine protected areas (MPAs) and other effective conservation measures (OECMs) to cover at least 30% of the OSPAR maritime area to ensure it is representative, ecologically coherent and effectively managed to achieve its conservation objectives. | X | X | X |  |
| **S5.O2:** By 2022 OSPAR will identify barriers to the effective management of MPAs, and by 2024 take steps to address them appropriately to enable all OSPAR MPAs to achieve their conservation objectives. |  |  | X |  |
| **S11.O2:** By 2023, and every six years thereafter, OSPAR will assess at a regional scale the OSPAR network of marine protected areas in respect of the resilience of marine biodiversity to climate change, with the aim of ensuring that the network provides a good representation of species and habitats and that its spatial design and management regime remains relevant. |  | X | X | X |
| **S12.O2**: By 2025 OSPAR will take nature-based carbon storage into account when reviewing the criteria for the designation of marine protected areas, and reviewing the OSPAR List of threatened and/or declining species and habitats. | X | X |  | X |

*Measure progress towards the ongoing development of the OSPAR network of MPAs and OECMs*

4. Continue to collate and update relevant information/data held within the OSPAR MPA database on (a) species, habitats and ecological processes within existing OSPAR MPAs; (b) human activities and resulting pressures and impacts on species, habitats and ecological processes within existing OSPAR MPAs; and (c) the management of OSPAR MPAs;

5. Further development of the OSPAR MPA database to ensure it is up to date and the data is accessible for use by OSPAR Contracting Parties, observer organisations and any interested third parties;

6. Assist in the preparation of the 2024 Assessment Sheet on the OSPAR Network of MPAs, to be presented to BDC 2025 with a view to publication;

7. Consider OECMs within the OSPAR context, in line with the NEAES 2030.

*Development of the OSPAR Network of MPAs*

8. Assist in developing further the OSPAR Network of MPAs:

1. from a regional perspective, based on the 2023 MPA Status Report and 2023 MPA Assessment Sheet, identify ‘gaps’ regarding the representativity, resilience, and connectivity of the Network and its components*;*
2. support coastal states in their nomination of any further components to the network;
3. consider, prepare and elaborate, as appropriate, scientific cases for MPA proposals in areas beyond national jurisdiction;
4. further consider the impacts of climate change with respect to MPA designation and management.

*Elaboration of an approach to assess/evaluate the ecological coherence of the OSPAR Network of MPAs*

9. Progress the work on developing the assessment of ecological coherence for the OSPAR network of MPAs as outlined in task S5.O1.T1.

*Management of MPAs*

10. Compile and report on the implementation of the OSPAR Recommendations on the Management of MPAs in areas beyond national jurisdiction (ABNJ) by OSPAR Contracting Parties, including taking forward the development of management measures for OSPAR High Sea MPAs and developing options for management actions for Contracting Parties in MPAs in ABNJ;

11. Taking into account the outcomes of the assessment of management of the OSPAR Network of MPAs of the latest MPA Status Report and other relevant information to work on the guidance and its application to assess management effectiveness of the OSPAR Network of MPAs;

12. Prepare any information exchange needs concerning selected areas under the collective arrangements between OSPAR and other competent international organisations;

13. Facilitate information exchange on MPA management practices.

*Exchange and sharing of information*

14. Exchange, as appropriate, information and experiences with the Barcelona Convention, the Helsinki Convention, the European Union Marine Expert Group, the Arctic Council, in particular PAME and CAFF, and other relevant initiatives on developing networks of Marine Protected Areas.

*Relation between the OSPAR MPAs and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) requirements*

15. Facilitate and discuss contributions of interested Contracting Parties to the regional considerations regarding MPAs under Article 13 of the MSFD.

*OSPAR Science Agenda*

16. To review the Excel spreadsheet containing the knowledge gaps identified in BDC and QSR 2023 assessments of relevance to ICG-MPA. Decide if the relevant knowledge gaps identified in the spreadsheet are in fact knowledge gaps that should be listed in the OSPAR Science Agenda 2024. For the knowledge gaps that should be listed in the OSA 2024, consider if the wording used is clear enough for an external audience to understand what is required or provide alternative text suggestions if they need rewording.