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Protecting and conserving the North-East Atlantic and its resources

What role is there for the Regional Seas Conventions in implementing the MSFD and the MSPD?

John Mouat
Deputy Secretary

OSPAR's role in Integrated Management of Human Activities and MSFD Coordination

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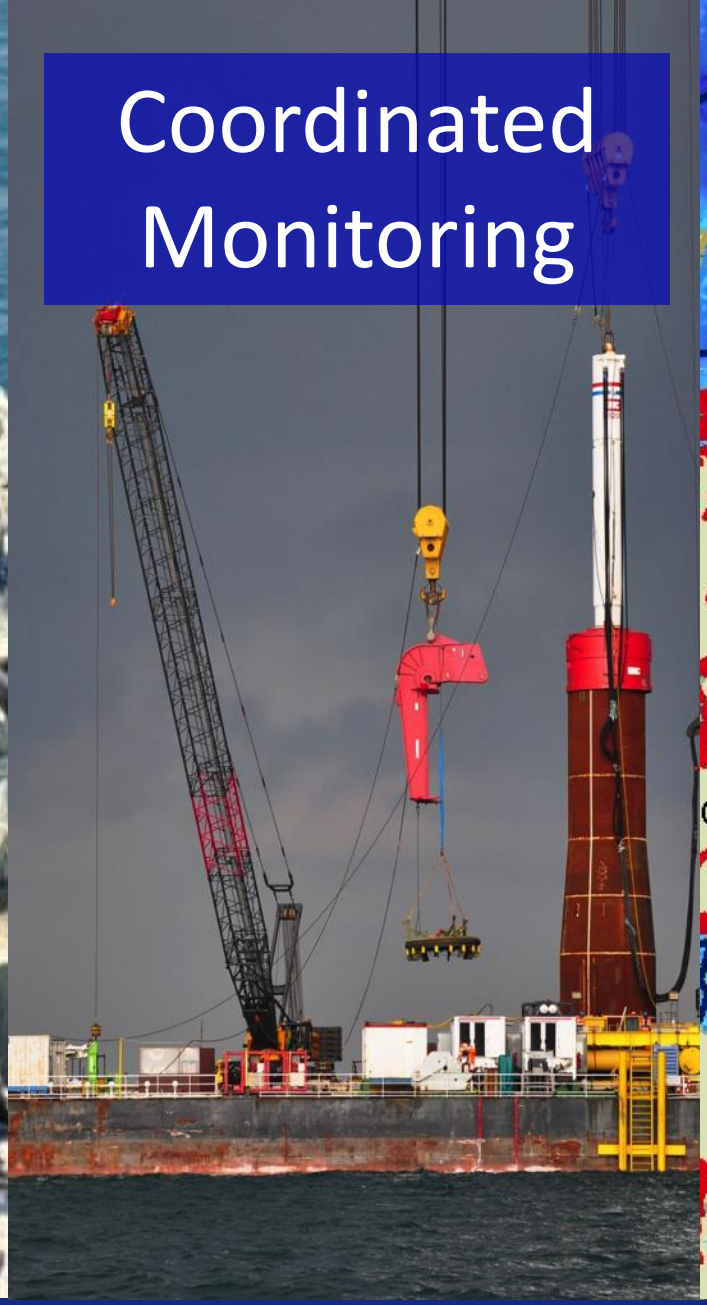

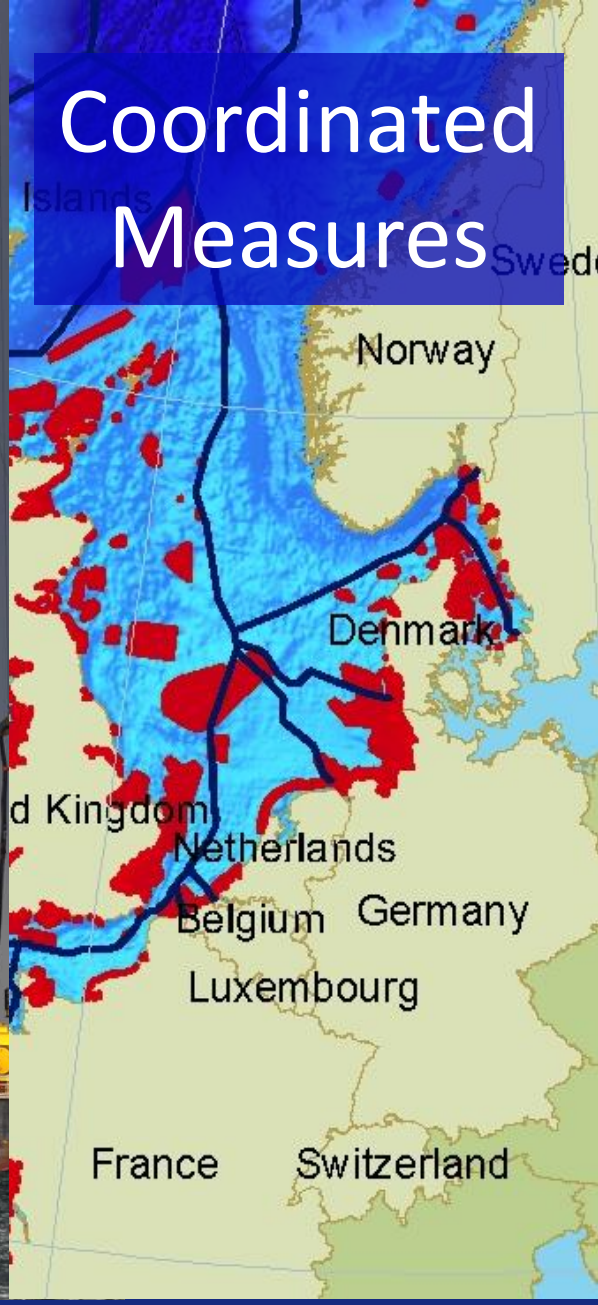

Regional MSFD Implementation

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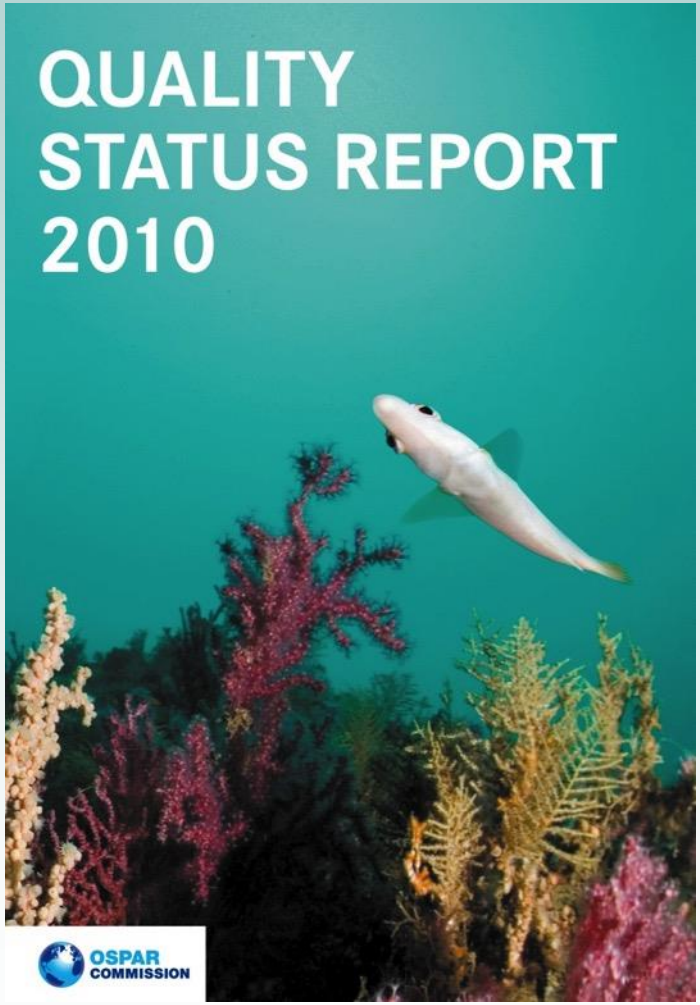
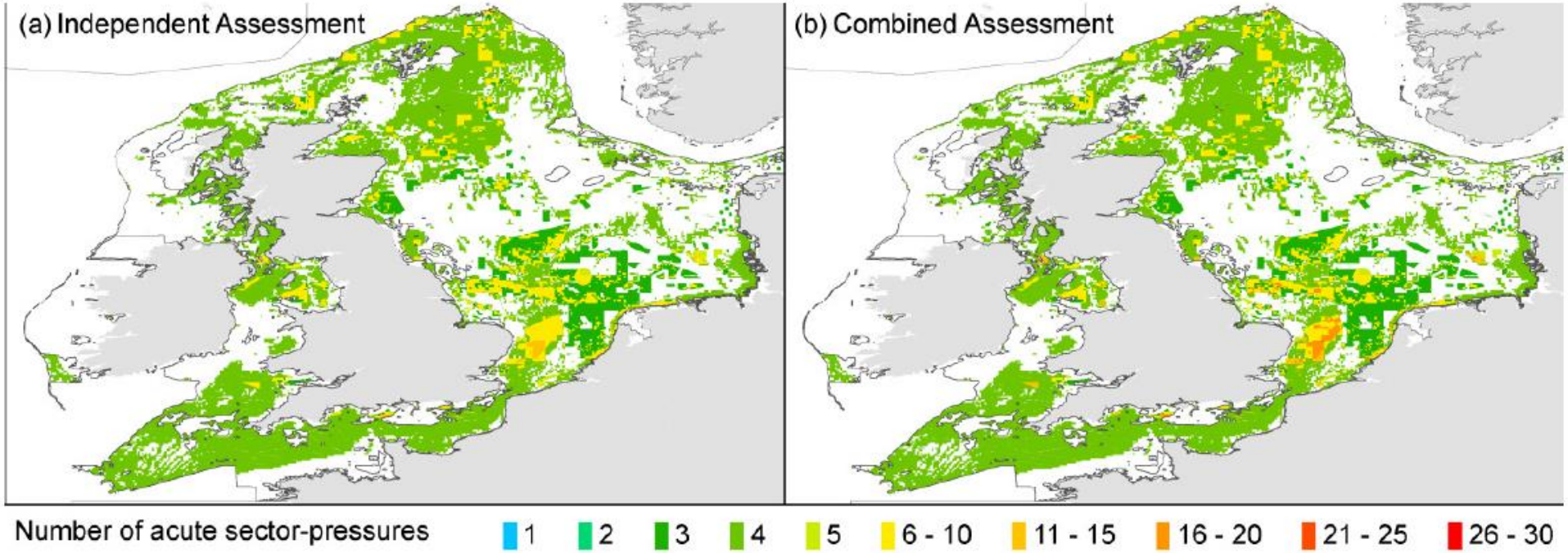
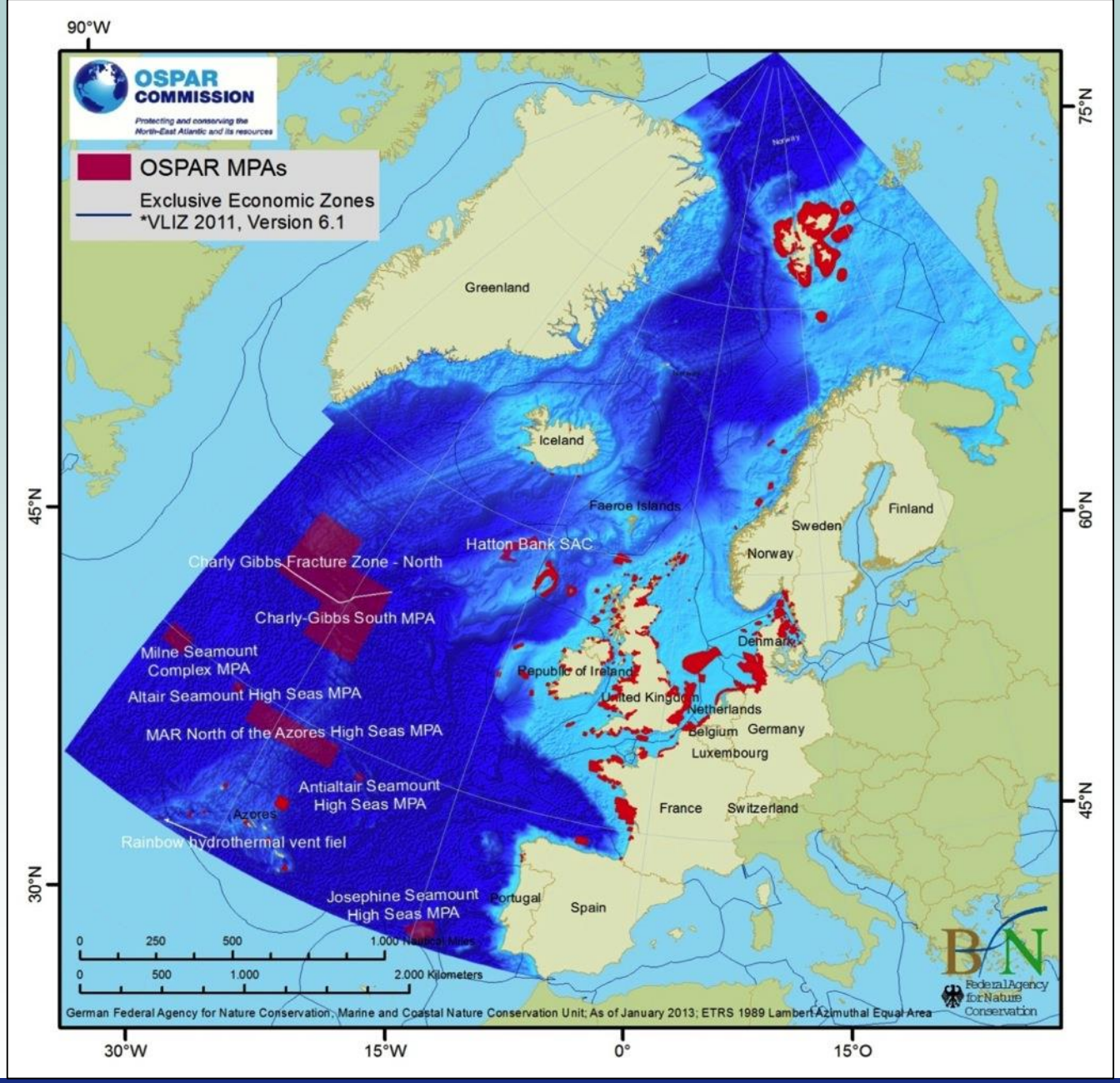
Regional Assessments



- Intermediate Assessment 2017
  - Climate change impacts/prevailing conditions
  - Pressures
  - Biodiversity Status
  - Ecosystem assessment outlook

Tools to support the Ecosystem Approach can support MSPD implementation





MPA Ecological Coherence

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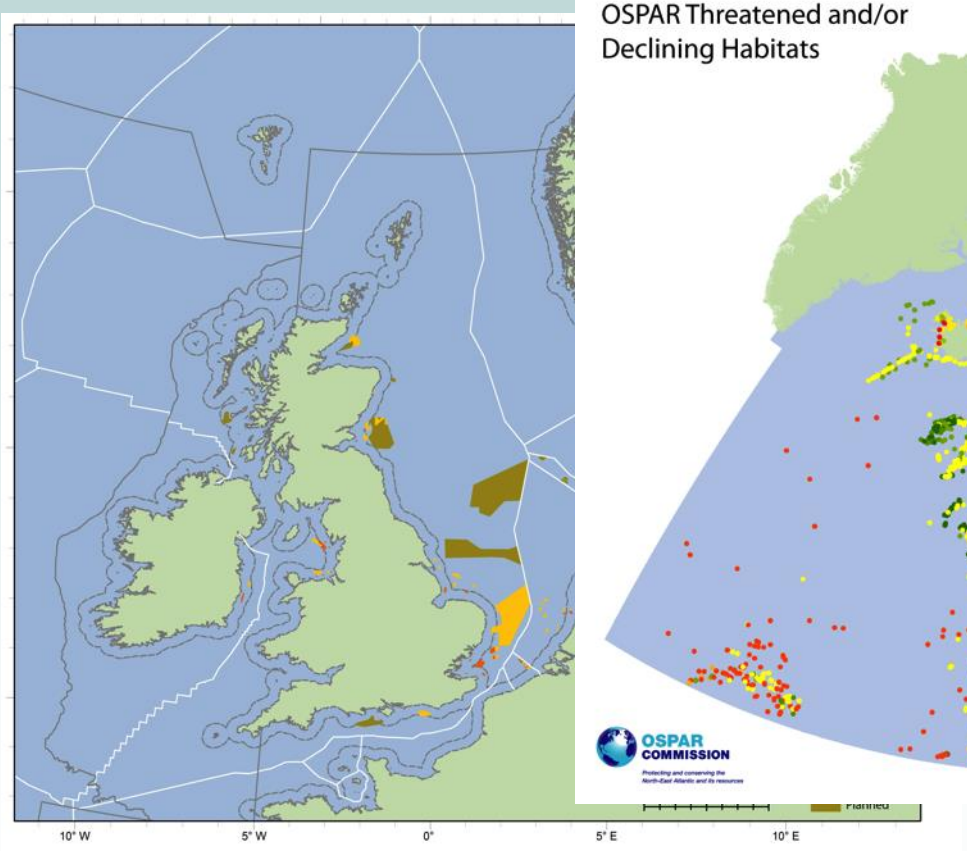
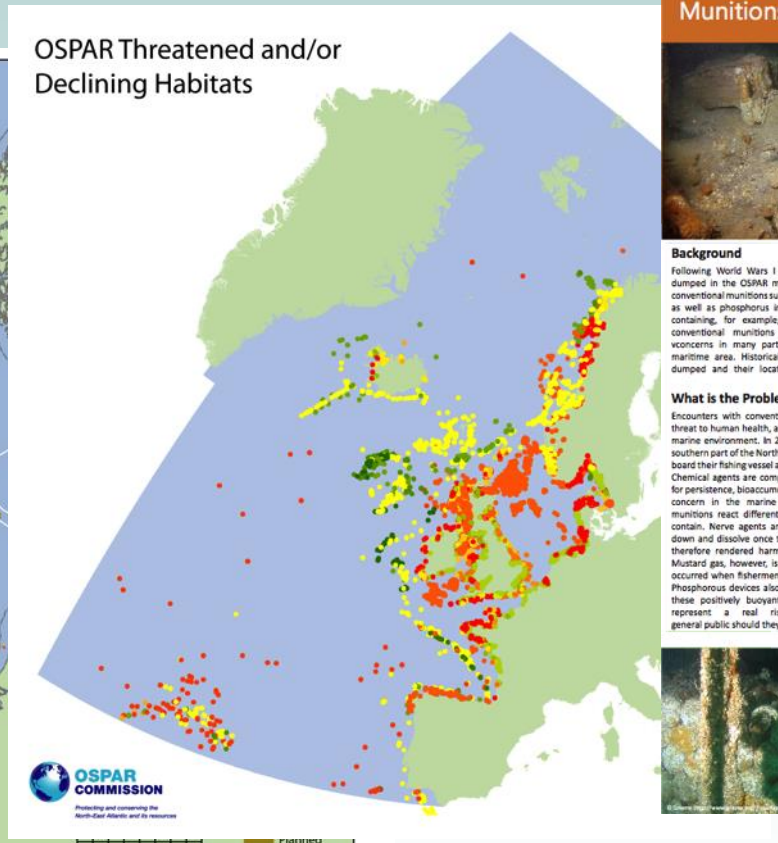
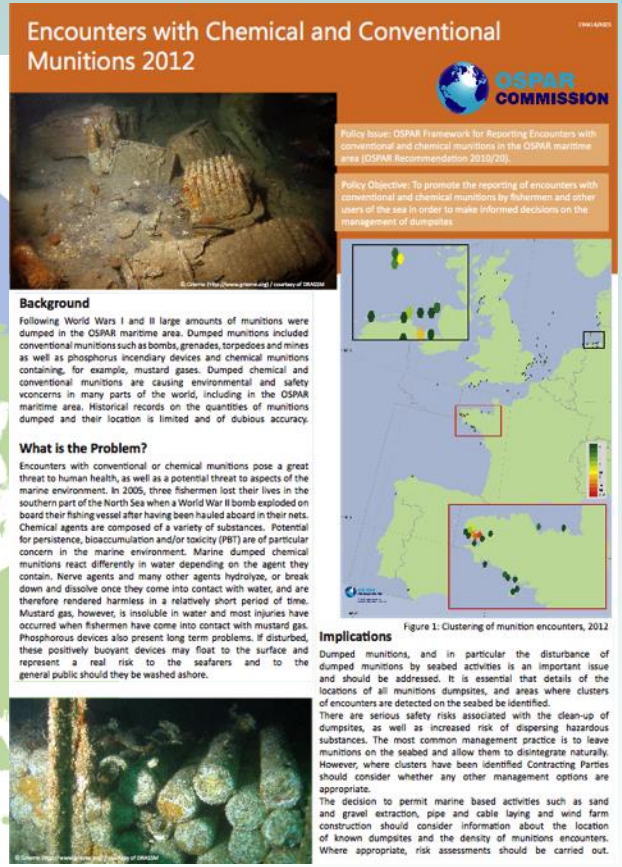
Regional MSFD and Thematic Datasets and Assessments







Encounters with Chemical and Conventional Munitions 2012

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Policy Issue: OSPAR Framework for Reporting Encounters with conventional and chemical munitions in the OSPAR maritime area (OSPAR Recommendation 2010/20).

Policy Objective: To promote the reporting of encounters with conventional and chemical munitions by fishermen and other users of the sea in order to make informed decisions on the management of dumpsites

Background

Following World Wars I and II large amounts of munitions were dumped in the OSPAR maritime area. Dumped munitions included conventional munitions such as bombs, grenades, torpedoes and mines as well as phosphorus incendiary devices and chemical munitions containing, for example, mustard gases. Dumped chemical and conventional munitions are causing environmental and safety vconcerns in many parts of the world, including in the OSPAR maritime area. Historical records on the quantities of munitions dumped and their location is limited and of dubious accuracy.

What is the Problem?

Encounters with conventional or chemical munitions pose a great threat to human health, as well as a potential threat to aspects of the marine environment. In 2005, three fishermen lost their lives in the southern part of the North Sea when a World War II bomb exploded on board their fishing vessel after having been hauled aboard in their nets. Chemical agents are composed of a variety of substances. Potential for persistence, bioaccumulation and/or toxicity (PBT) are of particular concern in the marine environment. Marine dumped chemical munitions react differently in water depending on the agent they contain. Nerve agents and many other agents hydrolyze, or break down and dissolve once they come into contact with water, and are therefore rendered harmless in a relatively short period of time. Mustard gas, however, is insoluble in water and most injuries have occurred when fishermen have come into contact with mustard gas. Phosphorous devices also present long term problems. If disturbed, these positively buoyant devices may float to the surface and represent a real risk to the seafarers and to the general public should they be washed ashore.

Figure 1: Clustering of munition encounters, 2012

Implications

Dumped munitions, and in particular the disturbance of dumped munitions by seabed activities is an important issue and should be addressed. It is essential that details of the locations of all munitions dumpsites, and areas where clusters of encounters are detected on the seabed be identified.

There are serious safety risks associated with the clean-up of dumpsites, as well as increased risk of dispersing hazardous substances. The most common management practice is to leave munitions on the seabed and allow them to disintegrate naturally. However, where clusters have been identified Contracting Parties should consider whether any other management options are appropriate.

The decision to permit marine based activities such as sand and gravel extraction, pipe and cable laying and wind farm construction should consider information about the location of known dumpsites and the density of munitions encounters. Where appropriate, risk assessments should be carried out.

How can OSPAR support MSPD implementation in the Future?

- Common Regional Assessments and Data
- Further Development of Measures (E.g. RAP for underwater noise)
- Better common understanding of ecosystem elements and cumulative effects of pressures
- Collaborative approach reduces costs

Thank you

- Secretariat@ospar.org

- Watch this space: www.ospar.org

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