

**THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL SEAS AND ROLE IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOALS AND THE POST 2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.**

OSPAR

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0. INTRODUCTION.

First of all, I would like to thank UNEP for the invitation to participate in the 16th Global Meeting of the Regional Seas Conventions and Action Plans, and the opportunity to explain my view and the view of the OSPAR Contracting Parties in relation to the Development Goals and the Post 2015 Agenda.

In OSPAR we had the chance to exchange ideas on the future role of OSPAR at our last meeting of Contracting Parties, last June in Portugal.

The discussion was very lively and rich and from the beginning there was a unanimous agreement on the need of including in the post2015 agenda development goals related to oceans and that there is a role to be played by regional seas conventions and agreements, including OSPAR.

It was also clear that the process at the UN level was complex and there were many different elements to be taken into account in the negotiations, as the post 2015 agenda will not only include goals on different topics, but also governance and financial matters for which, and all together, finding the appropriate equilibrium was key for the success of its implementation.

The two main issues of substance discussed were:

1. The need for a specific goal on oceans
2. Potential target topics that OSPAR may prioritise for consideration as oceans Sustainable Development Goals.

1. THE NEED FOR A SPECIFIC GOAL ON OCEANS.

Contracting Parties were supportive of Sustainable Development Goals for oceans but, taking into account the complexity of the negotiations, were of the view that OSPAR, as an international organization, should wait for the conclusions of the negotiations on

the identification of the thematic broad goals at the relevant UN Working Groups, in particular in relation to whether there is a need for a specific goal on oceans or if it was better to include oceans targets in other thematic goals.

As a consequence the common idea was to rely on the contracting parties to emphasise in the negotiations the role of the Regional Seas Conventions.

Nevertheless, the Contracting parties also explained that OSPAR could play a role in the implementation of the SDG goals once they are agreed and in providing relevant scientific and technical information to the SDG process, if required.

2. POTENTIAL TARGET TOPICS THAT OSPAR MAY PRIORITISE FOR CONSIDERATION AS OCEANS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

The Contracting Parties had also different perspectives on the concreteness of the target topics that the negotiations in the UN should consider, nevertheless there were opinions favouring the consideration of some challenges that oceans are facing such as pollution including marine litter, acidification, sea-level rise, the establishment of area-based management tools including marine protected areas in areas beyond national jurisdiction, tackling overfishing and overcapacity, illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, etc. And suggested the possibility of including targets related to the protection of ocean health and biodiversity; sustainable fisheries; small-scale fisheries and marine pollution, amongst others.

The debate turned very fast to the possible role of OSPAR related to the potential targets mentioned and there were doubts on the role of OSPAR related to certain matters, such as fisheries, as other international organizations could be better placed to give an input on the management of these activities.

As a conclusion, the common approach taken by OSPAR was that its role in the implementation phase could concentrate on the targets for which OSPAR could give more added value. This is most evident in targets related to issues OSPAR was already working on and in OSPAR's experience working under an ecosystem based approach to the management of human activities.

3. MY ASSESSMENT OF THE DEBATE.

- a) All Contracting Parties are participating actively in the negotiations at the UN level and are taking into account different national perspectives when negotiating SDG's.
- b) For the Contracting Parties Oceans SDG's are important but to find equilibrium between the different goals is key for a successful outcome of the process.

- c) There is a need to ensure coherence in the identification of the topic targets and that they should be ambitious but implementable.
- d) The national negotiators should be aware and well informed of the work of the Regional Conventions in order to take a realistic and coherent national position in relation to the identification of oceans sustainable development goals and the role of the regional seas conventions in the process.
- e) The OSPAR Commission has a clear role in the implementation phase once the goals and targets had been identified, in particular in matters for which OSPAR has experience and for which regional collective action is needed.
- f) For matters on which different organizations have competence there will be a need for joint implementation efforts.
- g) The implementation of the ecosystem approach could be an effective tool for implementation as sustainable development is embedded as an objective in all its steps.

4. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

Our Regional Seas Conventions, all have as a core objective, in a more or less explicit way, the promotion of sustainable development, so the agenda post 2015 should have a consequence in our work programmes and in the way we are working.

The definition of a universal development agenda, with common but differentiated responsibilities for countries, based on democratic ownership, and with a clear objective: the eradication of poverty and promotion of sustainable development, is complemented by other major international processes underway, including the review and definition of the Agenda of Financing for Development, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, all of them are closely linked to the process of defining objectives post2015. Though Regional Seas Conventions are not participating directly in these processes, we will be influenced by their outcomes.

If sustainable development is part of the substance of the Regional Seas Conventions, we should contribute to the core goals of the agenda post 2015 that is to say (extreme and relative) poverty eradication and sustainable development of the oceans and seas by tackling what we best know, the environmental dimension.

Economic, social and environmental vulnerability, defined as the probability of a decline in the level of welfare present due to an external shock or surprise, is one of the driving forces for poverty. Fighting environmental vulnerability at the regional level through the promotion of sustainable management of natural resources in our regions is a way to contribute to implementation of appropriate policies. To this end the implementation of the ecosystem approach could be instrumental.

In addition, the availability of adequate institutional frameworks and structures at international level has been highlighted in the UN discussions as a very important matter. The Regional Seas institutions could provide coordination for a favorable international environment for sustainable development of our oceans and seas, beyond, but not excluding, in relation to national and international cooperation agendas. To favor this approach we need to continuously assess our institutions to make them more open, inclusive and participatory, and comprising clear monitoring

systems involving accountability, not only for budget execution, but also of the results achieved and performance.