



Brussels, 30th April 2014

RE: OSPAR Regional action plan on marine litter – ensuring a strong, ambitious plan in 2014

Dear Minister,

Seas At Risk and the above organisations are writing to you with regard to the OSPAR Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter in the North East Atlantic, due to be adopted by the OSPAR 2014 meeting.

We are deeply concerned that **OSPAR Contracting Parties are diverging from the original purpose of the plan**. Any delay in the plan’s adoption results in a delay in action, and will lead to complications as Contracting Parties adopt their programs of measures under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD).

Marine litter is a serious problem in the OSPAR region, and due to its trans-boundary nature, a **coordinated regional effort to tackle the input of waste into the seas is necessary**. To encourage your administrators delegated with the task of agreeing this action plan, and to ensure a strong and ambitious plan is agreed upon in this year’s OSPAR meeting in June, we wish to remind you of:

1. The commitment made at last year’s OSPAR 2013 meeting to agree upon a Regional Action Plan in 2014.

“OSPAR agreed to develop a Regional Action Plan (RAP) on Marine Litter by 2014, with the aim to implement the North East Atlantic Environment Strategy and to follow up on the commitment in the Bergen Statement.”

It was also agreed that the RAP should contain a focus on specific sources or items of most concern to the region, regionally coordinated measures and SMART reduction or operational targets.

2. Your commitment at the Bergen Ministerial Meeting 2010 to develop reduction measures and ambitious targets:

“We note that quantities of litter in many areas of the North-East Atlantic are unacceptable, and therefore we will continue to develop reduction measures and targets, taking into consideration an ambitious target resulting in a reduction in 2020”

3. The European Commission’s article 12 assessment of the implementation of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive; particularly the conclusions that regional coordination must be improved, with the regional seas conventions being the vehicle for this. In the report accompanying the assessment¹, the Commission states that:

“Regional cooperation must be at the very heart of MSFD implementation, and influence national implementation processes, rather than the other way around. At the regional level, the Commission and the Member States should cooperate with other Contracting Parties in the context of the RSCs (Regional Seas Conventions), to stimulate further coordination at regional or sub-regional level”

4. The timeline of the MSFD, which states that Programs of Measures (PoM) must be adopted by 2015. The Regional Action Plan is the ideal opportunity to coordinate PoMs at the regional level and to guide each country on deciding on which measures to implement. Due to the requirement for public consultation, any delay in the adoption of the Regional Action Plan could mean that specific measures are left out of the public consultation process.

We believe that the current Regional Action Plan fulfills all of the requirements, and will lead to a reduction of marine litter in the OSPAR region. We strongly oppose any move to delay the adoption until 2015, or to remove or weaken the operational targets and measures.

We feel that strong and ambitious measures need to be guided by SMART targets, and that the operational specifics of these measures can be agreed upon after the adoption of the plan. Solving the problem of marine litter is not a matter of rocket science; the processes resulting in marine litter are known, possible measures to end this processes are available. What is needed is political will and ambition. Political negotiations must not be allowed to detract from the original aims of the measures proposed.

This is an exciting opportunity that has been many years in the making, and we call on you to secure your legacy of firm action to protect the environment.

Yours sincerely, and on behalf of all the supporting NGOs ,



Monica Verbeek, **Executive Director of Seas at Risk**

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52014DC0097>