

Bonn Agreement Accord de Bonn



Press statement

New Court
48 Carey Street
London WC2A 2JQ
United Kingdom

t: +44 (0)20 7430 5200
f: +44 (0)20 7430 5225
e: secretariat@bonnagreement.org
www.bonnagreement.org

Contact number **Audrey Baconnais-Rosez +0044 (0)20 7430 5200**

For immediate release **24 November 2010**

The Bonn Agreement takes decisive action against accidental and illegal pollution of the marine environment.

The Bonn Agreement Action Plan, an ambitious strategy for improving the protection of the coastal and marine environment against pollution by oil and other harmful substances, has been adopted in Dublin, alongside a political commitment put forward in a ministerial “Dublin Declaration”.

Ministers and Senior Government Officials of all coastal states around the Greater North Sea and its approaches (see map) and from the European Commission, at a meeting in Dublin on 24 November 2010, adopted an ambitious Bonn Agreement Action Plan to further improve the protection of the coastal and marine environment against pollution by oil and other harmful substances from shipping, offshore oil and gas operations and other maritime activities.

This important step towards healthier and cleaner marine environment was approved by representatives from Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the European Union under the so called Bonn Agreement, an international Agreement for regional cooperation in dealing with pollution by oil and other harmful substances.



■ Bonn Agreement Contracting Parties
■ Bonn Agreement maritime area

Alongside the Action Plan ministers also adopted the Dublin Declaration, a political statement reaffirming the goals which have been pursued over the last successful 40 years of cooperation, and setting out ambitious commitments for the years to come.

The meeting also welcomed the accession of Ireland to the Bonn Agreement, and a realignment of national zones of responsibility following which the size of the Bonn Agreement maritime area has more than doubled, now comprising about 1,586,000 km².

Mr Noel Dempsey, the Irish Minister for Transport hosting the meeting said: + Ireland joined the Bonn Agreement as a Contracting Party earlier this year. We fully recognise the need to work together to prevent pollution, to be prepared and respond when any accident happens. International technical cooperation in this area is essential. +

Only recently the importance of efficient pollution preparedness and response work was underlined by the accident on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. It is clear that despite the decrease in the number of observed spills in the Bonn Agreement area, one of the world's busiest international shipping areas, risks will always remain.

The Bonn Agreement Action Plan will now further strengthen regional cooperation on prevention, preparedness and response to marine pollution from shipping and other maritime activities, including concrete actions on aerial and satellite surveillance of maritime activities, capacities for pollution response, enforcement of environmental rules and standards, and programmes for research and development. The Action Plan also promotes a Bonn Agreement area-wide risk assessment that will take into account the environmental sensitivity of marine and coastal areas and adequate balances of resources for response work.

Mrs Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Co-operation Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response welcomed the Action Plan saying: +The experience gained and results achieved over the last 40 years have to be acknowledged but they also have to pave the way to achieving further goals and vision of the Bonn Agreement. It is therefore very timely that the Bonn Agreement engages to further enhance cooperation through the newly adopted Bonn Agreement Action Plan, strengthening not only response, but also adequate prevention and preparedness actions. +

Finally, in the margins of the Dublin meeting the UK and Norway reinforced their bilateral cooperation with the signature of a joint response plan, the so called NORBRIT plan.

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Note for editors

1) The Bonn Agreement (Agreement for cooperation in dealing with pollution of the North Sea by oil and other harmful substances, 1983) is the mechanism by which the North Sea and Irish Sea States, and the European Union (the Contracting Parties), work together to help each other in combating pollution in the North Sea and Irish Sea Area from maritime disasters and chronic pollution from ships and offshore installations and to carry out surveillance as an aid to detecting and combating pollution at sea.

Based on a German initiative, this important Agreement on the protection of the marine environment was concluded in 1969 in the former federal capital of Bonn. Since then, Germany has been the Depository of the Bonn Agreement. In 1983 and 1989, the Agreement was extended and adapted to take account of the latest developments.

The North Sea and Irish Sea States are Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

2) The NORBRIT Plan is a Memorandum of Understanding written to record the agreement, between the Maritime and Coastguard Agency for the United Kingdom and the Norwegian Coastal Administration for Norway.

The objectives of this plan are to establish procedures that are to be followed during any joint Norway/United Kingdom counter pollution and salvage operations at sea.