

Agreement for Cooperation in Dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances, 1983

Twenty-second Meeting of the Contracting Parties

2010 Ministerial Meeting of the Contracting Parties

Dublin: 23 - 26 November 2010

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## Declaration of the First Ministerial Meeting of the Bonn Agreement (Dublin Declaration)

Dublin, Ireland 24 November 2010

**WE THE MINISTERS AND THE MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION, responsible for dealing with pollution of the Greater North Sea and its Approaches by oil and other harmful substances have met in Dublin on 24 November 2010 for the First Ministerial Meeting of the Bonn Agreement in the presence of Observers from neighbouring regions and Intergovernmental Organisations;**

ACKNOWLEDGING more than 40 years of successful cooperation within the framework of the Bonn Agreement and RECOGNIZING the common benefit of further invigorating our cooperation to avoid accidental and illegal pollution from maritime activities in the Greater North Sea and its Approaches;

WELCOMING the accession of Ireland to the Bonn Agreement and the realignment of the Zones of Responsibility of Contracting Parties, following which the size of the Bonn Agreement maritime area has more than doubled;

AIMING at further strengthening both the protection of our coastal and marine environment from pollution by oil and other harmful substances as a result of maritime incidents and the way in which we cooperate on pollution prevention, preparedness and response;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the role of the International Maritime Organization in regulating global shipping, the development of an Integrated Maritime Policy for the European Union and relevant EU legislation<sup>1</sup> in preparedness and response to major maritime incidents;

RECALLING the political commitments with regard to response to accidental and illegal pollution from maritime activities made at the North Sea Conferences, in particular in Bergen (2002) and Göteborg (2006) and at the 2010 Ministerial Meeting of the OSPAR Commission in Bergen;

NOTING, both the continuing growth of maritime transport and other maritime activities such as offshore oil and gas exploitation and the fact that, despite the decrease in the number of observed spills during recent years, risks will always remain;

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<sup>1</sup> Norway is not a member of the European Union. Norway contributes on the basis of equivalent national legislation and EU legislation by which they are bound as member of the European Economic Area (EEA).

**Have ADOPTED the following joint Declaration:**

1. We *have a vision* of a Greater North Sea and its Approaches free from accidental and illegal pollution from shipping, offshore oil and gas operations and other maritime activities.
2. We note what has been achieved through e.g. MARPOL and BONN surveillance activities with regard to the reduction of pollution originating from human activities at sea. Nevertheless it is with great concern that despite the wide range of measures taken in recent years, accidental and illegal pollution with oil or other hazardous substances remains a significant threat for the Greater North Sea and its Approaches.
3. We are *acutely aware* of the economic and social value of our marine and coastal environment, and *recognise* that the costs of adequate resources for marine pollution prevention, preparedness and response are low compared to those arising from remediation after major pollution incidents.
4. We *stress* the importance of efficient maritime emergency prevention, preparedness and response. We *reaffirm* our commitment to continue our active cooperation under the Bonn Agreement on planning, training and operational testing of emergency response systems, including joint operational response exercises. We *recognise* the importance of this work being complementary to the overall European cooperation through the Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC) and in coordination with the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).
5. We *welcome* the well-established system for aerial and satellite surveillance of shipping, offshore oil and gas operations and other maritime activities in the Greater North Sea and its Approaches as an important aid for detecting possible pollution and discouraging illegal discharges at sea. We *reaffirm* our commitment to continue national flight programmes and joint operations such as Coordinated Extended Pollution Control Operations (CEPCOs) and *welcome* the satellite imagery service provided by EMSA through CleanSeaNet as a contribution to better preparedness and prevention of pollution.
6. We *welcome* the development and continuous update of Bonn Agreement manuals and codes that provide unique information sources for pollution prevention, preparedness and response work and have been recognised globally in the context of the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC) and its HNS Protocol.
7. We *reaffirm* our commitment to maintain and keep up to date the Bonn Agreement Joint Response Plans to maritime incidents (i.e. the DENGERNETH Plan, MANCHEPLAN, NORBRIT Plan, Quadripartite Zone Plan), providing an important tool to initiate response activities across borders immediately after an incident irrespective of the national zone of responsibility in which the spill originated. We *recognise* the importance of establishing joint response plans for areas currently not covered (i.e. the northern North Sea, Irish Sea and Celtic Sea).
8. *Recognising* the growing risks from increasing transport of hazardous and noxious substances, larger ships and persistently high traffic densities, offshore oil and gas operations and other maritime activities, we *note* the importance of maintaining an adequate balance of resources for ensuring efficient pollution prevention and response work in the Greater North Sea and its Approaches. We *agree* that further development of response capacities in the Bonn Agreement area should be based on joint risk assessments. We *further agree* to promote a region wide Bonn Agreement risk assessment and that such an assessment should be based on tiered response strategies, taking into account environmental sensitivity and addressing sub-regional and transboundary risks.
9. We *reaffirm* our joint commitment to the prevention of accidental and illegal pollution by collaboration on, and collective contribution to, enforcement of international maritime pollution rules and standards. We *recognise* that provisions such as the designation of the North Sea as a Special Area under MARPOL Annex I and V and as a SOx Emission Control Area under Annex VI, will not be effective unless properly enforced. In this context we *welcome* the successful work of the North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors in

promoting enforcement of pollution rules and standards and *agree* to continue cooperation with the Network on enforcement of all relevant MARPOL Annexes.

10. We *stress* the need for coordinated research and development programmes in order to ensure counter-pollution measures are executed with best available techniques and equipment and that decision making processes are supported with the best available knowledge, methods and supportive tools. We *note* the identification of priorities for Research and Development under the Bonn Agreement and *welcome* related cooperation with marine research funding frameworks such as the SEAS-ERA<sup>2</sup>.

11. We *reaffirm*, in the light of the pollution of the Gulf of Mexico caused by the Deepwater Horizon accident earlier this year, our commitment to take appropriate actions to prevent and respond to accidental and illegal pollution from offshore oil and gas operations in the Greater North Sea and its Approaches. In this respect we recognise the importance of synergies and close cooperation with the OSPAR Commission. We *welcome* progress made in the reduction of operational discharges of oil from offshore platforms to the sea in the OSPAR Maritime Area as highlighted in the Quality Status Report 2010<sup>3</sup>.

12. We *note* the development of integrated approaches to maritime governance and the importance of strengthening our cooperation with the relevant maritime sectors and bodies in order to move towards more holistic management of our seas, with the objective of achieving good environmental status of marine waters in accordance with the EU Marine Strategy Framework Directive<sup>4</sup>.

13. We *welcome* the active participation of Observers to the Bonn Agreement, e.g. Spain, and *reaffirm* our commitment to cooperate with other competent international and regional organisations and bodies, in particular the International Maritime Organization, OSPAR and HELSINKI Commissions, Lisbon Agreement, REMPEC, OECD and the Arctic Council with a view to achieve our common goals.

**In view of the above and as a strong commitment to pursue our vision, we attest the re-invigorated efforts to accomplish agreed objectives and to achieve better prevention, preparedness and response to marine pollution in the Greater North Sea and its Approaches and have ADOPTED the Bonn Agreement Action Plan, as at Annex 1, setting out ambitious strategic aims, operational objectives and actions for their implementation for the period 2010-2013.**

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<sup>2</sup> SEAS-ERA (European Research Area Network): Towards Integrated Marine Research Strategy and Programmes

<sup>3</sup> OSPAR, 2010. Quality Status Report 2010. OSPAR Commission. London. 176 pp. <http://qsr2010.ospar.org>

<sup>4</sup> Directive 2008/56/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 June 2008 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of marine environmental policy.