Terms of reference for the Working Group on Operational, Technical and Scientific Questions of the Bonn Agreement (OTSOPA)

**Background**

1. OTSOPA is the Working Group on Operational, Technical and Scientific Questions established under the Bonn Agreement.
2. The Bonn Agreement meeting in 1978 agreed (BONN 1978 SR Item 6.2) to establish a special working group to examine technical, scientific and organisational questions. The first meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Operational, Technical and Scientific questions concerning Oil Pollution Abatement (OTOSPA) were held later in 1978.

**Aim**

1. OTSOPA supports regional cooperation to prevent, prepare for and respond to accidental and illegal marine pollution from maritime activities in the Bonn Agreement area through assisting on the implementation of the Bonn Agreement Strategy Action Plan (BASAP).
2. OTSOPA aims to share best practice, discuss pollution trends and new maritime developments, exchange information on new projects, equipment or tools, and agree upon and evaluate a joint programme of work.

**Scope of work**

1. The key activities coordinated via OTSOPA include:
2. implementing the Bonn Agreement Strategy Action Plan (BASAP);
3. establishing aerial surveillance programmes;
4. monitoring and assessing the detections identified by the surveillance programmes;
5. testing cooperation through counter pollution exercises;
6. keeping under review the Bonn Agreement Counter Pollution Manual;
7. ensuring efficient cooperation based on an effective response strategy;
8. implementing the Sub-regional response plans which cover Joint Responsibility Zones; and
9. evaluating applications from potential observers and providing recommendations on them to the Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Bonn Agreement.

**Participants**

1. OTSOPA delegates include experts on operational, technical and scientific issues from the Contracting Parties. A Head of delegation shall be appointed by the Contracting Party to act as the primary contact point.
2. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations that contribute substantially to the aims and objectives of the Bonn Agreement and that have been granted with the observer status are invited to participate in the OTSOPA meetings.
3. The Presidency of OTSOPA shall rotate every two years among the Contracting Parties in English alphabetical order. A Contracting Party whose turn for election to the Presidency falls due may reserve the right to decline its election. The Chairperson shall act in a neutral capacity and not as a delegate of that Contracting Party.
4. The Chairperson shall carry out the following functions:
5. preside over the OTSOPA meeting;
6. carry out any duties entrusted to the Chair by OTSOPA;
7. take initiatives and put forward proposals to OTSOPA;
8. represent the Bonn Agreement at the Inter-Secretariat meetings or any other relevant event in coordination with the Chair of the Bonn Agreement; and
9. approve letters of support to project proposals together with the Chair of the Bonn Agreement.

**Operation and organisation of work**

1. OTSOPA holds at least one annual meeting.
2. OTSOPA reports annually to the Bonn Agreement.
3. OTOSPA updates its annual Programme of Work for adoption by the meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Bonn Agreement.
4. OTOSPA maintains a List of Actions for small and short-term tasks to be completed within a meeting cycle.
5. OTSOPA assists with the establishment of Working Groups and networks to fulfil its aim, including:
6. the Working Groups MAVI-SOWG[[1]](#footnote-1) and MAVI-TWG[[2]](#footnote-2) in relation to MARPOL Annex VI monitoring activities regarding strategic, operational and technical aspects; and
7. the Oil Spill Identification Network (OSINet) in relation to proving the origin of marine pollution by oil and oil products and using this evidence for the reimbursement of the cost of response operations, compensation for environmental damage etc. under governmental claims.
8. Under the Memorandum of Understanding between the OSPAR Commission and the Bonn Agreement, OTSOPA ensures there is exchange of technical and scientific information in both directions with the relevant OSPAR Commission subsidiary bodies, but specifically:
9. with the Offshore Industry Committee (OIC) in respect of prevention of and response to pollution by oil from offshore installations;
10. with the Hazardous Substances Committee (HASEC) in respect of prevention of pollution by hazardous substances according to MARPOL Annexes I and II; and
11. with the North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors (NSN) in respect of the enforcement of pollution maritime offences.
12. Existing Intersessional Correspondence Groups (ICGs) such as the Surveillance Expert Assessment Panel or the ICG on regional Priorities, and where necessary new ICGs, will focus on supporting implementation of the BASAP and on monitoring and assessment products.

**International engagement**

1. OTSOPA maintains appropriate interaction with other international organisations, when instrumental for the fulfilment of these Terms of Reference. In particular, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the HELSINKI Commission, the Lisbon Agreement, the Copenhagen Agreement, the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Arctic Council, with a view to share experience and good practices, and achieve common goals.
1. Working Group on strategic and operational aspects related to MARPOL Annex VI monitoring activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Working Group on technical aspects related to MARPOL Annex VI monitoring activities. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)