

# How do we work?

The vision of the Bonn Agreement is a Greater North Sea and its Approaches free from accidental and illegal pollution from shipping, offshore oil and gas operations and other maritime activities.

Bonn Agreement countries cooperate on a wide range of technical issues through the Working Group on Operational, Technical and Scientific Questions Concerning Counter Pollution Activities (OTSOPA). Issues covered include aerial surveillance sensors, dispersants, oil recovery, risk analysis, response to incidents involving hazardous and noxious substances (HNS), oil and chemical spill modelling and decision-support tools, equipment for use in rough seas, environmental monitoring and assessment, wildlife response, oil “fingerprinting” analysis, etc.

**The Bonn Agreement has produced a number of manuals and guidance documents.**

- The Counter Pollution Manual is used by Contacting Parties to put the Bonn Agreement into practice.
- The Aerial Operations Handbook supports aircrews in implementing operational procedures.
- The Bonn Agreement Oil Appearance Code (BAOAC) includes an oil volume estimation method and is supported by a Photo Atlas.

The Bonn Agreement cooperates with other competent international and regional organisations and bodies, in particular the International Maritime Organization (IMO), OSPAR and Helsinki Commissions, Lisbon Agreement, Copenhagen Agreement, Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), and the Arctic Council, to share experience and good practices.



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# New challenges

- ✓ Taking the necessary measures to prevent pollution incidents in the Bonn Agreement area where increased traffic congestion and increased ship size are foreseen together with possibly reduced navigational space due to offshore windfarms.
- ✓ Supporting further research on the behaviour at sea and the response techniques for new and alternative fuels introduced to comply with increasingly stringent emission regulations.
- ✓ Contributing to the prevention of marine pollution affecting air quality by implementation and enforcement of international rules and standards, including the joint surveillance for the enforcement of MARPOL Annex VI, and the North Sea as a SOx and NOx (Sulphur and Nitrogen Oxides) Emission Control Area (ECA).
- ✓ Encouraging national and regional use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems (RPAS) as new services for maritime surveillance, emissions monitoring, and pollution response.
- ✓ Improving the effectiveness of surveillance and recovery operations for floating objects such as containers, woods, or plastic pellets.
- ✓ Implementing the use of the Multi-regional Marine Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS) Response Manual addressed to first-responders and decision-makers dealing with HNS incidents at sea or ports.
- ✓ Enhancing the existing regulations and introducing new supporting measures to tackle the significant problem posed by marine plastics in the marine environment.
- ✓ Promoting joint risk assessments to develop the response capacities in the Bonn Agreement area.



Bonn Agreement  
Accord de Bonn





# Bonn Agreement

The Bonn Agreement for Co-operation in Dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances is the mechanism by which Contracting Parties work together to help each other in combating pollution in the Greater North Sea and its approaches from maritime disasters and chronic pollution from ships and offshore installations. It conducts surveillance as an aid to detecting and combating pollution at sea. It is the oldest regional agreement established by governments for responding to pollution incidents.

The Contracting Parties are Belgium, Denmark, the European Union, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Bonn Agreement covers the Greater North Sea and its approaches. This area of approximately 1.9 million km<sup>2</sup> includes the North Sea proper, the Skagerrak, the English Channel and its approaches, and other waters comprising the Irish Sea, the Celtic Sea, the Malin Sea, the Great Minch, the Little Minch, part of the Norwegian Sea, parts of the North-East Atlantic and the Bay of Biscay.



# History



## 1967

The grounding of the Torrey Canyon and the subsequent release of **117,000 tonnes** of oil with disastrous consequences for the environment proved a pivotal point for international cooperation to combat marine pollution.

1969	Denmark, Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom sign the "Agreement for Cooperation in Dealing with Pollution of the North Sea by Oil" in Bonn, Germany, establishing the "Bonn Agreement"
1983	The Bonn Agreement covers "other harmful substances" as well as oil.
1983	The European Union (then the EEC) becomes a Contracting Party
1994	The Bonn Agreement is amended to include aerial surveillance for the detection of operational and illegal spills, and for monitoring accidental marine pollution.
2002	The North Sea Network of Prosecutors and Investigators or NSN, associated with the OSPAR Commission, is established to facilitate effective prosecution of MARPOL violations.
2005	OSINet, the Bonn Agreement Oil Spill Identification Network of experts, is set up to support Contracting Parties in using oil forensic analysis to prove the origin of marine pollution by oil and oil products and as evidence for compensation claims to cover response operations and environmental damage.
2007	EMSA starts the CleanSeaNet service, a European satellite based oil spill monitoring and vessel detection service.
2010	Accession of Ireland to the Bonn Agreement Ministerial Meeting leading to the Dublin Declaration.
2012 2015	BE-AWARE I and II projects (co-financed by the European Union) undertakes a risk assessment of marine pollution in the Bonn Agreement area and models the effects of 10 risk-reducing and response scenarios.
2019	Ministerial Meeting in Bonn to celebrate the 50 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bonn Agreement and adopt the Bonn Declaration
2021	Following the adoption of the Decision to expand the agreement's scope of work with MARPOL Annex VI compliance monitoring and enforcement activities, a workshop is held to develop a common strategy and operational procedures on MARPOL Annex VI monitoring activities in the Bonn Agreement area.
2022	Accession of Spain to the Bonn Agreement

# Achievements

- ✓ Aerial surveillance, in combination with satellite imagery, is undertaken to prevent illegal or combat accidental pollution using dedicated remote sensing aircraft, to enforce maritime pollution rules and standards or to monitor major spills and give airborne support.  
National routine counter pollution flights focused on pollution from shipping and enforcement of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) MARPOL Convention are performed together with regional operations.
- The Tour d’Horizon programme for aerial surveillance of offshore oil and gas installations covers predetermined routes by individual countries in the central part of the North Sea during the year in order to provide maximum coverage.
- The Co-ordinated Extended Pollution Control Operations, or CEPCOs, is a jointly intensive pollution control operation in a specific high-risk area over a period of 24 hours or more.

✓ Recommendations identified in the area-wide risk assessment made under the BE-AWARE projects are included in the Bonn Agreement Strategic Action Plan 2019-2025.

✓ Lessons learnt from incidents and exercises are shared at the OTSOPA and Bonn Agreement meetings.



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