



## **HELCOM Ministerial Meeting 2024**

### **OSPAR Commission Statement**

**Riga, Latvia, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

Dear HELCOM Chair, distinguished Ministers, EU Commissioner, fellow Observer organisations, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honoured to make a statement at the 2024 HELCOM Ministerial Meeting on behalf of the OSPAR Commission.

First of all, I would like to convey apologies from Ane-Marie Løvendahl Eskildsen, Chair of the OSPAR Commission, and Dominic Pattinson, the OSPAR Executive Secretary, who are unable to be here today because of other commitments. They both send their good wishes for a successful meeting.

The work of OSPAR and HELCOM is intrinsically linked.

We share a common border and five Contracting Parties. The transboundary nature of the marine environment leaves us facing similar challenges, through species migration, ocean currents, and the spread of pollution and invasive species. Our joint Contracting Parties help provide a strong framework for cooperation that contributes to the delivery of our shared objectives.

We have a common responsibility towards marine environmental protection and stewardship and share a common understanding of the need for collective action. Through the HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan and the OSPAR North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy, which both aim to achieve a healthy marine environment by 2030, we pursue the same environmental objectives and many of our actions are synergistic and complementary in nature.

Our recent holistic assessments, HELCOM's HOLAS 3 and OSPAR's 2023 Quality Status Report, both highlighted similar pressures and challenges. By working together, we can better address common issues, such as plastic pollution, underwater noise, eutrophication, bycatch, the spread of invasive species and the loss of biodiversity.

And, of course, we have a long and successful history of cooperation that exists between our two organisations and that has led to the establishment of joint processes as well as the development of collective action to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic and Baltic Sea.

As our recent assessments highlighted, the triple planetary crisis that we are facing requires urgent action. Since the last HELCOM and OSPAR Ministerial Meetings in 2021, two international commitments have been adopted: The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the BBNJ Agreement. Furthermore, formal negotiations for a treaty to end plastic pollution under the United Nations started in November 2022.

*Protecting and conserving the North-East Atlantic and its resources*



These international commitments re-enforce the importance of regional organisations like OSPAR and HELCOM in helping to tackle the issues facing the marine environment. As well-established Regional Seas Conventions, OSPAR and HELCOM can also play an important role by sharing our expertise to help build the capacity of others to deliver coherent and pragmatic solutions for the protection of the marine environment.

On behalf of the OSPAR Commission, I would like to thank HELCOM for its valued and continued engagement, cooperation, and collaboration, and we look forward to continuing working together towards a healthy and thriving ocean.

Dr. Carole Durussel

Deputy Secretary, OSPAR Commission