

# Instructions for submitting Observer reports

## Introduction

This document provides the reporting template and instructions for Observers required to report during the **Russian Chairmanship**.

The deadline for submission is **1 December 2022**.

According to the “[Arctic Council Rules of Procedure](#)” (Annex 2), every **two years** Observers are requested to submit to the Chairmanship up-to-date information about relevant activities and their contributions to the work of the Arctic Council. Accordingly, the following **19 Observers** from the *Fairbanks Group* are requested to submit their regular report by **1 December 2022**.<sup>1</sup>

- Germany;
- The Netherlands;
- Poland;
- Switzerland;
- United Kingdom;
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN);
- Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM);
- OSPAR Commission (OSPAR);
- Standing Committee of the Parliamentarians of the Arctic Regions (SCPAR);
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE);
- United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment);
- West Nordic Council (WNC);
- World Meteorological Organization (WMO);
- Advisory Committee on the Protection of the Seas (ACOPS);
- International Arctic Science Committee (IASC);
- International Council for the Exploration of the Seas (ICES);
- International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH);
- Northern Forum (NF);
- Oceana;
- World Wildlife Fund for Nature – Global Arctic Program (WWF).

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<sup>1</sup> The **Fairbanks Group** includes the Observers reviewed for the first time before the Fairbanks Ministerial meeting in 2017, as well as Observers admitted that year. This group of Observers was reviewed for a second time at the Reykjavik Ministerial meeting in 2021.

## Role of Observers

The role and responsibilities of Observers, as well as criteria for admission to the Arctic Council, can be found in the “Arctic Council Rules of Procedure” (Annex 2) and the [“Observer Manual for Subsidiary Bodies.”](#)

The primary role of Observers is to observe the work of the Arctic Council. Observers contribute to the Arctic Council primarily through engagement at the level of Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Observers are invited to the meetings and other activities of the Arctic Council unless the Senior Arctic Officials decide otherwise. Observers may also propose projects through an Arctic State or a Permanent Participant.

## Report submission

Observer reports should include the relevant information described below and in the template.

- (a) A description of the Observer’s contributions to the work of the Arctic Council since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants;
- (b) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s future plans to contribute to the work of the Arctic Council, with special focus on contributions to the subsidiary bodies through project participation and support, as well as collaboration with Permanent Participants; and,
- (c) If applicable, a description of the Observer’s contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered in the previous sections since the time of the Observer’s most recent submission, or in the previous two years.

Observer reports should be submitted electronically to the **Arctic Council Secretariat** via email: [acs@arctic-council.org](mailto:acs@arctic-council.org) not later than **1 December 2022**. Please bear in mind while preparing your report that all Observer reports will be published online in the *Observer* section of the [Arctic Council online Library](#) (OAR) after the 2023 Ministerial meeting.

If an Observer fails to submit a report, the Arctic Council will consider this to mean that the Observer **is no longer interested in maintaining its status** as an accredited Observer to the Arctic Council.

## Cover sheet

Full name of Observer State or Observer Organization:

OSPAR Commission

Date of submission of regular report:

5 April 2023

Observer's website:

www.ospar.org

### Information for appropriate contact person

Full name:

Dominic Pattinson

Email:

Dominic.Pattinson@ospar.org

Telephone:

+44 (0)20 7430 5200

Organization or department:

Job Title:

Executive Secretary

Full mailing address:

The OSPAR Commission  
The Aspect  
12 Finsbury Square  
London EC2A 1AS  
United Kingdom

# Observer Report

Please describe in no more than two pages your State's or Organization's contributions to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years. Please highlight contributions to specific projects, such as through proposals, concept development, in-kind and financial support, and hosting of meetings. Please detail any collaboration with Permanent Participants, such as project proposal endorsement and support.

## 1. Introduction

The 1992 Convention for The Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (the OSPAR Convention) provides the mechanism by which fifteen Governments and the European Union cooperate to protect the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic (the OSPAR Maritime Area). The Governments are Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and United Kingdom. OSPAR aims to take all possible steps to prevent and eliminate pollution and to take the necessary measures to protect the maritime area against the adverse effects of human activities while restoring marine areas which have been adversely affected to safeguard human health and to conserve marine ecosystems. Five of our Contracting Parties are Member States to the Arctic Council and OSPAR's Region I includes large areas of Arctic waters. OSPAR has been an observer to the Arctic Council since May 2017. This report focuses on activities and contributions undertaken by the OSPAR Secretariat, acting on behalf of the Commission.

## 2. Arctic Outcomes Working Group

OSPAR's Arctic Outcomes Working Group (AOWG) was established in June 2022 to deliver the 2022-2025 Arctic Outcomes Roadmap, and is composed of OSPAR Heads of Delegation, additional delegates from Contracting Parties, and representatives from OSPAR observer organisations. This Roadmap sets out the steps considered necessary to support OSPAR's commitment to deliver the statement in the 2021 Cascais Ministerial declaration: *"We recognise the unique biodiversity of the Arctic, part of the OSPAR maritime area and commit to protect the Arctic marine environment, including through collaboration with other relevant organisations, such as the Arctic Council and the International Maritime Organisation"* and to support relevant objectives under OSPAR's 2030 North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy, including those concerning area-based conservation measures such as marine protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures. AOWG's initial focus is on the identification of sources of scientific information and traditional knowledge on the marine environment in the Arctic in OSPAR's Region I. An Online Briefing was organised in November 2022 to inform relevant stakeholders, including Arctic Council representatives, of the OSPAR Roadmap and to gather initial feedback on the information gathered to date. The information and knowledge received will be compiled and initial ideas for OSPAR measures and actions will be reviewed at the OSPAR Commission meeting in June 2023. A workshop will be organised in 2023 to present to stakeholders the evidence and case for the proposed OSPAR measures and to gather their feedback to further inform the OSPAR process. In light of these discussions, the proposed OSPAR measures and actions will be further developed in 2024. OSPAR considers the Arctic Council to be an essential partner in this work, and has, and will continue, to provide regular updates.

### 3. PAME

OSPAR was co-lead to the desktop study on marine litter within PAME, and the Secretariat contributed with our experience gained from developing and implementing the OSPAR Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the Prevention and Management of Marine Litter in the North-East Atlantic, adopted in 2014. OSPAR has adopted a second RAP-ML in June 2022, which will contribute to the reduction of marine litter across the region. OSPAR has agreed to be a co-sponsor of the Second International Symposium on Plastics in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic Region and has offered experts to join the scientific steering committee.

### 4. CAFF

Experts working on seabirds in OSPAR first informed the OSPAR Secretariat of similar activities of assessment of the same species by Arctic Council and CAFF. In further discussions between the CAFF and OSPAR Secretariats, seabirds were identified as a suitable topic to focus on in the short-term with a handful of species and specific assessments and measures being relevant. OSPAR is developing a Regional Action Plan on Seabirds and aims to coordinate the development and eventual implementation of actions with CAFF (CBIRD) and other relevant organisations. Discussions between experts on the development of the plan were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the planned participation of experts in the other organisations' meetings did not take place, there are now efforts to re-establish a close working collaboration.

### 5. Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP)

The OSPAR Working Group on Monitoring and on Trends and Effects of Substances in the Marine Environment (MIME) works on the monitoring and assessment of hazardous substances in the OSPAR maritime area. AMAP Secretariat participates in the annual meetings of MIME and actively collaborates with MIME experts and the OSPAR Secretariat intersessionally. There is ongoing collaboration between MIME and AMAP on contaminant assessment procedures, monitoring guidelines to promote harmonisation and coherence and the exchange of technical background reports for the assessments hazardous substances. AMAP provides Region I information for the OSPAR Hazardous Substances Assessment Tool (OHAT) which in recent years has been a valuable input to illustrate the state of the Arctic in both thematic and indicator assessments led by the Hazardous and Eutrophication Committee. Since 2022, AMAP and OSPAR, together with HELCOM and ICES, are working together to create and establish an open access, user friendly and well documented version of our respective hazardous substances assessment tools (HARSAT). The new HARSAT tool to be fully operative in autumn 2023 will be used for assessments of hazardous substances and their biological effects. HARSAT will also provide a platform where the tool would be easily maintained and used through scientific and interregional collaboration. AMAP and OSPAR are engaging jointly with the UNEP Stockholm Convention and the Minamata Convention, where our institutional collaboration ensures consistent assessments for our shared areas in the Arctic region.

In 2022 OSPAR's Radioactive Substance Committee (RSC) agreed to the text on modelling of additional concentrations of NORM and their assessment for inclusion in the AMAP 2023 Radioactivity in the Arctic report. The text was an extract of the 2022 OSPAR publication [Modelling and assessment of additional concentrations of NORM in seawater from discharges of produced water from the offshore oil and gas sector in the North-East Atlantic](#) with a reference to points that were relevant to the Arctic.

### 6. Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR)

The work carried out by OSPAR's Radioactive Substance Committee (RSC) have common areas of interest with the Radiation Expert Group (RAD EG) under the EPPR. The leader of RAD EG is invited to the RSC annual meetings to give an update of the work of the group. Considering the ongoing situation in the Arctic Council, the OSPAR Secretariat sent an invitation to the leader of RAD EG to present, if appropriate, some related projects or workstreams. The leader of RAD EG responded that the Arctic Council Working Groups were not officially represented anywhere for the duration of the current Russian Federation Chairmanship of the Arctic Council but they were looking forward to resume collaboration and information exchange with OSPAR RSC, the Arctic Outcomes Working Group and the new Chair of OSPAR RSC after May 2023.

## **6. Emergency, Prevention, Preparedness and Response (EPPR)**

OSPAR Secretariat is shared with the Bonn Agreement (BA) Secretariat. The Bonn Agreement is the mechanism by which ten Governments together with the EU, cooperate in dealing with pollution of the North Sea by oil and other harmful substances covering the Greater North Sea and its wider approaches. The BA scope of work is focused on the prevention, preparedness and response of accidental and illegal pollution from shipping, offshore oil and gas operations and other maritime activities. Bonn Agreement's work is also closely related to EPPR's. Updates from EPPR are given in the annual OTSOPA and Bonn meetings by Norway. Common areas of interest are new low sulphur fuels, risk analysis, the use of Remoted Piloted Aircraft Systems and the lessons learnt from incidents. The BA Secretariat attended the Arctic Risk Assessment Workshop held in London on 10-11 November 2022. The Bonn Agreement is interested in the Arctic Lessons Learned Arena platform developed by the Arctic Council and further discussions are ongoing at regional level to develop a similar platform or expand it at EU-level.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your State's or Organization's future plans for contributing to the work of the Arctic Council's Working Groups, Task Forces, and/or Expert Groups. Please highlight intentions to contribute to specific projects and to collaborate with Permanent Participants.

OSPAR adopted its 2030 North-East Atlantic Environment Strategy in 2021, and this helps to prioritise areas of engagement and common interest with the Arctic Council. The work of the AOWG, described above, is of particular interest, and we will continue to keep Arctic Council colleagues you informed of the Working Group's progress. We also hope that OSPAR and the Arctic Council will be able to exchange and collaborate more formally when the time is right. OSPAR is committed to ensuring that the work of this Working Group and the process to deliver on the 2022-2025 Arctic Outcomes Roadmap is inclusive, is based on evidence and knowledge, is transparent, consensus-based, and involves all stakeholders.

OSPAR is in the process of finalising its 2023 Quality Status Report, which will be published this year. The report, and its supporting assessments, include evidence on the state of the marine environment in OSPAR Region I, which covers a part of the Arctic. We have drawn on evidence acquired by the Arctic Council where relevant.

Subject to resources, we expect to continue to contribute towards the work of the working groups mentioned in the section above.

If applicable, please describe in no more than one page your State's or Organization's contributions to other aspects of the Arctic Council and its goals not covered by the previous sections since the time of your most recent report, or in the previous two years.