

Measures taken by OSPAR

The QSR 2000 recognised that marine dumped munitions present a hazard to the public and that OSPAR was considering a course of action for dealing with dumped munitions (OSPAR, 2000). One of the first steps taken by OSPAR was to collect information on the procedures in place by Contracting Parties in relation to marine dumped chemical weapons and munitions. To this end a questionnaire was circulated to Contracting Parties, Non-Governmental Organisations and Observers to gather information on reporting of encounters, on guidance issued to fishermen and users of the sea and on existing surveillance and management practices.

The results of this exercise (OSPAR, 2004b), showed that:

- Although there are systems in place in most countries to record encounters with dumped chemical weapons and munitions, such records are not centrally maintained and/or easily accessible.
- The information contained in guidelines produced by Contracting Parties for fishermen and other users of the sea varies considerably between countries. In order to ensure that sufficient information is available to fishermen who may encounter dumped chemical weapons and munitions the preparation of draft OSPAR guidelines was considered.
- Given the number of dumpsites recorded in the OSPAR overview of dumped weapons (OSPAR, 2005), there has been relatively little monitoring to date. Where monitoring has taken place, the need for further monitoring has been identified. The requirement for further site assessments and ongoing monitoring may need to be considered by Contracting Parties.
- There is no specific protocol available to assess the risks associated with activities in the vicinity of dumpsites.
- Recovery of dumped munitions is a costly and highly risky operation which could result in the release of toxic material into the environment, and the majority of scientific opinion is that munitions on the seabed present no risk to human health or the marine environment if they are left undisturbed.

In recognition of the deficiencies in available information on the locations of marine munitions and chemical weapons dumpsites and in the recording of encounters with munitions and chemical weapons, the OSPAR Commission published 'OSPAR Framework for reporting encounters with marine dumped chemical weapons and munitions' in 2003 (OSPAR, 2003a). The ongoing recording and reporting of encounters was seen as a possible way of identifying previously unknown or unrecorded dumpsites and also of identifying changes in the condition of dumped material or of the dumpsite following natural and anthropogenic disturbances. This information could be used to adjust the boundaries of known dumpsites or to identify new dumpsites or areas of high risk on marine charts. This activity is also consistent with the Decision No 2850/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 December 2000 setting up a Community framework for cooperation in the field of accidental or deliberate marine pollution (2850/2000/EC).

The preparation of these publications heightened the awareness amongst Contracting Parties that a coordinated OSPAR-wide approach would have added value in increasing our understanding of the extent and impact of past dumped chemical weapons and munitions in the entire Convention Area. In parallel to the collection of data and information from Contracting Parties and the preparation of the reports, OSPAR adopted Recommendation 2003/2 on an OSPAR Framework for reporting encounters with marine dumped conventional and chemical munitions. This Recommendation entered into force on 2 July 2004. The reporting deadlines under Recommendation 2003/2 were set for 1 September

2005 and every three years thereafter. Contracting Parties were encouraged to report clusters of encounters as soon as such clusters became evident. The first implementation report, consisting of reports of encounters as well as a short description of the systems in place, was published by OSPAR in 2007 (OSPAR, 2007) and the first JAMP assessment on encounters reported by Contracting Parties for the period 2004 - 2005 was published in 2008 (OSPAR, 2008). A considerable number of additional encounters were reported for the period up to the end of 2008 and this report updates the first JAMP assessment to include these new data.

While acknowledging that some Contracting Parties already have national guidance, OSPAR published 'A framework for developing national guidelines for fishermen on how to deal with encounters with conventional and chemical munitions' in 2004 (OSPAR, 2004a). This intended to provide background information on the following topics:

- Areas at risk, *i.e.* the location of conventional and chemical munitions dumpsites in the North-East Atlantic.
- General description of munitions.
- Description of chemical agents, their effects and first-aid treatment.
- What to do in the event of an encounter.

➔ *Go to full QSR assessment report on the impact of dumped conventional and chemical munitions (publication number 365/2009)*