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| Agenda Item 11 | EIHA 24/11/01-Annex.03  Original English |
| OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic | |
| Meeting of the Environmental Impact of Human Activities Committee (EIHA)  Madrid (Spain) and on-line: 15-19 April 2024 | |

Terms of reference for ICG-Marine Litter (ICG-ML) 2024‑2025

Participants

1. ICG Marine Litter will be convened by Belgium (Senne Aerbeliën), the Netherlands (Marijke Boonstra) and the United Kingdom (Morag Campbell) and will be open to all Contracting Parties and Observers of OSPAR.

Organisation of work

2. ICG Marine Litter will have two meetings during the 2024/2025 intersessional period. The first meeting, on 18-21 June 2024 in Madeira, Portugal will be split between a segment on data, monitoring and assessment and a segment on the RAP ML2. The second meeting, to be held from 12-14 November 2024 (on-line), will focus mainly on the RAP ML but including urgent items on monitoring and assessment if requiring agreement or discussion at EIHA 2025.

3. ICG Marine Litter will strive to strengthen its cooperation with other Regional Seas Conventions and other relevant international organizations such as the UN, ICES, the IMO and Arctic Council to the extent possible considering the available resources. Where appropriate it will provide supporting information to meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution. It will coordinate with MSFD TG ML, with a view to improving monitoring, assessment and effectiveness of measures against litter in the North-East Atlantic and support coordinated implementation of the MSFD and also actions against litter by OSPAR Contracting Parties which are also EU Member States. TG-ML are actively collecting research reports; these can be made available to ICG-ML.

4. ICG Marine Litter will be supported in its work by indicator expert groups covering each of the common (beach litter, seafloor litter, ingestion of litter by sea turtles, plastic particles in fulmar stomachs and [microplastics in sediments]) and candidate indicators and other possible indicators on impacts on biota. The main roles of the groups are:

1. to facilitate and advise on the monitoring programme (CEMP guidelines or under the JAMP);
2. to improve and develop methodologies for the indicator;
3. to secure and if necessary improve data quality in cooperation with the OSPAR Secretariat;
4. to support the lead and possible co-lead(s) in doing assessments according to the ICG-ML ToR;
5. to support the lead and possible co-lead(s) to contribute to the QSR 2023 follow-up and next round of assessments; and
6. to consider collaborative opportunities for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the work, for example through other relevant fora.

5. Based on these responsibilities the indicator expert groups will draft work programmes, which they report to ICG Marine Litter, including an indication of the workload. The indicator expert groups are encouraged to hold meeting(s) outside of the main ICG meeting on-line or face to face in accordance with the demands of the work and resource availability.

6. The indicator expert groups will be led by the relevant indicator task lead but should aim to have at least one co-lead. The leads will ensure the active involvement of the members of their group including through correspondence and on-line meetings. In turn, the members of the group will actively support the leads in their work. ICG Marine Litter will review the membership and leadership of the expert groups annually, with the aim of securing the necessary expertise in the groups.

Scope of work

9. For the effective delivery of its terms of reference and in particular the RAP ML2 it is recognised that ICG-ML should be supported by additional dedicated resource.

10. ICG Marine Litter will prioritise work on the Common Indicator Assessments and the RAP ML2, and will coordinate the following specific marine litter issues as identified below:

*Beach Litter Monitoring (Common Indicator)*

a. facilitate the monitoring programme for beach litter, including as necessary updating the CEMP appendix and data quality control;

b. update the field guidelines to align them with the revised CEMP guidelines;

c. oversee a rebuild of the database for beach litter monitoring data and submission of data to ODIMS;

d. continue the work on litter source identification initiated by Germany and Spain;

e. provide supporting analysis to enable the monitoring of progress against NEAES operational objective S4.03 and the development and monitoring of additional regionally coordinated reduction targets under objective S4.04;

f. work in collaboration with ICG MSFD on the development of coherent environmental targets among Contracting Parties in view of the third cycle of the MSFD;

g. produce updated indicator assessments for consideration at EIHA 2025/2026 and 2028;

h. work on the proposal for a candidate indicator for pellets and mesoplastic fragments on beaches.

*Floating Litter (Common Indicator Plastic Particles in Sea bird Stomachs for Region II and Common Indicator on Turtles for Region IV)*

i. facilitate the monitoring programme, including updating the CEMP appendix and data quality control, for the fulmar Common Indicator in the Greater North Sea area;

j. facilitate the monitoring programme, including updating the CEMP appendix and data quality control, for the Common Indicator on ingestion of marine litter by turtles;

k. produce updated indicator assessments for consideration at EIHA 2026.

*Seafloor Litter Common Indicator*

lj. facilitate the monitoring programme, including updating the CEMP appendix and data quality control, and follow up on data submission to ICES DATRAS database;

m. improve Quality Assurance / Control of the data in conjunction with ICES;

n. produce an updated indicator assessment for consideration at EIHA 2025/2026.

*Microplastics*

o. ~~[develop a candidate indicator]~~ Implement the Common Indicator on microplastics in sediments including the development of CEMP appendix and preparations for a first baseline assessment for consideration at EIHA 2026;

p. further develop other microplastics candidate indicators in line with advice from EIHA (e.g. microplastics in mussels);

*Other indicator and assessment work – impacts on biota, riverine litterI*

q. identify other biota and other assessment criteria for defining further impact indicators for ingestion of marine litter;

r. investigate indicators for other relevant impacts, especially for the entanglement of biota in marine litter;

s. develop a proposal for a candidate indicator to pilot an approach on riverine litter monitoring.

*Regional Action Plan*

t. carry out the actions associated to ICG-ML subject to availability of resources;

u. oversee the RAP-ML2 implementation programme, consistent with the requirements of the NEAES 2030, taking account of the NEAES strategic and operational objectives and Agreement 2021-02 on an NEAES Implementation Plan;

v. implement agreed RAP-ML2 actions and NEAES tasks and report on their progress to EIHA and CoG;

w. develop additional NEAES tasks in support of the RAP-ML2 and NEAES 2030 taking account of latest evidence on harm to be reviewed by 2025, to be submitted to EIHA and CoG, for inclusion into the NEAES Implementation Plan;

x. maintain cooperation with the implementation of Marine Litter Action Plans of other Regional Seas Conventions and other relevant international organizations such as the IMO, Arctic Council with the aim of prioritising and rationalising work;

*Implementation of OSPAR Recommendations*

y. facilitate the implementation of Recommendation 2016/01 on the reduction of marine litter through fishing for litter initiatives, including the submission of data, and investigating targets;

z. facilitate the implementation of Recommendation 2019/01 on Education Programmes for Fishers, including follow up to the 2022 overview assessment of Contracting Party implementation reports[[1]](#footnote-1);

aa. facilitate the implementation of Recommendation 2021/6 on the reduction of plastic pellet loss into the marine environment including a next reporting round to be concluded by 31 January 2025.

*OSPAR Science Agenda*

11. Co-convenors will make an initial filter of the OSA knowledge gaps identified in EIHA and the QSR 2023 of relevance to ICG-ML, and the overarching knowledge gaps, to determine the most relevant knowledge gaps for monitoring, measures and research for their work area.

12. Based on the Co-convenor’s initial filter, ICG-ML will determine whether the knowledge gaps are legitimate and identify, classify and prioritise the ICG-ML relevant knowledge gaps to be listed accordingly in the OSPAR Science Agenda.

13. For each knowledge gap, consider if the wording used is clear enough for an external audience, providing alternative text suggestions as required.

14. Where the NEAES column is blank, attempt to link the knowledge gap to a NEAES objective or implementation plan task. If this is difficult, consider whether the knowledge gap is a high priority.

15. Forward the results to the OSA task group leads, Lisette Enserink ([lisette.enserink@rws.nl](mailto:lisette.enserink@rws.nl)) and Marianne Olsen ([marianne.olsen@miljodir.no](mailto:marianne.olsen@miljodir.no)), copying the Secretariat (Carole.Durussel@ospar.org

Other Actions

16. Contribute and support implementation of the post QSR 23 JAMP.

17. ICG- ML will report to EIHA 2025 on progress in relation to the terms of reference.

1. ICG-ML to discuss arrangements for reporting following agreement in 2024 on amendments to the Recommendation [↑](#footnote-ref-1)