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**Minister for the environment, Karen Ellemann  
Danish Ministry of the Environment**

### **Ban on New Deep Sea Drilling**

#### **Appeal to bring about a decision at the forthcoming Ministerial Meeting on the OSPAR Convention (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic) in Bergen, Norway, from 20 to 24 September 2010**

Dear Karen Ellemann,

The oil disaster caused by BP and partner businesses in the Gulf of Mexico and the persistent efforts to contain the oil spill even three months after the Deepwater Horizon rig burned and sank clearly demonstrate the high environmental, socioeconomic and safety risks associated with deep sea drilling. Not only have at least 11 people died because of the disaster and thousands of fishermen lost their livelihoods, but many seabirds, marine reptiles and fish have died and likely will continue to die, even once the leak itself is permanently stopped. It is already clear that the accident has caused widespread and locally severe damage to coastal and marine ecosystems, some of which may persist well into the future. The scale and severity of adverse effects in the water column and at the seabed, the geographic scale of the damage and the potential for impacts of both oil and dispersant chemicals through the food web remain unknown.

An incident of a similar nature and scale occurring elsewhere (in the Arctic, for example) and/or at a different time could have far greater and more persistent impacts, and may be even less amenable to shut-off, containment and spill response than in the relatively well resourced Gulf area. As we know from past experience, large oil spills can leave legacies of environmental pollution which are detectable even decades later.

Greenpeace defines the deep sea as being more than 200 metres deep because a diver can no longer work or repair any damage this far below the surface. Since there are already several hundred deep sea drill holes around the world, and more planned as the search for oil extends ever further offshore and into more remote and extreme environments, the risk of further major accidents and leaks of a similar nature to the Deepwater Horizon is very real. A shift away from this risky course, which is technically unmanageable and an unacceptable threat to the marine environment and the global climate, is urgently needed.

Additionally, drilling activities authorised in the OSPAR maritime area would run contrary to recent commitments agreed by Parties to the Convention. At the OSPAR Ministerial Meeting held in Bremen in 2003, Ministers expressed particular concerns about the status of vulnerable cold-water coral reefs within the OSPAR area and endorsed efforts to create an '*ecologically coherent network of well managed Marine Protected Areas*' by 2010, taking account of the linkages between marine species, habitats and ecological processes in the region. Allowing any expansion of deep water drilling would seriously threaten the effectiveness of such a network, and would run contrary to the obligations contracted by members to this Convention to provide marine ecosystems with the necessary level of protection from human activities.

Furthermore, Greenpeace notes that the northern part of OSPAR Area I, which has historically been covered by year-round sea ice, is particularly vulnerable. This area is largely unmapped and not well understood scientifically. For this reason, there should be a moratorium on all industrial activities in this area, while further research is conducted and a suitable protection regime developed.

Therefore, recognising the general obligations incumbent upon all Contracting Parties to the OSPAR Convention (1992) 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 so as to safeguard human health and to conserve marine ecosystems”, and the additional obligation to take preventative measures under the precautionary principle when there are reasonable grounds for concern, Greenpeace is calling upon all Ministers attending the forthcoming Ministerial segment of the OSPAR Commission Meeting (North-East Atlantic Environment Summit) in Bergen, Norway (22-24 September 2010):

- 1. to ensure that deep sea drilling is a substantive item on the agenda of the Commission Meeting (20-24 September) and of the Ministerial segment itself**
- 2. to support an immediate moratorium on deep sea drilling for oil or gas within the OSPAR area, to be agreed at the forthcoming session as recently proposed by German Environment Minister Norbert Röttgen<sup>1</sup> and**
- 3. to consider legislative options to convert such a measure into a permanent ban on deep water drilling in due course.**

We are looking forward to hearing from you and to substantive progress being made to prevent a Deepwater Horizon-style disaster in the OSPAR region in Bergen in September.

Yours sincerely,



Mads Flarup Christensen  
Executive Director  
Greenpeace Nordic

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.zdf.de/ZDFmediathek/beitrag/video/1096324/Gluthitze-hier%252C-Oelpest-dort-#/beitrag/video/1096324/Gluthitze-hier%2C-Oelpest-dort->