



## PRESS RELEASE

### *Atlantic seamount becomes the first case added to international repository of ecologically or biologically significant marine areas*

Montreal, 17 February 2012 – The Josephine Seamount, located in the Horse-shoe Seamount Group of the Atlantic Ocean has been added to the prototype online repository that scientifically describes ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs) (available at <http://ebsa.cbd.int>).

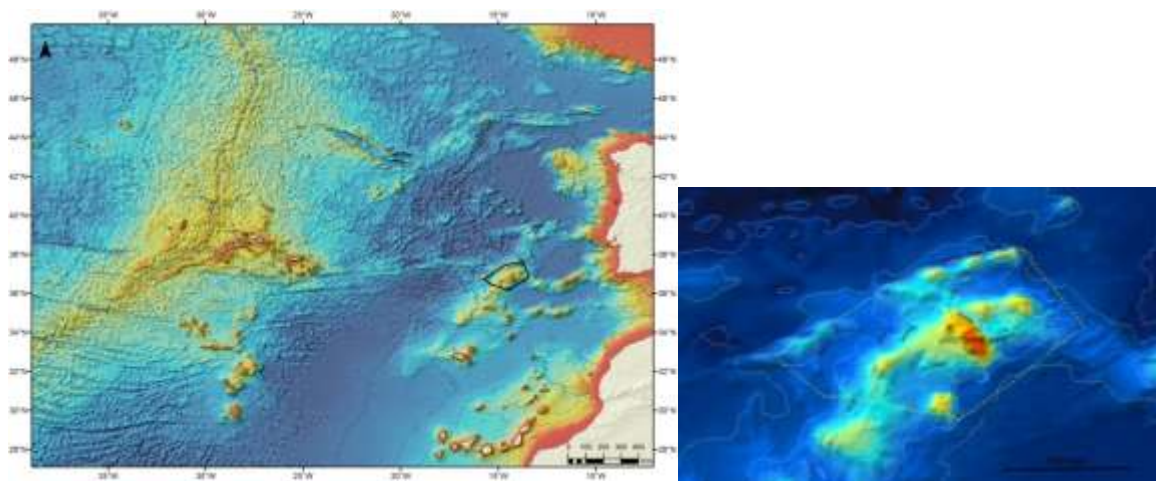
At the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Nagoya, Japan in 2010, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) sets out a process to identify EBSAs based upon agreed scientific criteria.

The North-East Atlantic is a leading region for pro-active deep-sea marine conservation. In 2010 Ministers of OSPAR Commission Contracting Parties designated the world's first network of High Seas Marine Protected Areas in the Wider Atlantic. In September 2011, the OSPAR Commission, together with the North-East Atlantic Fisheries Commission, organized the first regional EBSAs workshop, in collaboration with Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Josephine Seamount is the westernmost seamount of the Horse-shoe Seamount Group and is a possible stepping-stone for species travelling between European slopes and the slopes of oceanic islands such as Madeira and the Azores. Highly rated for its biological productivity the Josephine Seamount is part of the Atlantic deep-sea sub-region, where warm temperate waters support dense gorgonian corals and habitat-forming sponge aggregations which, whilst present in high densities are highly vulnerable and have slow recovery rates. Professor Ricardo Santos, of the University of the Azores, who was instrumental in ensuring that scientific information for the Josephine Seamount was available to the OSPAR Commission, explained that: "This is the first seamount discovered as a result of oceanic explorations in 1869, so it is extremely fitting that it becomes the first case of scientifically describing EBSAs."

The online repository has been developed under a process managed by the Convention on Biological Diversity with the assistance of partners such as Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS) of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (IOC/UNESCO) and the Global Ocean Biodiversity Initiative

The Josephine Seamount is one of six sites that are fully protected by the OSPAR Marine Protected Area designation, but such protection is not a prerequisite for describing EBSAs. Professor David Johnson, Executive Secretary of the OSPAR Commission explained that: "The scientific description of EBSAs represents a starting point for planning where conservation and sustainable use should be more risk-averse than in other areas."



The majority of those areas identified as candidate EBSAs (areas meeting EBSA criteria based on scientific assessment by the workshop) for the North-East Atlantic are large areas within which States and competent intergovernmental organisations may take enhanced conservation and management measures in accordance with international law.

This scientific description of EBSAs by the workshop, as well as the prototype repository, will be considered by CBD Subsidiary Body on Scientific Technical and Technological Advice (SBSTTA), at sixteenth meeting, to be held from 30 April to 5 May 2012, and at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, in October 2012.

Braulio Ferreira de Souza Dias, the Executive Secretary to the Convention on Biological Diversity, said: “When fully developed, the EBSA Repository will allow scientific and technical information on areas and features of the marine environment, as well as the experience of applying EBSA criteria, to be shared. We welcome this important contribution by OSPAR to test the prototype system.”

Meeting this week the OSPAR Commission Biodiversity Committee welcomed the development of the CBD Prototype EBSAs Repository, as called for by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity at its tenth meeting, and noted that scientific details of the five other OSPAR High Seas Marine Protected Areas would also be entered in the next weeks.

#### *Note for editors*

#### **The OSPAR Commission**

The OSPAR Commission was set up by the 1992 OSPAR Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic, which unified and updated the 1972 Oslo and 1974 Paris Conventions. It brings together the governments of Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, together with the European Union.

See also [OSPAR Ministers protect the North-East Atlantic deep-seas treasures - OSPAR News - Press Office - OSPAR Commission](#)

The repository can be found at: <http://ebsa.cbd.int>. The OSPAR Commission Biodiversity and Ecosystems Strategy can be accessed at [www.ospar.org/html\\_documents/ospar/html/10-03e\\_nea\\_environment\\_strategy.pdf#BDC](http://www.ospar.org/html_documents/ospar/html/10-03e_nea_environment_strategy.pdf#BDC)

#### **The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

Opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and entering into force in December 1993, the Convention on Biological Diversity is an international treaty for the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the equitable sharing of the benefits derived from the use of genetic resources. With 193 Parties, the Convention has near universal participation among countries. The Convention seeks to address all threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services, including threats from climate change, through scientific assessments, the development of tools, incentives and processes, the transfer of technologies and good practices and the full and active involvement of relevant stakeholders including indigenous and local communities, youth, NGOs, women and the business community. The Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety is a subsidiary agreement to the Convention. It seeks to protect biological diversity from the potential risks posed by living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. To date, 162 countries plus the European Union have ratified the Cartagena Protocol. The Secretariat of the Convention and its Cartagena Protocol is located in Montreal. For more information visit: [www.cbd.int](http://www.cbd.int).

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