

Meeting of the Focal Points of the  
Regional Marine Pollution Emergency  
Response Centre for the Mediterranean  
Sea (REMPEC)

REMPEC/WG.18/6  
20 July 2000

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Malta, 25 - 28 October 2000

Agenda Item 6

## **OPRC CONVENTION AND OPRC WORKING GROUP**

### **Note by IMO**

1. The International Convention on Oil Pollution, Preparedness, Response and Co-operation, 1990 (OPRC Convention) came into force on 13 May 1995. As at 31 May 2000, 54 member states of IMO have ratified the Convention, equivalent to 48.5% of the world's tonnage.
2. The Convention's objectives are to facilitate international co-operation and mutual assistance in preparing for and responding to a major oil pollution incident and to enhance global preparedness through national action with the final aim of mitigating consequences of major oil pollution incidents involving, in particular, ships, offshore units, seaports and oil handling facilities.
3. The strategy for the implementation of the OPRC Convention and OPRC Conference Resolutions has been:
  - assistance to develop national systems for preparedness and response;
  - the development of a training strategy through model courses;
  - development and updating of Manuals and Guidelines;
  - seminar, workshop and symposia;
  - regional co-operation mechanisms.
4. Overseeing and implementing this strategy has been the OPRC Working Group.
5. Since the last Meeting of REMPEC's Focal Points (November 1998), the OPRC Working Group met during the 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (28 June - 2 July 1999) and the major issues considered were:

- the draft Protocol on Hazardous and Noxious Substances and Draft Conference Resolutions which were finalized for circulation for the diplomatic conference to extend the OPRC to HNS;
- Combating Manuals/Guidelines:
  - Catalogue of Computer Programmes and Internet Information related to Responding to oil spills. The work has been finalized and the final version of the catalogue will appear as an annex to MEPC/Circ.367 with a view to distributing the catalogue to Member Governments and regional bodies.
  - Manual on Oil Pollution (Section IV) - Combating Oil Spills. The work is currently being led by the Netherlands. It is anticipated that a final consolidated version of the revised version will be submitted to MEPC 47 for approval for publication.
  - Guidance document on fisheries management during and after an oil spill. This work was led by ITOPF and the document has now been sent to FAO for comments. Once finalized, the OPRC WG have recommended that the document be issued as a joint IMO/FAO publication.
  - Bioremediation: France offered to prepare a chapter on bioremediation for inclusion in Section IV of the Manual on Oil Pollution. If thought to be voluminous, it could be published as a stand-alone publication.
  - Guidelines for response to spills of emulsified oils. This issue is currently being addressed by Canada and it is most likely that this issue will be included in the revised edition of the Manual on Oil Pollution (Section IV).
  - Retrieval of the INF Code Materials in the event of an accident; an interagency group comprising IMO, IAEA and UNEP has been set up to conduct, as its initial task, a literature review on the specific hazards associated with the carriage of INF material and consequences of accidents. The Working Group will decide on the best way to proceed after the completion of the review.
  - Development of standards for Compatible Oil Pollution Combating Techniques and Equipment. The Working Group reviewed the ongoing work of the International Standards Organization (ISO) and recommended procedures and processes to improve co-operation between IMO and ISO.
  - Review of the list of experts under the Intervention Protocol. The Working Group revised the draft survey form prepared by the Secretariat for the Directory of relevant centres of expertise to give advice in relation to marine pollution incidents involving HNS and recommended its distribution subject to approval by MEPC to Member Governments as a MEPC circular.
  - Training programmes. The Working Group reviewed the status of the OPRC model courses and their delivery by national or other organizations.
  - WMO Marine Pollution Emergency Response Support System (MPERSS). The Working Group was briefed of the MPERSS by WMO and mention was made of the collaboration developed between WMO and REMPEC for enhancing the MPERSS implementation in the Mediterranean.
  - Technical Co-operation. The initiatives related to marine pollution preparedness and response were reviewed at the global, regional and national levels by the Working Group.

- Pollution Preparedness, Co-ordination and Support Unit. The Working Group underlined and noted the need to staff a Pollution and Support Unit within the IMO Secretariat if IMO is to achieve its objective in building up the capacity of those countries in need of assistance to prepare for and respond to marine pollution emergencies.

6. The OPRC Working Group was not scheduled to meet during MEPC 44 (6 - 8, 10 and 13 March), but at the request of the Chairman of MEPC, some members of the Working Group met informally to discuss spill response issues of concern emanating from the ERIKA accident, the organization of an R & D forum and to review the work and organization of the Correspondence Group on the Manual on Oil Pollution (Section IV).

7. The next meeting of the OPRC Working Group is scheduled to take place during MEPC 45 (2 - 6 October 2000).

8. Pursuant to Resolution 10 of the 1990 IMO Conference on International Co-operation on Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response (OPPR Conference), which invited IMO to initiate work to develop an appropriate instrument to expand the scope of the OPRC Convention to apply, in whole or in part, to hazardous and noxious substances' pollution incidents, and pursuant to the decisions of the 82<sup>nd</sup> session of the Council of IMO and the 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the MEPC to convene a diplomatic conference in this regard, provisions were made by IMO for a three-day Conference held in conjunction with MEPC 44.

9. The Conference was convened at the Headquarters of IMO in London from 9 to 15 March 2000. Representatives from 79 States and organizations from the United Nations system, observers from intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations attended the Conference.

10. As a result of its deliberations, the Conference adopted the "Protocol on Preparedness, Response and Co-operation to Pollution Incidents by Hazardous and Noxious Substances 2000 (OPRC-HNS Protocol)", as well as six resolutions concerning:

- accession of the Protocol and its early implementation;
- early entry into force of the 1996 HNS Convention;
- the promotion of technical assistance;
- the development and implementation of a training programme for preparedness and response to HNS pollution incidents;
- technical co-operation;
- early implementation of Article 10 of the OPRC-HNS Protocol.

**Action requested of the Meeting of Focal Points**

11. The Meeting is invited to take note of the information provided.