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**REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY
RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC)**

**CENTRE REGIONAL MEDITERRANEEN POUR L'INTERVENTION
D'URGENCE CONTRE LA POLLUTION MARINE ACCIDENTELLE (REMPEC)**

**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN
PLAN D'ACTION POUR LA MEDITERRANEE**



9th Meeting of the Focal Points of the Regional
Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre
for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)

REMPEC/WG.30/6/2
24 March 2009

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Agenda Item 6

**PROPOSAL RELATED TO FUTURE POSSIBLE WORK OF
THE MEDITERRANEAN TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (MTWG)**

Note by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. The Programme of Work of the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG) approved by the Eighth Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC and detailed in document REMPEC/WG.30/6/1, shall be partially completed by the end of the current biennium as shown hereunder:

- i. The Mediterranean Guidelines on Oiled Shoreline Assessment shall be finalised by the end of 2009.
- ii. The Mediterranean Waste Management Decision Support Tool, in its electronic format, shall be available early 2010 for testing by volunteering Mediterranean coastal States.

2. Regarding the Guidelines on Sunken Oil Assessment and Removal Techniques and as referred in paragraph 9 of document REMPEC/WG.30/6/1, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) OPRC-HNS Technical Group has expressed interest on the topic and has included the development of the Guidelines in its programme of work.

3. As a regional contribution to this international forum and as agreed by the Eighth Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC (paragraph 5 of document REMPEC/WG.30/6/1), the MTWG will be supporting the development of the Guidelines by providing comments on the outline of the proposed Guidelines which will be submitted by Italy, currently leading the OPRC-HNS TG's Correspondence Group on this topic.

MTWG Proposed Work Programme

4. Taking into consideration the progress made on the programme of work of the MTWG, REMPEC invited its Focal Points, by Circular Letter 03a/2009 dated 21 January 2009, to submit any technical subject related to marine pollution preparedness and response, for consideration in the MTWG work programme for the biennium 2010-2011. To date, the Centre did not receive any proposal from the Contracting Parties.

5. In these circumstances and taking into consideration Specific Objectives 18 and 20 (*vide* document REMPEC/WG.30/6/1) of the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships, the Secretariat proposes two activities to be considered in the programme of work of the MTWG for the up-coming biennium.

Revision of the Dispersant Guidelines adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention

6 The assessment carried out by the Centre for the preparation of the "Regional Government and Industry Workshop on Co-operation, Preparedness for and Response to Oil Spills in the Mediterranean Sea" (11-12 May 2009, Marseilles, France) revealed that little or no information was provided on the following dispersant related issues:

- dispersant related legislation;
- delimitation of zones for the use of dispersants;
- dispersant testing procedures; and
- identification of competent laboratories authorised to test dispersants.

7. In addition, the issue of disposal/recycling of expired dispersant stockpiles has been raised by some Mediterranean coastal States during national training courses and other meetings organised by REMPEC.

8. In this regard, it should also be noted that the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), has established a Technical Correspondence Group addressing the issue of the usage of oil spill dispersants and their implications. The Correspondence Group will focus on the harmonization of dispersant testing procedures in the European Union.

9. It should be recalled that the Guidelines for the Use of Dispersants for Combating Oil Pollution at Sea in the Mediterranean Region, adopted by the Eighth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (UNEP (OCA)/MED IG.3/5, Appendix I, Antalya, Turkey 15 October 1993), have not been revised since October 1998.

10. When adopting the above-mentioned Dispersant Guidelines, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention:

- i. agreed to exchange the information concerning their respective national policies regarding the use of dispersants, including *inter alia* information on products approved for use, criteria for approval of products, laboratories authorized to perform testing of products, restrictions and conditions for use of dispersants;
- ii. agreed to mutually accept, in joint response operations in case of emergency, the policy regarding the use of dispersants of the coastal State in whose territorial waters the response operations are carried out;
- iii. in all such cases, the competent national authorities of the affected coastal States, agree to consider authorisation for use in their territorial waters of dispersants approved by the assisting coastal State, providing that such approval was granted in conformity with the principles on which these Guidelines are based;
- iv. agreed to endeavour to co-operate in developing compatible testing procedures for approval for use of products commercially available with a view to eventually harmonizing such testing procedures;
- v. agreed to endeavour to facilitate the transfer of technology among themselves with regard to the use of dispersants, in particular through REMPEC; and
- vi. agreed that if a State, affected by pollution, does not possess the pre-established national regulations for the use of dispersants, it shall seek the most qualified advice and endeavour to take into account the regulations of the neighbouring States.

11. The Guidelines define the role of REMPEC which was requested to continue to collect and disseminate, through its Regional Information System (RIS), information concerning:

- i. the state-of-the-art in the field of using dispersants in oil pollution response;
- ii. new products and application techniques;
- iii. research on the process of aging of stored dispersants and related developments;
- iv. policy, including rules and regulations regarding the use of dispersants, of the Mediterranean coastal States;
- v. products approved for use in the Mediterranean coastal States;
- vi. delineation of zones for the use of dispersants established by the coastal States;
- vii. testing procedures adopted by the Mediterranean coastal States; and
- viii. laboratories authorised to test dispersants on behalf of the competent national authorities in their respective countries.

12. This information has been partially collected by the Centre through the update of the individual Country Profiles for the assessment referred to in paragraph 6 of the present document and will eventually be up-loaded on the new REMPEC website in a dedicated Country Profile page.

13. Considering the developments in the field of dispersants since the last revision of the Guidelines for the Use of Dispersants for Combating Oil Pollution at Sea in the Mediterranean Region in October 1998, and taking into consideration the above information, the Secretariat proposes to include the revision of the Guidelines in the programme of work of the MTWG for the period 2010-2011.

Update of MIDSIS TROCS

14. The Mediterranean Integrated Decision Support Information System (MIDSIS-TROCS) Version 2.0 is an information support system based on TROCS 2001 database, developed by REMPEC in collaboration with Malta University Services (MUS). It has been produced within the framework of the Mediterranean Action Plan with a view to providing the Mediterranean coastal States with a decision-support tool. It is aimed at assisting the Contracting Parties in the decision making process when dealing with marine pollution emergencies caused by releases of hazardous and noxious substances (HNS), as well as by certain crude and refined oils.

15. The tool contains response options presented in a decision-tree format which is reinforced by tables, matrices and diagrams, some of which represent actual experiences at marine incident sites. Other sections contain information on the behaviour of commonly transported chemicals, the compatibility of chemicals, the resistance of equipment material to chemicals, and safety precautions when entering spill sites.

16. MIDSIS-TROCS is a compilation of information originating from different sources which the Centre has assembled to reflect the current state-of-the-art for responding to marine chemical emergencies, with the objective that this tool is a workable guide to the end-user. Amongst this information, the relevant part of the Manual on Co-operation in Response to Marine Pollution, Volume 2, (HELCOM Response Manual, Volume 2) was incorporated in MIDSIS TROCS Version 2.0 with the permission of the Helsinki Commission.

17. During the Eight Meeting of Focal Points of REMPEC, the Secretariat informed the Meeting about developments at the international level concerning the classification of chemicals and their related GESAMP profiles which are not reflected in the current Version 2 of MIDSIS TROCS. At the Meeting, the Secretariat highlighted that these developments would need to be reflected in a revised MIDSIS TROCS to ensure the use of an updated decision support tool.

18. The Meeting, aware of this issue, agreed to disseminate Version 2 of MIDSIS TROCS which included a note to draw the attention of users to the new classification of chemicals which was not reflected in the said Version 2. The Secretariat provided, accordingly, each Mediterranean coastal State with CDs of the decision support tool and uploaded it on the REMPEC website for broader dissemination (<http://www.rempec.org/databases.asp>).

19. Moreover, taking into consideration the evolution of Information Technologies since the last revision of MIDSIS TROCS in 2004, it is recognised that the current application could also be further improved using new available technologies.

20. It is recalled that, at the international level, the Protocol on Preparedness, Response and Co-operation to Pollution Incidents by Hazardous and Noxious Substances, 2000 (OPRC-HNS Protocol) entered into force on 14 June 2007. Seven Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention ratified the OPRC-HNS Protocol namely, Egypt, France, Greece, Malta, Slovenia, Spain and the Syrian Arab Republic.

21. In the course of the current biennium interest has also been expressed by a number of Mediterranean coastal States to receive further assistance for the implementation of the OPRC-HNS Protocol.

22. In view of the above and in addition to the proposed training activities to be organised by the Centre during the biennium 2010-2011, the Secretariat recommends that, with a view to further assist the Contracting Parties to implement the OPRC-HNS Protocol, the decision support tool MIDSIS TROCS be reviewed. It is thus proposing to revise MIDSIS TROCS, in the framework of the MTWG, during the biennium 2010-2011 (*vide* document REMPEC/WG.30/10), in partnership with other institutions that are interested in this work.

The Meeting of Focal Points is invited to:

- **take note** of the information provided by the Secretariat in the present document; and
- **provide views and comments** on the proposals of the Secretariat referred to in paragraphs 13 and 22 of the present document.