

Decision IG.21/8

Follow up actions regarding the Offshore Protocol Action Plan

The 18th Meeting of the Contracting Parties,

Desirous of ensuring that the Protocol shall begin to produce beneficial effects at the earliest possible moment and facilitating its implementation at regional and national levels through coordinated actions with the support of the Coordinating Unit and all MAP Components,

Recognizing the dual nature of the Protocol which not only addresses the environmental impact of these activities but also the safety of processes thus providing a regional holistic approach,

Acknowledging that in order to achieve the goals of the Protocol, all Contracting Parties should co-operate in ensuring that the best available techniques are used in daily activities,

Having considered the variety of highly specialized techniques and skills required to ensure the safety of the personnel and the fitness of the installation, all along the life cycle of offshore operations from the exploration phase, through the development and production phase to the abandonment of the installation,

Conscious that significant accidents caused by Offshore activities could have long term adverse consequences for the fragile ecosystems and biodiversity of the Mediterranean Sea due to its enclosed nature and special hydrodynamics as well as negative consequences on the economies of the Mediterranean coastal States especially for tourism and fisheries,

Noting Decision IG.20/12 and the need to prepare the Offshore Protocol Action Plan, which will define the Mediterranean Offshore Strategy with a view to promoting and ensuring the application of the common best practices over the entire Mediterranean region,

Noting however that the Offshore ad hoc Working Group has a limited scope and mandate, whereas the Offshore Protocol calls for long term co-operation, in particular in specialized technical fields as well as on the monitoring of the impact of offshore activities,

Recognizing the need for a regional technical forum to assist the Contracting Parties in dealing with technical issues related to offshore activities and also the monitoring of their impact:

Requests the Secretariat and the ad hoc Working Group to continue the necessary work with a view to achieve the drafting of the Offshore Protocol Action Plan by the end of 2014;

Urges all the Contracting Parties who have not yet done so to designate, through the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) Focal Point, a senior official having a strong experience of both the technical aspects of offshore activities as well as the regulatory process for these activities in his/her country, who should organize at national level the necessary consultations with other authorities having competencies as regards the various aspects of offshore activities, to facilitate the implementation of the Offshore Protocol;

Encourages all the Mediterranean coastal States as well as the concerned stakeholders of the industry and NGOs to participate actively to the activities aiming at the implementation of the Offshore Protocol with the spirit of common interest for the well-being of the Mediterranean region;

Approves the establishment of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group which should support the drafting of the Action plan and serve as a regional technical body to assist in the identification of best practices and to ensure a monitoring and assessment of the impact of these activities consistent with the overall policy adopted within the Mediterranean Action Plan;

Adopts the Terms of Reference of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (BARCO OFOG) set out in Annex;

Decides that the BARCO OFOG should be financed through extra budgetary resources; and

Requests the Secretariat to identify international bodies that might provide specific sources of financing to assist Mediterranean Coastal States in carrying out the obligations arising from the Offshore Protocol;

Invites the relevant oil and gas offshore industry to assist the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (BARCO OFOG), through technical support and financial contributions for the implementation of the program of work that may result from the Offshore Protocol Action Plan.

Annex

Terms of Reference of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group (BARCO OFOG)

The following are the terms of reference and working procedures for Members serving the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group, hereinafter referred to as the “OFOG Group”.

Background

1. The scope of the Offshore Protocol to the Barcelona Convention compared to other similar Protocols under other Regional Seas is wide encompassing as it does not limit itself to monitoring of the environmental impact of offshore oil and gas activities but also addresses issues related to the safety of processes and the qualification of the staff employed in these activities (human element). Moreover, the Protocol establishes a regional co-operation framework based on the promotion of the best available standards and practices. Therefore in order to adequately answer to the requests of the Protocol, the Offshore ad hoc Working Group recommended at its first Meeting held in Malta in June 2013 that a regional forum should be established, where qualified representatives of the Contracting Parties could share their experience and propose to the Contracting Parties recommendations regarding the more technical aspects of offshore activities.

Scope of Work of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group

2. The OFOG Group will mainly serve as forum to exchange best practices, knowledge and experiences between its Members in order to assist the Parties in attaining the objectives set out in article 23.1 of the Protocol.

3. The OFOG Group will serve as an advisory body to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention as regards the Offshore Protocol.

4. The OFOG Group should operate under the instructions of and report to the Meetings of the Parties who should periodically examine and review the Offshore Protocol Action Plan.

Composition

5. The OFOG Group is primarily composed of representatives of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention who are designated by the MAP Focal Point as National Offshore Focal Point.

6. In view of the range of expertise required for the various topics covered by the Protocol, several OFOG Sub-Groups could be set-up, as need be. These Sub-groups will focus on technical and practical aspect of the Offshore Protocol Action Plan. The Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention through their National Offshore Focal Point shall designate, as required, the appropriate national entities and/or officials as contact points for each OFOG Sub-Group.

7. The representatives of the OFOG Sub-Groups shall report to their respective National Offshore Focal Point to ensure dissemination, coordination and follow-up at national level.
8. Representatives of the oil and gas industry as well as IGO's and NGO's with a relevant mandate to the topics discussed in the various sub-groups are encouraged to participate as observers.
9. Representatives of other regional fora with a similar mandate to the OFOG Group are invited as observers.
10. The composition of the OFOG Group and Sub-Group shall be published and kept up to date on a dedicated website.

Tasks

11. The activities of the OFOG Group will encompass all matters referred to its consideration by the Contracting Parties based on the relevant articles of the Offshore Protocol. Nevertheless, due to the complexity of matters included in the Protocol, priority should be given to the environmental impact and control of pollution from such activities.
12. In order to fulfill its role, and building upon the work carried out in the framework of other relevant fora, the OFOG Group will provide technical support and guidance, and make recommendations to the Meetings of the Parties to the Offshore Protocol to accomplish its functions as stipulated in Article 30.2 of the Offshore Protocol, and in particular on, but not limited to, the following issues:
 - a. identifying priorities for preparation of guidance documents, standards and best practices in the oil and gas sector;
 - b. preparing, or initiating and overseeing the preparation of, guidelines on the industry best practices;
 - c. in the interest of sharing experience, facilitating rapid information exchange between national authorities through the appropriate information mechanism, regarding e.g. the occurrence and causes of and responses to major incidents, and events which could have led to major accidents;
 - d. promoting and facilitating consensus between national authorities regarding the best regulatory practice;
 - e. exchanging information regarding the application of national legislation and policies relevant to offshore oil and gas activities, and assisting the Secretariat in monitoring the implementation of the Offshore Protocol;
 - f. developing and applying common standards as per article 10 of the Protocol;
 - g. keeping under review the technical content of the annexes to the protocol and make relevant recommendations;
 - h. preparing draft measures to control the use of chemicals and oil and any other substances or sources of pollution;
 - i. developing appropriate guidelines for monitoring and assessment paying particular attention to ensure consistency with other related monitoring policies adopted by the Contracting Parties;
 - j. assisting in defining appropriate relevant targets for Offshore activities within the implementation of the Ecosystem Approach to MAP policies and strategies.

Meetings and correspondence groups

13. The OFOG Group shall normally meet once a year. Working arrangements may be developed by the Group preferably at its first meeting.
14. At the OFOG Group meeting, the OFOG Group shall decide on the place, dates and duration of its next meeting.
15. The OFOG Sub-Groups shall be maintained as correspondence groups.