MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (MAP)
REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC)

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

Sliema, Malta, 13-15 May 2025

Agenda Item 6: Illegal and accidental oil and HNS pollution from ships

Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean (Joint REMPEC – DGECHO)

REMPEC
Malta, 2025

Note by REMPEC and DGECHO

The present document provides information on the consultation process conducted by REMPEC and DG ECHO to implement the outcomes of the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Malta, May 2021) and MEDEXPOL 2024 (Malta, September 2024). It also provides an update on the ongoing work of the Working Group on the new CECIS MP established by DG ECHO. Finally, it provides elements facilitating decisions on the way forward for the use of CECIS MP as Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean.

Background

1.   The Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Malta, June 2019) requested the Secretariat to explore the use of the Emergency Communication and Information System for Marine Pollution (CECIS MP), to enhance coordination of requests and offers of international assistance in the Mediterranean region. This task was undertaken within the two-year EU-funded, Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil & HNS Pollution Cooperation (West MOPoCo) Project.

2.   It is recalled that in the Mediterranean region, communication in Cases of Emergency is addressed through two disconnected channels for the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (CPs) and the EU Member States, respectively:

> .1   the Mediterranean emergency communication procedures and systems set up in the framework of the 2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol, hereinafter referred to as the "Regional Information System (RIS)"; and

> .2   the Emergency Communication and Information System for Marine Pollution (CECIS MP) for requesting and offering assistance, and the European Union Maritime Information and Exchange System (SafeSeaNet) for reporting maritime incidents.

3.   Due to the simultaneous use of these two disconnected communication channels the CPs have stressed, on various occasions, the difficulties encountered during incidents and exercises when communicating with other countries and REMPEC in terms of notification, exchange of information and request for assistance. They concurred with the need to establish a common and unique system applicable to all CPs.

4.   In this context, REMPEC provided the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Online, May/June 2021) with the considerations for the establishment of a Common Emergency Communication System in the Mediterranean, as laid down in document REMPEC/WG.51/9/2.

5.   The Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean, hereinafter referred to as the Common System, could be implemented on the basis of the above-mentioned considerations, and through the following adaptations/interconnections to be made, where relevant, on CECIS MP functionalities:

- User rights and contact updates.
- Access to the application.
- Notification.
- Assistance.
- Country Policies / Country Profile.
- Resources-Policy Information / MEDGIS-MAR.

6.   Following the presentation of document REMPEC/WG.51/9/2, several delegations welcomed the proposal by the Secretariat and stressed the importance of the establishment of a Common System to facilitate the exchange of information and to coordinate the regional assistance through a unique platform.

7.   Further to the discussion on the Common System, and as detailed in its report REMPEC/WG.51/13, the 14th meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC:

> .1   agreed on the use of CECIS MP by all CPs, as a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean, for the request of assistance.

.2　encouraged CPs, upon receipt of REMPEC annual "Circular on the Directory of Competent National Authorities in charge of Accidental Marine Pollution, Preparedness and Response and Mutual Assistance and other Relevant Information", to update the list of REMPEC Focal Points and CECIS MP simultaneously;

.3　concurred with the proposal to facilitate access to CECIS MP by REMPEC Focal Points by:

.1　creating on REMPEC's emergency page, a link to CECIS MP authentication screen; and

.2　exploring the possibility of access to both systems, i.e. REMPEC's Regional Information System databases and CECIS MP, with the same credentials;

.4　agreed to establish a common notification procedure by:

.1　first encouraging third countries to exchange through CECIS MP the whole POLREP from the alert phase to the request for assistance; and

.2　secondly, further exploring the harmonisation of the notification procedures via SafeSeaNet for all the Contracting Parties, notably by:

.1　exploring through the High-level Steering Group, the authorisation of REMPEC's access to SafeSeaNet to allow compliance with Article 9 of the 2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol; and

.2　identifying necessary adaptation of the existing reporting procedures established within the Barcelona Convention and its 2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol;

.5　further agreed with the proposed adaptation of CECIS MP, with a view to facilitating the use of the Standard forms for the Request of Assistance by:

.1　creating a direct link or providing access to the approved Standard Form for request of experts from the Mediterranean Assistance Unit (MAU) and the Standard Forms for request of equipment, products, and specialised personnel, to be completed by the Contracting Parties and attached to the POLFAC for dissemination to Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and REMPEC, as applicable; and

.2　granting the necessary user access to allow REMPEC to process requests of assistance on behalf of Contracting Parties in accordance with Article 12.1 and 12.2 of the 2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol;

.6　concurred with the proposed creation of a link to CECIS MP enabling access to REMPEC's Country Profile;

.7　agreed upon the proposed interconnection between the equipment database of the CECIS MP and MEDGIS-MAR; and

.8　requested the Secretariat to liaise with the European Commission European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) to:

.1　implement the above agreed adaptations, and

.2　continue exploring, in consultation with the Contracting Parties, communication streamlining processes.

8.　　The consultation process between REMPEC and DG ECHO further clarified various aspects related to the aforementioned technical and administrative functionalities, namely:

.1　Legal and data protection: As an EU system, ERCC and all users are required to operate according to the EU data protection laws. Furthermore, the system will be flexible enough to manage which users will be allowed to see what;

.2   Connection of CECIS Marine to national systems, is not feasible; and

.3   Logistical: As mentioned, users must comply with data protection laws and can control who has access to their data. However, while the system's security is a top priority and no issues have arisen so far, the complete prevention of illegal activity cannot be guaranteed.

Progress on the establishment of the Common system using CECIS MP Platform

9.   During the renewal and upgrade period of CECIS MP by DG ECHO (2024-2025), REMPEC carried out the following actions in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations of the 15th Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points (Malta, June 2023):

.1   organizing the regional Workshop on Reporting, Monitoring, and Data Sharing (MEDEXPOL 2024), held in Malta from 25 to 26 September 2024. Agenda item two of the workshop addressed the capacities and limitations of the Common System, which findings are submitted for review at this Meeting;

.2   tasking the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG) to continue assisting REMPEC in cooperation with DG ECHO during the different phases of the development of the Common Emergency Communication System and in testing it once developed and to contribute to the preparation of MEDEXPOL 2024, to assist CPs in fulfilling their commitments inter alia in data sharing reporting on oil and HNS Spills ; and

.3   developing a questionnaire circulated on 4 July 2024 to the members of the Correspondence Groups focusing inter alia on the three elements 7.2, 7.6 and 7.7, referred in paragraph 7 above.

MEDEXPOL 2024

10.   During MEDEXPOL 2024, the Delegates of the European Union (EU) informed the meeting that the start of the development of the new CECIS MP was planned for late autumn 2024. The system would be based on the same structure as CECIS for Civil Protection, enabling a quicker and more efficient development of the CECIS MP baseline, to which specific features and functionalities for a marine pollution incident communication would be added.

11.   The EU delegates provided the following clarifications regarding the follow-up on the features listed in point 7 above, covering aspects from adaptations to those beyond the scope of CECIS MP, such as points 7.3.ii, 7.4, and 7.6:

(7.2) Update the list of REMPEC Focal Points and CECIS MP simultaneously:
   i.   Each user country will need to have a CECIS MP administrator who will manage national accounts. Contacts/data of those accounts can be shared with or hidden from other users. Note that depending on the national system, those contacts may be the same or different from the REMPEC Focal Points Directory.
   ii. The new user management will enable a more flexible and dynamic attribution of roles, including notifications and full or restricted access to specific information, e.g. contact details, incident info, resources, etc.

(7.3) Access to CECIS MP by REMPEC Focal Points:
   i.   Creating a link to CECIS MP authentication screen on REMPEC's emergency page is possible.
   ii. Access to CECIS MP will require creation of the EU login. CECIS MP links with REMPEC's Regional Information System databases, more precisely MEDGIS-MAR and Country Profile pages on REMPEC Website, have been assessed

(7.4) A common notification procedure:
 i. Countries that are not SafeSeaNet (SSN) users will be encouraged to exchange the whole POLREP from the alert phase to the request for assistance through CECIS MP. For the Standard forms of requesting and offering assistance. It would be preferred that CPs would simply use a standard request and offer window in CECIS M (it will be very similar to the current one) rather than the forms that are now agreed at REMPEC. However, if needed, the option to attach the Standard forms to complement the request, may be envisaged.
 ii. Authorisation of REMPEC's access to parts of the SSN data and a better link between SSN and CECIS MP remains to be addressed in the SSN High Level Steering Group.

(7.5) Use of the Standard forms for the Request for Assistance:
 i. Standard Form for request of experts from the Mediterranean Assistance Unit (MAU) and the Standard Forms for request of equipment, products and specialised personnel could be integrated into a request and offer part of the CECIS MP. Exact details will be addressed during the development stage.
 ii. When operational, CECIS MP will provide a platform for each country to share incident information and requests/offers of assistance without the need for REMPEC to coordinate this exchange. REMPEC having rights to see CPs related incidents (automatic rights attribution)
 iii. REMPEC will have its own user rights to receive and share information and to make offers within the framework of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit (MAU). The goal is to ensure that all requests and offers of assistance within the MAU are made exclusively through CECIS MP.

(7.6) Link on CECIS MP enabling access to the REMPEC's Country Profile: The link would consist of hardcoding URL address which would redirect to a specific page. It is noted

Note that Country Profile information is not required for the CECIS MP purposes.

(7.7) Interconnection between the equipment database of the CECIS MP and MEDGIS-MAR:
 i. The preliminary assessment has shown that the two systems are not compatible, and it would require a significant development to link and synchronize them. The added value of this link is questionable because (1) the use of MEDGIS-MAR is very limited among the Contracting Parties and (2) two systems would remain running in parallel and duplicating each other.
 ii. Therefore, investment in additional development does not seem to be justified and it is advised that Contracting Parties would make a switch from MEDGIS-MAR to CECIS MP when the latter becomes operational.
 iii. In relation with the other contents of MEDGIS-MAR, not related with equipment availability and request for assistance, being them not in the scope of CECIS MP, they should not be incorporated in this system.

Initiation of the establishment of CECIS MP, as a platform for the Common System

12. As announced at MEDEXPOL 2024 (Malta, September 2024) the development of the new CECIS Marine started at the end of 2024. The system will be largely based on the recently launched CECIS for civil protection; all necessary adjustments for the Marine version are currently being addressed.

13. To support this process, a 'CECIS MP User Working Group' (the Group), including REMPEC has been re-convened for necessary adaptations for the Marine version, and to hold monthly meetings to discuss and decide on the features of the new CECIS MP, to address existing concerns and to facilitate easy transition to the new system through the following topics:

1.   User Management (including involvement of other relevant national organisations),

2.   Link with SSN,

3.   Resources tree and resources factsheets,

4.   Requests for Assistance,

5.   Offers of Assistance,

6.   Emergency (POLREP),

7.   Maps,

8.   Lessons Learnt platform.

14.   During the initial monthly meetings (24 January, 21 February and 21 March 2025), the Group focused on the resource management (including the resource tree factsheets and experts), request for assistance and first mock-ups. These align with the key topics related to the equipment data base considered by the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points Meeting as detailed in paragraph 12 above.

15.   The main achievements of the Working Group are :

.1   Established resources tree;

.2   Adding and searching for resources: agreed mock-ups;

.3   Updated Factsheets for Resources (vessels, aircraft and equipment): agreed mock-ups;

.4   Agreement on identifyingng and presenting available expertise in CECIS MP user countries: agreed mock-ups;

.5   Concept for a request for assistance: agreed mock-ups; and

.6   Additional features:
     (1) requests and offers concerning multiple countries for the same emergency will be displayed in one Request Overview window, and
     (2) all new acknowledgements (for a new emergency and a new request) will be displayed in the pop-up window when a user enters the system

Involvement and Contribution of the Contracting Parties

16.   Within the work of the Group, REMPEC conveyed two requests to the MTWG members who are not EU Member State, to gather relevant information on updated factsheets for resources and equipment, referred to in paraph 16.3 above . EU Member States provided their information directly to DG ECHO through separate EU communication, as they are already CECIS users and require different level of information .

17.   In view of the decision at the 14th meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC to use CECIS MP as a regional emergency communication system, and further discussions at the 15th meeting of the Focal Points outlining some inputs that would be required from the Contracting Parties and the Secretariat, and finally the updates at the last MEDEXPOL, as referred to in paragraphs 10 to 12 above, non-EU countries as future users of CECIS MP will have, in parallel to the work of the Group, to:

.1 appoint national CECIS Marine administrator/s (name, authority, contact) and map national user authorities – the main one and other relevant users (authority name and functional contact). New CECIS Marine will allow having main (constant) users and those that can be relevant and 'activated' in specific circumstances or emergencies with the read-only or read-and-write rights, determined by the administrator; and

.2 create EU login account according to the attached instructions. For security reasons, all Commission systems and applications are required to use EU login. Access to CECIS Marine will not be possible without EU login.

Way Forward

18. In view of the above the Secretariat, recommends that Contracting Parties:

.1 consider in detail the information in paragraph 11 above, and instruct the Secretariat on the way forward;

.2 support the Secretariat in providing inputs to the work of the Group: to the development of different parts/modules of CECIS (through REMPEC consultations), the testing of the system (such mock-ups), then inputting data like resources, etc.; and

.3 continue the work using the new platform as per paragraph 12 above, with the required involvement of third parties as detailed in paragraph 17.

Actions requested by the Meeting

19. **The Meeting is invited to:**

.1 **take note** of the information provided; and

.2 **examine and discuss** the proposals put forward in paragraph 18, as deemed necessary.