
**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)

REMPEC/WG.61/6/5
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Agenda Item 3: Illegal and accidental oil and HNS pollution from ships

Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG) and related activities

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Note by the Secretariat

This document provides an update on the progress made by the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG) since the Fifteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC and proposes future activities to be integrated into the Programme of Work of the MTWG for the biennium 2026-2027.

Background

1. The Meeting of the Focal Points of the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) (Malta, October 2000) agreed to establish the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG) aimed at facilitating the exchange of technical data and scientific information on preparedness for and response to marine pollution emergencies. The said meeting adopted the Guidelines for the MTWG, which were further reviewed and subsequently adopted by the 11th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Malta, June 2015) ([REMPEC/WG.37/14/1/Annex II](#)). These Guidelines provided the method of work for the MTWG.

2. Based on the recommendations adopted by the 12th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (“the Barcelona Convention”) and its Protocols (Monaco, November 2001), the need for such a regional forum (i.e. MTWG) was strengthened. It was agreed that REMPEC should develop and maintain close working relationships with other Regional Activity Centres (RACs) of the UNEP/MAP and with other “specialized regional organizations” which play a coordinating role, in particular, with those scientific institutions in the region.

3. The 22nd Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 22) (Türkiye, December 2021) adopted the Mediterranean Strategy for the Prevention of, Preparedness, and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2022-2031), hereinafter referred to as “the Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031)”. It addresses issues related to the activities carried out within the MTWG in its Common Strategic Objective 1 (CSO 1): Prevent, prepare for, and respond to operational, illegal and accidental oil and HNS pollution from ships.

4. To meet the CSO 1, the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (CPs) acknowledged the need to further develop policies to address current and new challenges in prevention, preparedness for and response to operational, illegal and accidental pollution from ships in the Mediterranean, and to facilitate and enhance existing or new services to foster monitoring and exchange of knowledge and data.

5. CPs also recognized the need for a stronger inter-sectoral cooperation between at-sea, shoreline, and wildlife responders, port authorities, oil and chemical industry and agree to aim for a holistic/integrated management of marine pollution incidents that enable a coordinated response operation at sea and onshore, including the response to wildlife.

Programme of Work of the MTWG for the biennium 2024-2025

6. The 15th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Malta, 13-15 June 2023), considered document [REMPEC/WG.56/3/2](#) providing an update on the progress made by the MTWG since the 14th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (online, 31 May to 2 June 2021) and the proposed activities to be integrated into the work programme of the MTWG for the present biennium 2024-2025.

7. Acknowledging the valuable work carried out by the MTWG, the 15th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC agreed to maintain the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group, established within the MTWG by the 13th Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC, and encouraged the CPs, which had not yet done so, to nominate their national entities and/or officials as contact points for this Correspondence Group and considered the following tasks to be implemented through this Correspondence Group to:

- .1 contribute to the development of the Post 2016-2024 Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan through the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group in cooperation with the OFOG Sub-Groups on Environmental Impact and on Health and Safety;
- .2 maintain the task assigned to the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group to assist the Secretariat in cooperation with the EC during the different phases of the development

- of the Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean and to test it once developed;
- .3 review Part II of the Guidelines for the use of dispersants for combating oil pollution at sea in the Mediterranean region with a special focus on the issues of salinity range, nutrient levels and the risk of using dispersants in the vicinity of desalination plants in the Mediterranean Sea; and
- .4 develop an electronic version of the Oiled Shoreline Assessment Form in the 2009 Mediterranean Oiled Shoreline Assessment Guidelines and the 2013 Oiled Shoreline Assessment Manual.

8. Considering that risks associated with the transportation by ships of oil and HNS with possible harmful consequences on biota and ecosystems could not be eliminated and that accidents could and still did occur, including those causing acute pollution, the 15th Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points invited the MTWG to establish a new Correspondence Group on Data Sharing, Monitoring, and Reporting to carry the following tasks:

- .1 improve the contribution of the CPs to activities related to Data Sharing, Monitoring, and Reporting on Oil and HNS Spills in the Mediterranean; and
- .2 contribute to the preparation of a Regional Workshop to enhance Regional Cooperation in Responding to Marine Oil and HNS Pollution in the Mediterranean (MEDEXPOL 2024) on Data Sharing, Monitoring, and Reporting.

9. The 15th Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points also encouraged the CPs to designate through the REMPEC OPRC Focal Points, the appropriate national entities and/or officials as representatives in the Correspondence Group on Data Sharing, Monitoring, and Reporting. Following REMPEC Circular Letter 07/2024, inviting CPs to review the nominations for the OPRC Correspondence Group, 16 CPs designated their national entities and/or officials, resulting in a total of 26 members.

Implementation of the PoW of the MTWG for the biennium 2024-2025

OPRC HNS Correspondence Group

10. With a view to ensuring better practicability and coordination of the two Correspondence Groups, the Secretariat, through Circular Letter No 7, dated 28 May 2024, proposed assigning the above-mentioned new activities to the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group and to inherently strengthen its composition by incorporating entities and officials that have the necessary knowledge and experience with the Barcelona Convention Reporting System (BCRS); the UNEP /MAP MED POL as well the Mediterranean Correspondence Group on Monitoring (CORMON) Pollution.

11. In this context, the OPRC HNS Correspondence Group was regularly consulted and involved in the following activities during 2024-2025:

- contribute to the Questionnaire in preparation of MEDEXPOL 2024 (July 2024), on the reporting on the implementation of the Prevention and Emergency Protocol and the Offshore Protocol and in case of emergency, the monitoring of the of operational and accidental offshore and shipping activities under IMAP, and the exchange of information;
- review and update of the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan - 2026-2035 (July 2024) the draft review and update (October 2024); and
- review of the draft final version of the Offshore Guidelines and standards on the removal / decommissioning of installations and related financial aspects (November 2024).

12. Furthermore, MEDEXPOL 2024 acknowledged that reporting and monitoring rely on the availability of accurate and up-to-date information. It also recognized that the fragmentation of information sources at national level could hinder access to reliable data. Regarding the revision of the Country Profile and the development of MEDGIS-MAR, the Workshop took note of a delegation's remark emphasizing the need to carefully avoid duplication of systems where information and data are

provided and made available. This aims to prevent redundant efforts and mitigate the risk of desynchronization.

13. To this effect, MEDEXPOL 2024 agreed to inter alia, request the Secretariat to:

.1 assess possible future developments of MEDGIS-MAR to enable possible interconnection with the Country Profile pages to allow for a unique update by CPs and easier use of the layer “accidents”; and

.2 develop a layout of the new structure for the Country Profiles and provide a detailed assessment of the feasibility for its upgrade.

14. Moreover, MEDEXPOL 2024 agreed to, inter alia, request the CPs to take note and apply the recommendation of the Decision IG.26/3 of COP 23:

.1 on the submission of the report on incidents and spills using the latest version of the Data Dictionary and Data Standard (DD&DS) for CI 19 and providing to any extent possible all the data required in DD&DS, including estimation of quantity and volume of oil and other substances released; and

.2 to start collecting data on impacts on biota with reference to the above-mentioned updated version of DD&DS for IMAP CI 19.

Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean

15. The development of the new CECIS Marine started at the end of 2024. As detailed in document REMPEC/WG.61/6/3.3, the system will be largely based on the recently launched CECIS for civil protection; with necessary adjustments for the Marine version. A ‘CECIS MP User Working Group’ (the Group) within the DGECHO has been established, including REMPEC, to meet on a monthly basis to discuss and decide on the features of the new CECIS Marine and to address existing concerns to facilitate the transition to the new system. Initially the Group focused on the resource management, focusing on categories and the resource tree, factsheets and first mock-ups.

16. To advance these topics, the MTWG—specifically, non-EU Member States—was invited in late February 2025 to complete the *Resources Tree* document and the corresponding Excel file developed by the Group, for consideration at the Group meeting scheduled for end March 2025. The tables are intended for MTWG members from non-EU Member States (third Parties), as EU Member States were directly involved in the process. Due to the lack of feedback from third parties, REMPEC and DG ECHO will work on facilitating the participation of non-EU Member States in this process, as outlined in document REMPEC/WG.61/6/3.3.

Review of Guidelines for the use of dispersants for combating oil pollution at sea in the Mediterranean region

17. In line with the recommendation of the 15th Meeting of REMPEC Focal Points, the Secretariat updated Part II of ‘Basic Information on Dispersants and their Application’ of the Guidelines for the use of dispersants for combating oil pollution at sea in the Mediterranean region (REMPEC, 2011). In accordance with the task assigned by the 15th Meeting to the MTWG, the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group contributed to this work through:

- .1 the Questionnaire to facilitate the review of the Guidelines (October 2024); and
- .2 the review of the final draft of Guidelines for their finalization (February 2025).

Development of the electronic version of the Oiled Shoreline Assessment Form

18. In line with the recommendation of the 15th Meeting, the Secretariat developed an electronic version of the Oiled Shoreline Assessment Form, of the Mediterranean Oiled Shoreline Assessment Guidelines (2009) and the Oiled Shoreline Assessment Manual (POSOW 2013).

19. In accordance with the task assigned by the 15th Meeting to the MTWG, the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group contributed to this work by testing the draft digital version of the Form (August 2024). The electronic version of the 'Oiled Shoreline Assessment Form' of the Mediterranean Oiled Shoreline Assessment Guidelines, has been published on [REMPEC Website](#).

Study on the Readiness of the Mediterranean Region to respond to Marine Pollution Incidents involving Low-Sulphur Fuels and Alternative Fuels (October 2024)

20. In the context of the designation of the Mediterranean Sea as SO_x ECA, and its effective application as from 1 May 2025, REMPEC prepared a *Study on the Readiness of the Mediterranean Region to Respond to Marine Pollution Incidents Involving Low Sulphur Fuels or Alternative Fuels*.

21. Considering the significance of this topic, REMPEC has involved the MTWG, OPRC Focal Points, and Partners in the Study's review and development. The OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group contribution to this work consisted of:

- .1 the Questionnaire on the Study on the Readiness of the Mediterranean Region to respond to Marine Pollution Incidents involving Low-Sulphur Fuels and Alternative Fuels (October 2024); and
- .2 the Online validation Workshop to discuss the findings of the Study and the draft policy recommendations (November 2024).

Proposed activities for 2026-2027

22. Accordingly, the Secretariat proposes that the MTWG, through the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group is tasked with the following tasks to:

- .1 support the Secretariat in the preparation and testing future improvement and upgrade of MEDGIS-MAR;
- .2 contribute to the review of the Country Profiles and its upgrade with the ultimate aim to facilitate the collection and utilization of datasets for statistical analysis and studies at regional level, could be developed;
- .3 assist the Secretariat in cooperation with the EC during the different phases of the development of the Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean;
- .4 assist the Secretariat in implementing the findings and recommendations of the *Study on the Readiness of the Mediterranean Region to Respond to Marine Pollution Incidents Involving Low Sulphur Fuels or Alternative Fuels*, as deemed appropriate; and
- .5 contribute to strengthening the national monitoring system by integrating key elements that enable the monitoring assessment of the impact on the marine environment using IMAP CI19. This includes to any extent possible all the data required in DD&DS, and on impacts on biota, defining the competent responsible authority, engaging operational institution experts, etc.

Actions requested by the Meeting

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

- .1 **take note** of the information provided in the present document; and
 - .2 **consider** the proposed activities, as laid down in paragraph 22 above, to be integrated into the PoW of the MTWG for the biennium 2026-2027.
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