



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

Webinar to enhance regional cooperation in responding to marine
Oil and HNS pollution in the Mediterranean (MEDEXPOL 2020)

REMPEC/WG.47/4
Date: 19 October 2020

27-28 October 2020

Original: English

Agenda Item 4

WAY FORWARD FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMON EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

Note by REMPEC

SUMMARY

Executive Summary: This document introduces the way forward for the establishment of a Common emergency communication system for the Mediterranean.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 11

Related documents: UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.22/28, REMPEC/WG.45/16, REMPEC/WG 47/INF 3, REMPEC/WG 47/INF 4

Background

1. In accordance with the recommendation of the Regional CECIS Marine Pollution workshop for the Mediterranean countries (Brussels, Belgium, 22-23 October 2019), reproduced in Appendix to document REMPEC/WG.47/INF.3, REMPEC OPRC Focal Points and the members of the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG) were invited to complete the Survey for the establishment of a Common emergency communication system for the Mediterranean, reproduced in Annex I to the document REMPEC/WG.47/INF.4, with a view to exploring the most appropriate solution to set up such System for the whole Mediterranean region.

2. The present document provides an overview of the main outcomes of the Survey, reproduced in Annex II to the document REMPEC/WG.47/INF.4, and propose possible solutions for the establishment of a Common emergency communication system for the Mediterranean.

Main outcome

3. The Survey revealed that substantial changes are needed to the current emergency communication systems in the Mediterranean to address the difficulties encountered by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention during real incidents and exercises. These difficulties arise especially from the absence of connection between the two communication systems in place in the region, namely the SafeSeaNet (SSN)/CECIS Marine Pollution (MP) applications provided by the European Union and the emergency communication procedure set-up in the framework of the Protocol concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea (2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol).

4. To address this critical issue and with a view to providing the Mediterranean with a unique emergency communication system that ensures a well-coordinated and prompt response to marine

pollution incidents, the present document provides a review of gaps encountered and Contracting Parties' expectations and proposes possible options.

Elements for the development of an adequate emergency communication system for the Mediterranean

5. The Survey consisted of two sections reproduced below:
 - .1 **Section 1:** Background information on Emergency communication systems in the Mediterranean
 - .2 **Section 2:** Needs and requirements for a Common Emergency Communication System

6. The main conclusions resulting from the review of the answers provided under Section 1 include:
 - .1 with regard to the notification and exchange of information on pollution incidents, and the request and offer of assistance and related forms:
 - the SSN-CECIS MP and the REMPEC Emergency Procedure are equally used;
 - the users of both systems continue using traditional communication means (i.e. fax/telephone/email);
 - POLREP forms are commonly used by many of the Contracting Parties; and
 - the use of the Request and Offer (R&O) assistance forms adopted by Contracting Parties¹ is still low.
 - .2 with regard to issues encountered during exercises or real incidents, when communicating with countries:
 - Hard-copy generate additional burden and delays; and
 - Using direct phone calls/emails/fax may cause difficulties in tracking replies.

Contracting Parties' suggestions to improve the emergency communication system in the Mediterranean:

- .1 Maintain the use of telephone and e-mails as an integral component of the communication system and upgrade it with new information technologies;
 - .2 Develop and generalise the use of the electronic forms of POLREP and the R&O of assistance forms, in accordance with Decision IG.23.11²;
 - .3 Generalise the use of the R&O assistance forms, as a complement to the POLFAC in line with Decision IG.23.11³;
 - .4 Encourage the communication between countries through REMPEC directly or through CECIS MP;
 - .5 Ensure that request of assistance and actions taken are shared in real time by parties involved.
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7. The conclusion on the results of Section 2 of the survey are presented below:

¹ Decision IG.23/11 - Mediterranean Guide on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Responding to Marine Pollution Incidents

² Excerpt Decision IG.23/11 - UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.23/23, Page 403, Request the Secretariat to explore financial resources, including support from Contracting Parties, to prepare a printed publication of the Guide to facilitate its use and to develop an electronic version of the operational part of the Guide, which would facilitate requests for assistance.

³ Excerpt Decision IG.23/11 - UNEP(DEPI)/MED IG.23/23, Page 403 "*Urge* the Contracting Parties to take the necessary measures to incorporate the procedures defined in the Guide into their national, bilateral and multilateral systems of preparedness and response to marine pollution; *Recommend* to the Contracting Parties to regularly test those procedures during communication and full-scale exercises"

.1 At the regional level:

- **Operational Needs:** using a single Communication System, allowing completion online of POLREP and R&O assistance forms, and linkage with other tools and databases;
- **Technical and Administrative needs:** A common policy on data accessibility (24h, password, protection of sensitive data, etc.), the development and maintenance of a user-friendly system, technical and financial assistance to accommodate staff and equipment and compatibility of the Communication System with the CECIS MP/SSN;
- **Legal needs:** mutual recognition of the validity of the electronic requests and offers of assistance, compatibility with national legislation and requirements, and adoption of a binding agreement on the System.

.2 At the national level:

- **Legal requirements:** strong data protection, the adoption by all countries of the electronic reporting forms, the addition of provisions on the system in the National Contingency Plans, the transfer of data in accordance with data protection laws in force, the possibility for high level communication protected by user password, and the distinction between the receiver of and the respondent to the request.
- **Administrative issues:** Need to identify the administrators and users within the national competent authorities, the user rights, the update of the national procedure in relation with the System.
- **Technical and Operational considerations:** possible required adaptation of communication means / infrastructure and training of operational staff.
- **Logistics:** Setting up of the new system may require the adaptation of the communication means and possibly additional staff. At present, it might be difficult to specify specific needs. It will depend on the specified requirements of the system.
- **Other:** There is no need to set up an entirely new Common emergency communication system for the Mediterranean. If a pollution incident occurs within "internal" waters and always under the instruction of the competent national Maritime Authority, the selection of a "regional agreement/Mediterranean" field on CECIS MP, could maintain the current communication channel with REMPEC.

Suggested options to take into consideration for the establishment of a Common emergency communication system for the Mediterranean

8. Taking into consideration the recommendation of the 13th Meeting of the Focal Points (Malta, June 2019) related to the use of CECIS MP; the possibility for third countries to use CECIS MP through direct expression of interest addressed to DG ECHO, and the option of enabling connexion to CECIS MP via REMPEC, **a common communication system should be based on the existing systems in consideration of the following principles:**

- .1 SSN and the emergency line and phone of REMPEC continue to be used for the notification of incidents
- .2 CECIS MP would allow completion/access to the R&O of assistance, third countries will directly integrate the system or continue using REMPEC's access to CECIS MP

- .3 POLREP and the Forms of R&O of assistance would be used under an electronic form
- .4 Data base of the EU on CECIS MP would be maintained, database Mediterranean countries on MEDGIS-MAR (equipment) would be linked through CECIS MP platform
- .5 The cost of development and maintenance of online information systems, would be free in case of using CECIS MP

9. In this context, the following proposed actions **at the regional level** should be considered:

- .1 Maintain SSN and REMPEC emergency line (email and phone) for notification of incidents.
- .2 Avoid parallel communication systems and encourage non-EU countries to use CECIS MP, through a dedicated "Mediterranean" restricted area with the possibility to open communication with other EU Member States or "Regional Agreements".
- .3 No additional cost for Contracting Parties for the development, maintenance and use of a dedicated "Mediterranean" area under CECIS MP.
- .3 Alternatively, ensure compatibility of any other communication system with CECIS MP.
- .4 Integrate and ensure online completion of POLREP and R&O of assistance Forms.
- .5 Maintain database of the EU on CECIS MP and provide access to MEDGIS-MAR (equipment) through a link on CECIS MP platform.
- .6 Integrate databases to ensure a follow-up in real time of the situation .
- .7 Ensure the system remains easily accessible 24 h.
- .8 Define the policy on the designation of the administrators and end users and their accessibility to the system.
- .9 Define the policy ensuring protection of sensitive data and information, protected passwords.
- .10 Develop user's policy, access rights, data sharing accessibility.
- .11 Avoid creating additional reporting obligations.

10. Proposed actions to be implemented **at the national level**:

- .1 Officialise and share the list of the administrators and users.
- .2 Agree on the user rights and data protection and management at national level.
- .3 Establish a training programme for the operators.
- .4 Ensure compatibility of the interconnection of the System to the national communication system, adaptation of communication means/infrastructure, and remote access onsite and from the command centre.
- .5 Consider supporting the set-up of the required logistics and training of additional staff to ensure a smooth and harmonised communication among national administrators and users.
- .6 Involve countries in establishing and officialising the System functioning: data protection, user assignment, access policy as well as its interaction with the national emergency communication systems.

Actions requested of the Meeting

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

- .1 **take note of** the information provided in the present document,
- .2 **review and comments** as appropriate on the suggested options and requirements for the establishment of a Common emergency communication system for the Mediterranean
- .3 **propose recommendations** for their consideration by the 14th Meeting of REMPEC's Focal Points