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

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

REMPEC/WG.51/10  
Date: 10 May 2021

Online, 31 May – 2 June 2021

Original: English

Agenda Item 10

### **MEDITERRANEAN TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (MTWG) AND RELATED ACTIVITIES**

#### **Note by the Secretariat**

#### **SUMMARY**

**Executive Summary:** This document provides an update on the progress made by the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG) since the Thirteenth 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 2022-2023

**Action to be taken:** 18

**Related documents:** UNEP(DEC)/MEDIG.13/8, UNEP(DEPI)/MEDIG.22/28, Decision IG.22/4, REMPEC/WG.45/12/1, REMPEC/WG.51/9/2, REMPEC/WG.51/10/1, REMPEC/WG.51/10/2, REMPEC/WG.51/INF.5

#### **Background**

1. The Meeting of the Focal Points of the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) (Malta, 25-28 October 2000), agreed to establish the Mediterranean Technical Working Group (MTWG), aimed at facilitating the exchange of technical data and scientific information in the subject area of preparedness and response, in relation to marine pollution emergencies. The Meeting adopted the Guidelines for the Mediterranean Technical Working Group, further reviewed, and adopted by the Eleventh Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Malta, 15-17 June 2015), which provided the method of work for the MTWG.

2. Based on the recommendations adopted by the Twelfth 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 (COP 12) (Monaco, 14-17 November 2001), the need for such a regional forum (i.e. MTWG) was strengthened, as it was agreed that REMPEC should develop and maintain close working relationships with other Regional Activity Centres of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and with the "specialised regional organisms" which play a coordinating role as set forth in UNEP/MAP, particularly with the scientific institutions within the region.

3. The Nineteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 19) (Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016), adopted the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021), hereinafter referred to as "the Regional Strategy (2016-2021)", which addresses issues related to the activities carried out within the MTWG in the Specific Objectives:

- .1 Specific Objective 18: To encourage the participation of the regional scientific and technical institutions in research and development activities and to facilitate the transfer of technology.
- .2 Specific Objective 19: To improve the quality, speed, and effectiveness of the decision-making process in case of marine pollution incidents, through the development and introduction of technical and decision support tools; and
- .3 Specific Objective 21: To revise the existing recommendations, principles, and guidelines, and to develop new ones aimed at facilitating international cooperation and mutual assistance within the framework of the 2002 Prevention and Emergency Protocol.

#### **Programme of Work of the MTWG for the biennium 2020-2021**

4. The Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (Floriana, Malta, 11-13 June 2019), considered document REMPEC/WG.45/12/1 providing an update on the progress made by the MTWG since the Twelfth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC (St Julian's, Malta, 23-25 May 2017), and the proposed future activities to be integrated into the programme of work (PoW) of the MTWG for the biennium 2020-2021.

5. While noting that the MTWG shall be maintained as a correspondence group, according to "Guidelines for the Mediterranean Technical Working Group", the Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC proposed to align the PoW of the MTWG with capacity building activities scheduled within the PoW of REMPEC, to allow follow-up discussions on MTWG activities at regional events.

6. Acknowledging the valuable work carried out by the MTWG, the Meeting agreed to include, in the PoW of the MTWG for the biennium 2020-2021, the following tasks to be implemented through the established OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group:

- .1 to test and enhance the communication system to be developed, in the framework of the EU-funded project Western Mediterranean Region Marine Oil and HNS Pollution Cooperation (West MOPoCo), including specific forms of the Mediterranean Guide on Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in Responding to Marine Pollution Incidents, to ensure systematic and smooth communication during an emergency;
- .2 to contribute to the development of the Joint Inter-Regional HNS Response Manual and provide input as required to future sessions of the Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), to develop the operational guide compiling good practices on preparedness and response to spills of HNS, the proposal of which was agreed at the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC);
- .3 to prepare a study on the issue related to spills of condensate, noting that the traditional techniques and response methods to combat marine oil spill may not be fit for the purpose of handling incidents involving condensate.

7. Welcoming the progress made since the last Meeting of Focal Points by the Secretariat of the Bonn Agreement, the Secretariat of HELCOM and REMPEC, in consultation with their respective technical working group to join efforts and resources to produce a joint manual based on existing guides and tools on HNS response, in the framework of the EU-Funded West MOPoCo Project, the Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC:

- .1 noted the information provided in the document REMPEC/WG.45/12/3, which reports the main outcome of the Joint Inter-Regional HNS Response Manual Preparatory Meeting; and;
- .2 agreed upon the initial draft table of contents of the Joint Inter-Regional HNS Response Manual.

**Progress Report on the implementation of the Programme of Work of the MTWG for the biennium 2020-2021**

**OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group under the MTWG**

8. During the period under review, fifteen (15) out of twenty-two (22) Contracting Parties designated their national entities and/or officials as contact points for the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group.

9. In this regard, the Secretariat proposed to encourage the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocol, which has not yet been done, to nominate their national entities and/or officials as contact points for the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group.

**Communication system**

10. Pursuant to the decisions of the Thirteenth Meeting, tasking the MTWG to test and enhance the communication system to be developed, and requesting the Secretariat to envisage the use of the Common Emergency Communication and Information System for Marine Pollution Incidents (CECIS MP), to enhance coordination of requests for, and offers of international assistance, the MTWG participated actively in the following activities organized within the West MOPoCo project, the outputs of which contributed to the definition of the process to set up a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean, which is submitted to the present Meeting for consideration under document REMPEC/WG.51/9/2:

- .1 participation of OPRC Focal Points and the Members of the MTWG from twelve (12) Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, at the Regional CECIS Marine Pollution workshop for the Mediterranean countries (Brussels, Belgium, 22-23 October 2019), organised by REMPEC in cooperation with the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), the recommendations of which are reproduced in the Workshop report under document REMPEC/WG.47/INF.3
- .2 contribution of thirteen (13) Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention, a survey launched by REMPEC, to assess the conditions required for the establishment of a Common Emergency Communication System for the Mediterranean, the results of which are reproduced in **Annex I** and **Annex II** to document REMPEC/WG.47/INF.4.

11. In light of the above, and subject to the outcome of the discussions on the related document REMPEC/WG.51/9/2, the Secretariat proposes to task the MTWG, through the OPRC HNS Correspondence Group, to continue supporting the process for the establishment of the Common Emergency Communication System, during the biennium 2022-2023.

**The Marine HNS Response Manual – Multi-Regional Bonn Agreement, HELCOM, REMPEC**

12. Following the approval of the initial draft table of contents of the Manual by the Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points of REMPEC, the development of the Marine HNS Response Manual – Multi-Regional Bonn Agreement, HELCOM, REMPEC, herein referred to as the Manual, was carried out through a wide consultation process involving the coastal States of the Baltic Sea, the North Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, through the respective technical Correspondence Groups: The Working Group on Operational, Technical and Scientific Questions Concerning Counter-Pollution Activities (OTSOPA), the HELCOM Response Working Group, and the OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group under the MTWG coordinated by respective secretariats: Bonn Agreement, HELCOM and REMPEC.

13. During the consultation process, the MTWG contributed by providing comments and suggestions on:

- .1 the second draft Manual resulting from discussions held at the 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the HELCOM Response Working Group (Vejle, Denmark, 26-28 February 2020);
- .2 the third draft Manual, which took into account the feedback from the three Secretariats and the findings of the OTSOPA meeting (Online, 26-28 May 2020);

- .4 the fourth draft Manual discussed during the Webinar to enhance regional cooperation in responding to Marine Oil and HNS pollution in the Mediterranean (MEDEXPOL 2020) (online, 27-28 October 2020), attended by members of the MTWG, reported in document REMPEC/WG.51/INF.5 to the present Meeting; and
- .5 the final draft Manual, prepared taking into consideration MEDEXPOL 2020 recommendations, as reproduced in document REMPEC/WG.51/10/2.

14. Subject to the outcome of the discussions on document REMPEC/WG.51/10/2, in particular with regards to the submission of the Manual to PPR9, and in line with the recommendation of the Thirteenth Meeting of the Focal Points, requesting the MTWG's OPRC-HNS Correspondence Group to provide input, as required, to future PPR's sessions, the Secretariat proposes to coordinate the input and contribution from members of the MTWG, for the "Development of an operational guide on the response to spills of Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS)", in the framework of the PPR.

15. Noting that parts of the Manual, have been integrated in the latest version of the Maritime Integrated Support Information System on Transport of Chemical Substances (MIDSIS-TROCS 4.0) developed by REMPEC, within the framework of the WestMOPoCo project, as mentioned in document REMPEC/WG.51/10/2 of the present Meeting, the Secretariat also proposes to refer to this development and to recall, in the submission to PPR9 referred to above, that the Twelfth session of the IMO's OPRC-HNS Technical Group (former PPR) invited delegations to continue submitting information and case studies on HNS incidents of interest to it, with a view to sharing these with REMPEC for inclusion in MIDSIS-TROCS.

#### **Study on the issue related to spills of condensate**

16. As detailed in document REMPEC/WG.51/10/1 of the present Meeting, to avoid duplications, following the required consultations with Cedre and TOTAL S.A., the Secretariat proposed to the MTWG to consider the "Condensates – Chemical intervention Guide" reproduced in **Annex I** to the document REMPEC/WG.51/10/1, prepared by Cedre, as a foundation for possible further developments taking into account Mediterranean coastal States' contribution and input on condensates, notably:

- .1 a detailed list of the type of condensates transported by sea, produced, and operated on in the respective countries; and
- .2 comments, suggestions, and recommendations on the proposed guide.

17. Considering that only four (4) out of twenty-two (22) Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention provided feedback, within the limited time available from the completion of the "Condensates – Chemical intervention Guide" and the request for input; subject to the outcome of the discussions on document REMPEC/WG.51/10/1, notably the extension of the period of the mandate of the MTWG to allow for further progress and finalization of this task, the Secretariat proposes to resume the work on this task in July 2021, for its completion by the end of December 2021.

#### **Actions requested by the Meeting**

##### **18. The Meeting is invited to:**

- .1 **take note** of the information provided by the Secretariat in the present document; and
- .2 **consider** the proposals put forward by the Secretariat to be integrated into the programme of work of the MTWG for the biennium 2022-2023, as laid down in paragraphs 9, 11, 14, 15 and 17 of the present document.