**16th Inter-Secretariat Meeting between Regional Agreement Secretariats, DG ECHO and EMSA, 5 February 2020, DG ECHO offices, Brussels**

**Summary Report (draft)**

**1. Opening of the Meeting**

1.1 Mr Ikka Salmi (DG ECHO / Director of Disaster Preparedness and Prevention) welcomed the participants at DG ECHO in Brussels for the 16th Inter-Secretariat meeting, which brings together the European Regional Agreements to exchange information and share best practices in the field of marine pollution preparedness and response. These annually held meetings provide a unique forum for sharing good practices in the field of marine pollution response among all the European Regional Sea Conventions.

1.2 The meeting was chaired by Ms Lito Xirotyri, EMSA and attended by representatives of the Barcelona Convention / REMPEC, the Bonn Agreement/OSPAR Secretariat, the Copenhagen Agreement, the HELCOM Secretariat, the Lisbon Agreement, the OTSOPA Chairman, the HELCOM Response Chairperson, the European Commission/DG ECHO and EMSA. Apologies were received from the Black Sea Commission Secretariat and DG MOVE (scheduled to attend the meeting for Agenda item 2). The meeting’s Agenda is attached as **Annex A**, the list of participants as **Annex B**, and the ‘Table of Activities’ (v.16) as **Annex C**.

**2. Update on the ship-source pollution correspondence group (Directive 2005/35/EC)**

2.1 This topic was not discussed in detail, as DG MOVE was unable to attend. EMSA provided a brief overview of the work currently undertaken by the correspondence group (CG) in developing a harmonised (standard) template to assist Member States report to the Commission the **implementation of Directive 2005/35/EC on ship sourced pollution** and the introduction of penalties for infringements (as per Art.12 of the Directive). The OTSOPA Chairperson and the Bonn Agreement Secretariat are actively involved in the work of this CG, noting that the existing regional reporting formats on illegal discharges observed during aerial surveillance and the database of NSN are being considered under this work. HELCOM, REMPEC and Bonn Agreement reiterated their interest in this work and asked the Commission to submit some information on the topic at their relevant technical regional meetings including the draft standard reporting template (e.g. HELCOM Response, OTSOPA, NSN and MENELAS).

**3. Review of Regional Agreements’ MPPR Activities and Regional Priorities**

3.1 The Regional Agreements representatives presented their ongoing activities, based on the updated **Table of Activities and Projects in the field of Marine Pollution Preparedness and Response (v.16)** (**Annex C**). This Table provides an overview of all the relevant on-going projects within the Regional Agreements, DG ECHO and EMSA and should be consulted for more detailed background information.

3.2 On behalf of **HELCOM**, Mr Markus Helavuori from the **HELCOM Secretariat** and the **HELCOM** **RESPONSE Group** Chairperson Ms Heli Haapasaari updated the meeting on the key issues currently addressed within HELCOM, as guided by the Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) (2007-2021). These include the review and update of the BSAP; the revision (and shortening) of the HELCOM Response Manual, namely merging Volumes I (oil response) and III (on-shore response) and redrafting Volume II (HNS response) via the inter-regional HNS Manual being developed under the WestMoPoCo project; and the ongoing development of the HELCOM Response Exercise Plan (HREP) framework, a first draft of which will be discussed at the upcoming RESPONSE meeting. The meeting took note of the new pollution response capacities available in the region and the recently detected relatively large oil spills / illegal discharges in the region. In terms of regional priorities that may require EU funding, HELCOM indicated that regional risk analysis remains a priority, and the RESPONSE group will be discussing the possible update of the BRISK risk analysis project. Furthermore, exploring the response to new types of fuels and the at-sea recovery of new substances that are being transported in the Baltic are also topics of high interest to the region.

3.3 Ms Susana Salvador, **Bonn Agreement/OSPAR Secretary** and Mr Ronny Schallier, **OTSOPA Chair**, provided an overview of the evolution of the 50 years of the Bonn Agreement (BA) cooperation in the Greater North Sea, noting that BA is the oldest regional agreement established by governments to respond to pollution incidents. Reference was made to the BE-AWARE Trend Analysis 2030 and the simplified risk analysis of the Bay of Biscay conducted in view of Spain becoming a BA Contracting Party in 2019. The BA enlarged in 2019 its scope of action to also include air emissions from shipping (MARPOL Annex VI) and the operational implications and considerations for implementing this will be discussed at OTSOPA 2020 and at a dedicated workshop later in 2020. The new Bonn Agreement Strategic Action Plan (BASAP) 2019-2025 includes on-going actions from the BAAP 2016-2019 and from the implementation plan of the BE AWARE projects, covering both recurrent tasks and new tasks addressing new challenges for the region. Recent results of aerial surveillance flights highlight that the numbers of unknown spills or spills of other substances seem to be increasing, while ship-sourced oil spill detections are decreasing in the wider North Sea area. The meeting noted the ongoing revision of the joint BA/HELCOM annual reporting format on detections observed during aerial surveillance; and the intention of the BA and OSPAR to sign an MoU reflecting the two organisations’ special relationship and common areas of interest.

3.4 Mr Gabino Gonzalez, Head of Office of the **Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC)** provided an overview of the Centre and its activities, on the basis of the Regional Strategy for Prevention of and Response to Marine Pollution from Ships (2016-2021) adopted by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention. Defining the post-2021 strategic vision for the Mediterranean is one of the region’s future priorities. The meeting took note of REMPEC’s recent activities, including (sub-) regional and national capacity building and contingency planning developments, including the Readiness Evaluation Tool for Oil Spills - RETOS[[1]](#footnote-1); guidance documents and training courses; technical assistance provided on various environmental issues; and response exercises and recent activations of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit (MAU). The meeting was updated on the status of the WestMoPoCo project and the development of the Inter-regional HNS Response Manual, expected to be published in December 2020. The meeting noted the status of work regarding the Road Map for a proposal for the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea as a whole, as a SOx Emission Control Area (SECA) within the Framework of the Barcelona Convention, which is also a high priority topic for the region.

3.5 Mr Jens Hulgaard, newly appointed Secretary of the **Copenhagen Agreement** (CA), informed the meeting on recent work within the Copenhagen Agreement (which is not based on a Convention, but on long-standing cooperation among the Nordic countries), highlighting the two operational exercises conducted in 2019 (CA East and CA West) and their key findings, challenges and identified areas for improvement. The meeting noted the ongoing update of the Manual “Plan for Co-operation” and the work of the ad-hoc group on Claims Management. In terms of priorities, the review of exercise planning and evaluation processes was identified as a priority topic by the CA.

3.6 Mr Orlando Costa, representing the **Lisbon Agreement (LA)**, informed the meeting that since the Agreement entered into force in February 2014, the Contracting Parties (France, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and the EU) maintain contact. Efforts are being made to establish an action plan to reactivate the Agreement, which is currently being assessed at national level in Portugal, to be shared with the other Contracting Parties.

**4. Discussion on areas of possible inter-regional cooperation**

4.1 A first draft of the **Inter-regional HNS Manual** has been drafted by a group of organisations (ITOPF, Cedre, REMPEC and ISPRA) and this draft will be discussed at the various RAs meetings (i.e. HELCOM Response 27-2020, OSTOPA 2020), with the aim of finalising the Manual by summer 2020 for publication in December 2020. This work is done under the EU funded WestMoPoCo project (2019-2020), in close cooperation between REMPEC, the Bonn Agreement and HELCOM. The aim is to review existing work at regional and EU/international levels (HNS guidelines, manuals, tools) and develop an operational HNS Manual, to be used by several regional agreements and possibly also at IMO level (IMO HNS Guidelines).

4.2 **Work on pollution response exercises** planning and evaluation has been identified as an issue of common interest for the Regional Agreements, noting the ongoing HREP work and the work on exercises under the Copenhagen Agreement. There seems to be consensus in the need for a more systematic review of the exercises regarding lessons learnt and recommendations applicable at national, regional and EU level. Following relevant HREP outcomes, work on this topic will continue both at regional and at EU level.

4.3 The meeting took note of the inclusion of **air emissions from shipping** (MARPOL Annex VI compliance monitoring activities) in the Bonn Agreement scope of action and the upcoming meetings dedicated to discussing the operational implications from this new task (i.e. OTSOPA 2020 and a dedicated BA workshop in Q4/2020). The meeting also noted the status of work regarding the possible designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a SOx Emission Control Area (SECA) within the Framework of the Barcelona Convention, and that MARPOL Annex VI is discussed under the HELCOM Maritime group. Air emissions from shipping (MARPOL Annex VI) is a topic of common interest across the Regional Agreements and the EU.

4.4 Following a request by EMSA, and in view of exploring the Agency’s potential role in the field of marine litter, REMPEC, HELCOM and OSPAR presented a brief overview of their work on **Marine Litter (ML)**, as per their Regional Action Plans on Marine Litter. The meeting took note of the substantial work being undertaken on this issue at regional level and the various technical groups in place addressing the topic. Particular points noted include that all three regions are considering an update/revision of their ML plans; the management of abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) is a common challenge, as is the effective enforcement of MARPOL Annex V implementation at ports; sea-based sources of ML and shipping related waste should be further addressed; there is ongoing informal cooperation between the Regional Sea Conventions (RSC), UNEP-MEDPOL and the EU (i.e. under the UN Global Partnership on Marine Litter which has identified some initial priority actions; the RSC also participate in the work of the MSDF Technical Group on Marine Litter).

4.5 Following the above, and noting EMSA’s recent reorganisation and expanded portfolio of work under the Sustainability Unit, it was also discussed among the group if there is a wish to explore **expanding the scope** **of the** **Inter-Secretariat meeting**, in order to also address more environmental / pollution prevention issues, such as marine litter and air emissions from ships. Noting that this may require an extension of the meeting duration and possibly expanding the participating entities (e.g. OSPAR, DG ENV, HELCOM Maritime and HELCOM Pressure Groups), there were various opinions, both supporting such expansion and noting that these topics are already addressed (not in detail) under Agenda item 4. There was consensus and strong support for the Inter-Secretariat meetings to continue, and to maintain them as informal and ‘paper-less’ meetings focusing on the exchange of information and good practice and it was agreed for all to reflect on this topic, while keeping MARPOL Annex V and VI on the Agenda, under item 4 ((Discussion on areas of possible cooperation) as they are topics of common interest to all the Regional Agreements.

**5. European Commission / DG ECHO Activities**

5.1 Ms Asta Mackeviciute, representing the **DG Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (DG ECHO)** of the European Commission, updated the group on the DG ECHO projects and activities related to marine pollution prevention, preparedness and response. She provided an overview of recently completed and ongoing Prevention and Preparedness (P&P) projects funded by DG ECHO and highlighted the new elements introduced in the 2020 Call (i.e. Track I – covering single country P&P grants, and Track II – covering cross-border P&P and Marine Pollution grants) and the associated timeline and available budget. New activities under the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) were also presented, namely the new **Knowledge Network**, which aims to set up a sub-network of civil protection professionals, a sub-network of science for disaster risk management and a sub-network on education and learning. The question was raised by DG ECHO whether there was a need or wish for a marine pollution sub-network to also be established under the Knowledge Network, noting that there should not be any overlap with the CTG MPPR and other regional fora; the meeting asked to receive more information regarding the scope of work and tasks of this new Knowledge Network and its sub-groups.

5.2 Following discussions during last year’s meeting, it was agreed that the Regional Agreements could contribute at the Inter-Secretariat meetings in identifying regional priorities that may require EU funding, so as to support the planning cycle of the relevant DG ECHO calls and other EU funding programmes. The Inter-Secretariat meetings in February each year could be the first place where such priorities are identified and shared, these can then be further discussed in the regional meetings and concluded at the CTG MPPR meeting in October each year. A short Form could be developed by DG ECHO for this purpose (to be filled in by the Regional Agreements) and this process could be tested next year. Noting the regional priorities presented under Agenda item 3, the ongoing work on exercises and how to document and learn from lessons identified from real incidents were mentioned as possible examples.

**6. Update on EMSA’s MPPR activities**

6.1 Ms Lito Xirotyri, EMSA, updated the meeting on the Agency’s recent re-organisation reflecting the five strategic priorities identified in the EMSA 5-year strategy, noting that the new EMSA “**Sustainability”** Unit covers both environmental activities (i.e. pollution prevention), as well as EMSA’s pollution response services. The meeting noted recent and upcoming developments regarding the **stand-by oil spill recovery vessel Network** which, in mid-2020 will include 17 vessels available for oil spill response, including six vessels with dispersant spraying capability and five vessels with RPAS oil detection capabilities on board (i.e. small VTOL quadcopters). The **Equipment Assistance Service (EAS)** will have as of mid-2020, four arrangements, one in Tolkkinen (Northern Baltic), one in Frederikshavn (replacing the one in Gdansk in Southern Baltic), one in Rotterdam (North Sea) and one in Ravenna (Southern Europe). All EAS arrangements include portable floating storage tanks and a procurement is currently ongoing for medium-sized equipment, equipment that can be airlifted and paired with medium sized VOOs. A brief update was also provided regarding the six regionally held ‘stress-test’ workshops conducted in late 2019 and the current status of the project report.

6.2 The meeting took note of the updates provided on the **CleanSeaNet (CSN)** oil spill identification, monitoring and vessel detection service; EMSA’s **Remotely Piloted Aircraft Services** (RPAS) for marine pollution, ship emission monitoring and maritime surveillance; and on the Agency’s **services for chemical spills**, including the MAR-ICE service’s expansion to also provide chemical experts on-site at the command centre of a requesting country. Ongoing work under the **CTG MPPR** framework was also presented, including the development of guidance on oil spill sampling, guidance on health and safety of oil spill responders, as well as the aerial surveillance trainings and training being developed on chemical spill response management.

**7. Any Other Business**

7.1 Due to lack of time, it was not possible for the CA Secretary to update the meeting on the work of the Emergency Prevention Preparedness & Response (EPPR)working group of theArctic Council.

7.2 The meeting agreed to maintain the ‘**Table of Activities’** and to keep updating it on an annual basis, focusing only on recent projects and developments (not on historical data). Participants were reminded to regularly consult the **Calendar of MPPR Events** published on EMSA’s website and to inform EMSA of relevant regional / national meetings and exercises to be included therein, to avoid overlap of meetings.

**8. Next Meeting and Close**

8.1 The meeting’s documents and presentations are published on EMSA’s password-protected extranet (<https://extranet.emsa.europa.eu> / “Extranet Documents” / “**Inter-Secretariat Group”** part).

8.2 The 17th Inter-Secretariat meeting will be hosted by EMSA in Lisbon in **February 2021** (concrete date to be defined). HELCOM indicated their willingness to host the 2022 Inter-Secretariat meeting in Finland.

8.3 EMSA thanked all the participants for their contributions and DG ECHO for hosting the meeting and concluded the meeting. Participants were then invited to a short visit of the DG ECHO Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC) located close-by.

**9. Follow-up actions to consider prior to the next Inter-Secretariat meeting:**

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| All  | * Consider possible common work regarding exercise planning and evaluation, following the HELCOM HREP project outcome.
* Consider possible common work on how best to identify lessons and learn from real incidents.
* Include as sub-points under Agenda item 4 (Discussion on areas of possible cooperation) issues of common interest, such as: work on MARPOL Annex VI, marine litter work, risk assessment tools and response to new fuel types. Consider if and how the scope of this informal Inter-Secretariat meetings could or should be expanded concerning timing and the participation of other related entities, to cover also the exchange of information and good practice on more ‘pollution prevention’ issues, such as MARPOL Annex V and MARPOL Annex VI.
* Regularly review the MPPR calendar of events posted on EMSA’s website to avoid overlap of events’ dates and to inform the Secretariat of relevant meetings/exercises to be included therein.
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| European Commission | * Prepare a short Form regarding the regional priorities that could be considered for EU-funding, to be filled-in by the Regional Agreements and include this as a standing item on the Agenda.
* Prepare an INF paper for the relevant regional meetings on the work of the Correspondence Group on the Ship Source Pollution Directive (2005/35/EC).
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1. The objective of the Manual and Tool to Evaluate Oil Spill Management Capabilities – RETOS V 2.1 RETOS™ is to assist governments and companies in assessing their level of oil spill response planning and readiness management in relation to commonly agreed pre-established criteria considering international best management practices. The Manual and RETOS™ were developed with the support of regional and international experts from industry and government. Users can select the focus of the assessment from seven different scopes: facilities, industry-corporate and country local/national programs, among others. Manuals and tables are now available in English, Spanish, French and Portuguese, here: <https://www.arpel.org/library/publication/341/>

• Sub-regional workshop on the use of Retos: <https://www.westmopoco.rempec.org/en/news-events/the-sub-regional-workshop-on-the-use-of-retos-tm>

• National assessment: France (<https://www.westmopoco.rempec.org/en/national-retos-assessment-workshop-france>); Malta (<https://www.westmopoco.rempec.org/en/news-events/first-national-retos-workshop-malta>); [↑](#footnote-ref-1)