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Intergovernmental Review Meeting of
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First Meeting of the Contracting Parties
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the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution
and its related protocols

Geneva, 5 - 10 February 1979

Note by the Executive Director

The attached paper, which was prepared by the Director of the
Regional Oil Combating Centre in co-operation with the Inter-
Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, is submitted to
participants for their information.

First Meeting of the Contracting
Parties to the Convention for the
Protection of the Mediterranean
Sea Against Pollution

Cannes, 5-10 February 1979

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE
REGIONAL OIL-COMBATING CENTRE FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA IN MALTA

PREPARED BY THE DIRECTOR OF THE CENTRE

Title of Project: The Mediterranean Programme at the
Regional Oil-Combating Centre for
the Mediterranean MED XII

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INTRODUCTION

1. A progress report on the first year of the activities of the Regional Oil Combating Centre for the Mediterranean Sea in Malta has been presented by the Director of the Centre at the Inter-Governmental Review Meeting of Mediterranean Coastal States on the Mediterranean Action Plan, Monaco, 9-14 January 1978 (document UNEP/7G 11/INF.7). This document contains an up-dated progress report on the Centre's activities in 1978.
2. Since the inauguration of the Centre in December 1976, all international and local staff according to the project document have been recruited. The international staff consists of the Director, Mr. Philippe Le Lourd (France), the Deputy Director (Administration) Mr. J. Camilleri (Malta) and the Deputy Director (Technical) Mr. N. Swaid (Syria, who left the Centre by the end of October 1978), supported by six local staff. To help the Centre to develop its activities in the technical field, a fixed term appointment of three months was given in 1977 to Mr. J. Wardley-Smith, an expert of world repute in oil pollution. In 1978 the Canadian Authorities seconded Captain M.S. Greenham for 6 weeks to assist the Centre in the field of contingency planning.
3. As a contribution in kind (US \$120,000) the Maltese Government has provided suitable premises to house the Centre, including installation of telephone and telex facilities.
4. During the first year of the Centre's activities the Director visited all the Mediterranean Coastal States except Albania. These visits were of utmost importance for the proper functioning of the Centre. They served as an official introduction of the Centre to the anti-pollution authorities concerned in each Coastal State and enabled the Centre to establish focal points and first communication links in every State, as well as to collect information on their ability to combat oil pollution. With this information in hand, the Centre can now develop its activities with some knowledge of present capabilities with the region.
5. The Director prepared a comprehensive report for each country including all the information collected by him and also the views given by the Authorities he met. Information on communications, accident reporting systems, potential zones of risks and sensitive zones to oil pollution, contingency plans, oil combating facilities, training facilities or requirements, etc. was included in his reports, which were made available to the countries

concerned. This information has already been covered in the progress report of the first year of activity of the Centre.

6. From the information collected during this first visit and the few replies to questionnaires sent during the same time, the Director prepared a plan of action for the Centre for 1978 and presented it at the inter-governmental meeting at Monaco.

7. Meetings of UNEP (Monaco - Midterm Review Meeting of the MEDPOL Projects), IMCO (sessions of the Marine Environment Protection Committee), training seminars (INFOPOL in June 1978, URBINO in July 1978) and particularly the Workshop organized at the Centre in September 1978 on Contingency Planning, provided opportunities for the Centre to up-date and implement the contacts established and information gathered during the first visit.

8. At the end of 1977, as soon as the Information Officer and the Technical Staff of the Centre had been recruited, the information collected from the bordering States from these visits and contacts, was classified and efforts have been made to collect all the promised or complementary information required. The Centre is still expecting to receive or to up-date information from different countries.

9. The Centre has made very effort to send information available at the Centre to the bordering States, as requested. For example, technical and scientific information was sent to Cyprus, Lebanon, Malta, Morocco, Tunisia, Yugoslavia, etc.

FUNCTIONS PERFORMED BY THE CENTRE

10. This part of the report describes briefly the actions taken by the Centre since its opening in pursuance of its objectives and functions as provided for in Resolution 7 of the Barcelona Conference.

Objectives of the Centre

11. The objectives of the Centre are:

- (i) to strengthen the capacities of the coastal States in the Mediterranean region and to facilitate co-operation among them in order to combat massive pollution by oil, especially in case of emergencies in which there is grave and imminent danger to the marine environment;

- (ii) to assist the coastal States of the Mediterranean region, which so request, in the development of their own national capabilities to combat oil pollution and to facilitate information exchange, technological co-operation and training.

Functions of the Centre

12. The functions performed by the Centre during the period concerned were as follows:

- (i) To collect and disseminate information on:
 - (a) inventories of experts and equipment in each coastal State for combating massive accidental spillages of oil;
 - (b) plans, methods and techniques used for combating oil pollution in order to assist as far as necessary countries of the region in the preparation of their national contingency plans;
 - (c) those areas in the Mediterranean which are especially vulnerable to oil pollution and, with reference to these areas, specification of clean-up methods which can be used with minimum environmental damage in such areas.
- (ii) To prepare and keep up to date, in the light of information collected emergency plans that could be implemented:
 - (a) in case of massive oil pollution where there is an absence of bilateral or multilateral agreements between coastal States;
 - (b) in sectors of the Mediterranean, yet to be identified, where the risk of massive accidental oil pollution is high or where the capability for prompt counteraction in time of emergency does not presently exist.
- (iii) To develop and maintain a Communication/Information system appropriate to the needs of States being served by the Centre.
- (iv) To develop and encourage technological co-operation and training programmes for combating oil pollution.
- (v) To assist in strengthening the International Referral Systems (IRS) by developing the capacity to serve as a sectorial focal point which could collect data on the sources of information available in

connexion with oil pollution and with special emphasis on dealing with massive spills of oil and to make that data available.

- (vi) To develop and maintain close working relationships with other Mediterranean regional activity centres and with the "specialized regional organisms" which play a co-ordinating role as set forth in the Barcelona Action Plan particularly with the scientific institutions within the region.
- (vii) To co-operate in all appropriate activities which are directed towards the prevention and reduction of pollution in the Mediterranean resulting from oil spills.

13. The first collection of information was on oil combating equipment, products and experts currently available in the Mediterranean. Three questionnaires were sent in 1977 to every focal point to identify their nature, number, performance and location. Up to October 1978 nine of the eighteen coastal States replied, i.e., Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Malta, Spain, Syria and Turkey. A preliminary list of experts and a description of the combating facilities available in the region have been presented to the participants of the coastal States at the Workshop held at the Centre in September 1978. Simultaneously the Centre has established permanent contacts with manufacturers of equipment and products and requested them to provide literature and information on the facilities they can offer in the region. The response to this request was very satisfactory and already gives the Centre the possibility to answer technical enquiries from the coastal States and in cases of emergencies.

14. To a lesser extent, other initiatives were taken, particularly during the Director's visits, to collect information on plans, methods and techniques used for combating oil pollution as well as to gather through many contacts preliminary statistics and data which could later on allow the Centre to assess those areas of the Mediterranean vulnerable to oil pollution in order to assist the coastal States in future sectoral and contingency planning.

15. This kind of activity requires the direct co-operation of the coastal States and a joint collaboration with other projects (such as Monitoring Pilot Projects MED I and MED VI), the support of UN Agencies (IMCO, FAO, UNESCO, UNEP, WMO, etc.) and that of the regional institutions concerned.

Preparation of Emergency Plans

16. Earlier than initially planned, the Centre developed its activities on contingency planning. Following a request by the Maltese Government in July 1977 and thanks to the useful services and experience of Mr. J. Wardley-Smith, appointed temporarily to the Centre by IMCO, the Director presented the draft outline of a National Contingency Plan to the Maltese Minister of Health and Environment. This draft has been made available to the other countries, with the view that this first plan may well serve as a model which could give them useful guidance. Requests from Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia for assistance in the preparation of their national contingency plans have also been received but could not so easily be tackled due to the limited technical staff at the Centre.

17. The first task for the Technical Expert, as soon as he was appointed in November 1977, was to set up an operations room and a plan of action for the staff in case of emergency. Also, the Director has, during his visits, indicated to the focal points, the procedures of communication to alert the Centre in case of emergency.

18. Information was collected on existing contingency plans and has already been disseminated to the coastal States. The subject of contingency planning has also been introduced in the programme of training offered in the region in June and July 1978.

19. Pursuant to Recommendation 38 of the Inter-Governmental Meeting held at Monaco in January 1978, referring in particular to the development of national, sectoral and sub-regional contingency plans, the coastal States were invited by the Executive Director of UNEP and the Secretary-General of IMCO to participate in a Workshop on Contingency Planning in Malta between 4 and 7 September 1978. This was the first meeting of its kind organized by the staff of the Centre and it gave coastal States the first opportunity to visit the Centre and the existing facilities. All the coastal States, except Albania, Lebanon and Yugoslavia attended this Workshop. They were extensively briefed about the data already collected and available for assistance in the field and they exchanged information and views on national contingency plans, bilateral and multilateral agreements, new trends and technologies for combating pollution, communication systems, technical co-operation and training programmes. The subject of the regional contingency planning for the Mediterranean Sea was discussed and in particular the proposal presented by the Centre at the

Monaco Meeting was considered. A final report has been prepared which includes the views and recommendations of the participants for the future activities of the Centre. This report has already been circulated to the coastal States (CPW/5).

Communication/Information System

20. Communications with the coastal States are at present limited to telephone, cable and telex. Immediately after its opening, the Centre set up the necessary facilities and every endeavour was made by the Centre to establish first working liaisons with each of the focal points in the coastal States.

21. The visits made by the Director and the alerts received at the Centre from the coastal States were good opportunities to test the present communications with the Centre. Also a specific exercise was held in June 1978 which indicated that communications with some of the coastal States needs to be improved to operate efficiently in case of emergency. A report on this matter was presented to the Workshop on Contingency Planning in September 1978.

22. Since its opening the Centre has been informed of 10 oil spills in the Mediterranean Sea. Four were accidental and successfully controlled by the coastal countries and the assistance of the Centre was not required. Some of these alerts were transmitted to the Centre with considerable delay but for others the Centre kept in touch and took the opportunity to follow the spills and to predict their movement during the following 24 hours.

Technical Co-operation and Training Programmes

23. Since the opening of the Centre the technical co-operation of the Centre has been limited to exchanges of technical information. This point was discussed specifically during the Workshop on Contingency Planning in September 1978 and it was recommended that the Centre promote and develop an exchange of practical experience and hold joint exercises, as well as collect and disseminate information on the existing ways by which coastal States concerned can obtain the necessary technical assistance.

24. The main effort of the Centre to develop technical co-operation in the region was made on the promotion and development of training programmes in the region and the preparation of future "on-scene officers" and persons designated in future by the coastal States to develop their national contingency plans. In 1977, the Centre informed the coast States of the training seminar INFOPOL 77 on pollution from ships organized in June 1978 in Le Havre and Marseille

and sent a questionnaire to identify the needs and facilities existing in the region according to different levels of training. Eight of the 18 countries have replied to this questionnaire, i.e., Algeria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Israel, Malta, Monaco and Turkey.

25. Referring to these answers and information collected, the Centre prepared a programme of training for 1978 which was successfully conducted thanks to the support of IMCO Headquarters and UNEP and the active collaboration of France and Italy, by offering training facilities and fellowships to those coastal States developing their national contingency plans. Five nationals from Cyprus, Egypt, Malta, Turkey and Yugoslavia attended the INFOPOL 78 seminar.

Twenty participants from 13 coastal States, i.e., Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Libya, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey and Yugoslavia, attended a training seminar for the Mediterranean coastal States which was jointly organized by the Centre and SOGESTA with the support of the Italian Government at Urbino in July 1978. Nine of the participants to these two seminars attended the Workshop on Contingency Planning in September 1978. The organization of a training seminar specifically designed for the States of the region appeared at this occasion as essential to develop the regional mutual interest and the co-operative spirit needed for future action.

26. The role that the Centre may play in the development of technical co-operation and training programmes was supported by the Workshop.

International Referral Systems (IRS)

27. This activity was due to start in April 1977. The Director received a general briefing about the IRS in November 1976. In July 1977, discussion was held with the IRS co-ordinator. In November 1977, the Information Officer was sent to a training course on IRS in Nairobi as a preliminary step to start activity in this field.

28. Follow-up contacts have been kept with UNEP/IRS and in March 1978 the Centre was officially registered as a source of IRS in the field of oil combating. Up to now the Centre has not been contacted through this system but can be expected to start functioning as soon as the Centre is included in the Directory of IRS. In the meantime the Centre, by collecting information in the field, has prepared at least some preliminary data on the sources of information. Several requests for information of this kind have already reached the Centre directly.

29. From the discussion with UNEP/IRS the registration of the Centre as a sectoral focal point seems to be premature. The Centre is awaiting further guidelines on this matter.

Relationships with Other Mediterranean Organizations

30. Since its opening, the Centre has established contacts in Malta with the Regional Activity Centre for the Pilot Project on Monitoring of Oil and Oil Products. After a meeting in March 1977 between UNEP, IOC, RAC and ROCC, an agreement was finalized in March 1978 which specifies the following co-operation:

- (a) exchange of data and information relevant to the level and extent of pollution by oil and petroleum hydrocarbons in the Mediterranean;
- (b) providing mutual assistance for the preparation of reports, surveys, contingency plans, etc.;
- (c) assisting in the development of training activities;
- (d) establishing a common data bank.

This co-operation, although on an informal basis, has been active. For example, the Centre transmitted regularly all significant information received on oil monitoring and analysis in the environment. The reports of visits of the Director to the coastal States were transmitted to RAC I and for one country (Morocco) the existence of potential samples available for analysis was reported for eventual action. Contacts with the Malta Yacht Club were made jointly to receive from the yachts reports of observation and alerts on oil spills in the Mediterranean. Lectures and films were also given by the Centre to the University of Malta. In October 1978, RAC and ROCC arranged to have monthly meetings to consider regularly the progress of this collaboration. One of the points to be considered in the near future will be the establishment of a common data bank on the basis of all the data already collected on both sides and that planned to be collected in future.

31. Working relationships with the UN Agencies working in the region are also essential to support the activities of the Centre particularly to assess the potential risk and the potential impact of a massive oil spillage in the Mediterranean. The Centre is regularly kept informed by IMCO and UNEP of every relevant initiative they take and documents they produce. The Centre has also made contacts with FAO, IOC, UNESCO, ECM and CIESM.

32. The Centre, in June 1978 received a delegation from certain Asian countries conducted by IMCO on an educational tour of oil combating in the Mediterranean. A programme for this visit was also prepared by the Centre. Relationships have been established as well with non-UN organizations such as the Interim Secretariat of the Barcelona Convention, which keeps the Centre regularly informed on the progress of the ratification of the Convention, and with shipping and off-shore organizations dealing with the Mediterranean.

Prevention and Reduction of Pollution

33. Since its opening the Centre maintained close contact with IMCO on this matter by participation in all the sessions of the Marine Environment Protection Committee. In this framework, in 1978, a feasibility study to provide adequate reception facilities in the Mediterranean has been conducted to implement the 1973 MARPOL Convention. The Centre received the exports in charge of this study in May 1978 and has been kept informed about the progress of this study.

34. During visits to coastal States, countries have been advised of the existing IMCO Conventions and encouraged to ratify these Conventions. After these visits information was exchanged on such points as reception facilities and monitoring marine pollution. Technical information and advice on monitoring and control of the operation of tankers have been requested by different countries visited and considered by the Workshop on Contingency Planning as a role that the Centre could develop.

35. Thanks to the support and co-operation of the coastal States and particularly of the Government of Malta, the Regional Oil-Combating Centre successfully developed its activities. It is hoped that during 1979 and 1980 the Centre will be able to perform to a fuller extent the functions as set out in Resolution 7 of the Barcelona Conference.

WORK PROGRAMME

36. In accordance with Resolution 7 of the Barcelona Conference and recommendation of the Monaco Meeting, the priority in the work programme of the Malta Centre (for 1979 and 1980) should be given to the following matters:

- (a) to collect and disseminate information relating to marine pollution in the region on oil combating equipment products, experts methods, and techniques used for clean-up operations etc.;

- (b) to establish an appropriate communication system adequate to the needs of States being served by the Centre;
 - (c) to develop and encourage technological co-operation and training programmes for combating oil pollution;
 - (d) as recommended by the Workshop on Contingency Planning (Malta, September 1978) to pursue the development of national, sectoral and regional contingency planning;
 - (e) to assist in strengthening the International Referral Systems (IRS);
 - (f) to promote the necessary measures in the implementation of the Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency;
 - (g) to perform other appropriate activities directed towards the prevention and reduction of pollution in the Mediterranean resulting from oil spills.
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