

Interspill 2025 - Abstract of REMPEC – Topic: Response updates

Towards a Continuous Improvement Process for Maintaining Advanced Levels of Preparedness for Oil Spill Response and Harmonizing Response Approaches for HNS Incidents

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Government, Regional, National and International authorities, industry and multiple stakeholders all strive for excellence and continuous improvement in spill preparedness and response. One of the main aims and objectives of the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) is to contribute to preventing and reducing pollution from ships and combating pollution in case of spills. In this presentation, we describe the work done by REMPEC to assist 18 of the 21 Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention in undertaking a formal assessment of their respective national oil spill response preparedness programmes. The objectives of the 2019-2023 activities were to develop exhaustive and complete national self-assessments identifying specific areas for improvement of oil spill response preparedness and readiness; to adopt an effective and achievable National Implementation Plan to meet the objectives of sustaining and improving spill response readiness; and to define a set of activities deriving from the National Implementation Plans to be carried out at the sub-regional and regional level.

The assessments were based on the Association of Oil, Gas and Renewable Energy Companies of Latin America and the Caribbean (ARPEL) "Readiness Evaluation Tool for Oil Spills (RETOS™)", including its accompanying manual and the 2008 International Oil Spill Conference Guideline. During the process: REMPEC contributed to the update and upgrade of RETOS™, its accompanying Manual, and the 2023 International Guide on OSR Assessment in collaboration with Ipieca, IMO, and ARPEL. The national assessments also included the evaluation of wildlife response preparedness using Sea Alarm's Self-Assessment Tool (SAT) for 14 of the Contracting Parties. A key outcome for each Contracting Party was the resulting National Implementation Plan.

The post-assessment process also will be highlighted. Given the significance of the 18 assessments and the lessons learned, REMPEC planned (in its 2024-2025 Programme of Work) to extend the evaluation to industry operators with the aim to achieve a comprehensive integrated approach encompassing all levels of preparedness within the scope of Government-Industry collaboration. Concrete innovative actions will be presented. The approach has been illustrated through the results of the complementary West MOPoCo and IRA-MAR projects, including preparation of European ports for an oil or HNS emergency, the One Incident One Response approach and related OneX Serious Games by Sea Alarm, and use of drones in maritime emergencies.

We will conclude with the way forward, capitalising on the approach and achievements accomplished in the Mediterranean that exemplify a process for the response community to apply updated international tools to maintain a higher level of preparedness for oil and Hazardous and Noxious Substance (HNS) spill preparedness and response. The process reflects IMO guidance on implementation of the OPRC Convention and OPRC-HNS Protocol (IMO 2020). The overarching goal is to identify challenges and opportunities to continue building on the achievements and to explore possible ways of further cooperation and collaboration between Government and Industry stakeholders. This and similar regional initiatives capitalize from the collaborative effort of stakeholders and from contributions of organizations such as Cedre, Ipieca, ISPRA, ITOFF, Sea Alarm, and other industry experts including the main contributors to the development of RETOS™.
