

## **DEVELOPING OIL SPILL PREPAREDNESS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

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### **Paper Outline**

#### *Introduction*

The Mediterranean basin covers portions of three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. Surrounded by 21 countries with varying political, social and economic conditions, this Sea is subjected to very heavy demographic and industrial pressures.

The Mediterranean is an area of substantial oil traffic as it is an important transit centre between Middle Eastern & Russian oil, and the Western countries. Historically, oil spill incidents appear to be closely linked to traffic density and flow; this characteristic, together with the many sensitive areas in the region and seasonal bad weather conditions make the Mediterranean a high risk area for oil spills.

In 1991, the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) produced a status report on oil spill preparedness and response in the Mediterranean. The main conclusions of the report were:

- The current high concentrations of shipping and oil movements in the Mediterranean would remain similar over the next decade.
- Analysis of traffic movements identified high risk areas including the restricted waters of the Suez Canal, straits of Gibraltar, and several others. Other areas most at risk are those with major import movements i.e. Southern France, Sicily, around Venice, etc.
- The Mediterranean is an environmentally sensitive area and subject to increasing pressure as a result of rising population of the coastal zones.
- The oil industry's capabilities to respond to oil spill incidents could be improved.
- Most governments of countries with Mediterranean coast lines assumed prime responsibility to respond to Tier 2 & 3 incidents.
- Cooperation between industry and governments on oil spill contingency planning should be developed.

The report also recommended that IPIECA and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) hold an oil spill seminar in the region. This event took place in 1992 in Cairo, and as a result, the Mediterranean Oil Industry Group (MOIG) was established in 1997 following two more events in 1995 (Rome) and 1996 (Istanbul).

This paper looks into the structure of MOIG and the importance of its strategic partnership with key stakeholders. The efforts of the group, particularly from 2007-2009, to develop a coordinated, progressive and sustained programme of actions that strengthens the current state of oil spill preparedness in the region provides the main focus for this paper.

### *IPIECA Oil Spill Working Group (OSWG)*

The International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) was established in 1974 to provide a principal channel of communication between the oil and gas industry and the United Nations, with a mandate to develop and promote scientifically-sound, cost-effective, practical, socially and economically acceptable solutions to global environmental and social issues pertaining to the oil and gas industry. Its membership is comprised of 30 international and national petroleum companies, and 11 associations.

IPIECA draws on the skills and experiences of its international membership through a number of Working Groups and Task Forces, comprising: Oil Spill Response; Climate Change; Biodiversity; Social Responsibility; Operational, Fuels & Product Issues; Health and Sustainability Reporting.

The IPIECA Oil Spill Working Group (OSWG) was established in 1987 and serves as the key international industry forum to help improve oil spill contingency planning and response around the world. Key OSWG activities include:

- Interaction with the IMO, Industry Technical Advisory Committee (ITAC), and other key stakeholders.
- Building and sustaining oil spill response capacity through the Global Initiative.
- Sharing of best practices through meetings, workshops, conferences and production of internationally renowned publications.

Working through IPIECA, and with organisations such as the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (OGP), the Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF), etc., and in association with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the oil and gas industry has worked hard to reduce the frequency of spills whilst at the same time developing effective preparedness strategies and response options in the unfortunate event of a spill.

### *Global Initiative*

The OPRC Convention calls for national authorities to work with the oil and shipping industries to unify their efforts. In recognition of this, the IMO and IPIECA have been collaborating for many years on the Global Initiative, a programme designed to encourage and, where possible, assist countries to ratify and implement the relevant international oil spill conventions and develop effective and sustainable national and regional oil spill contingency plans.

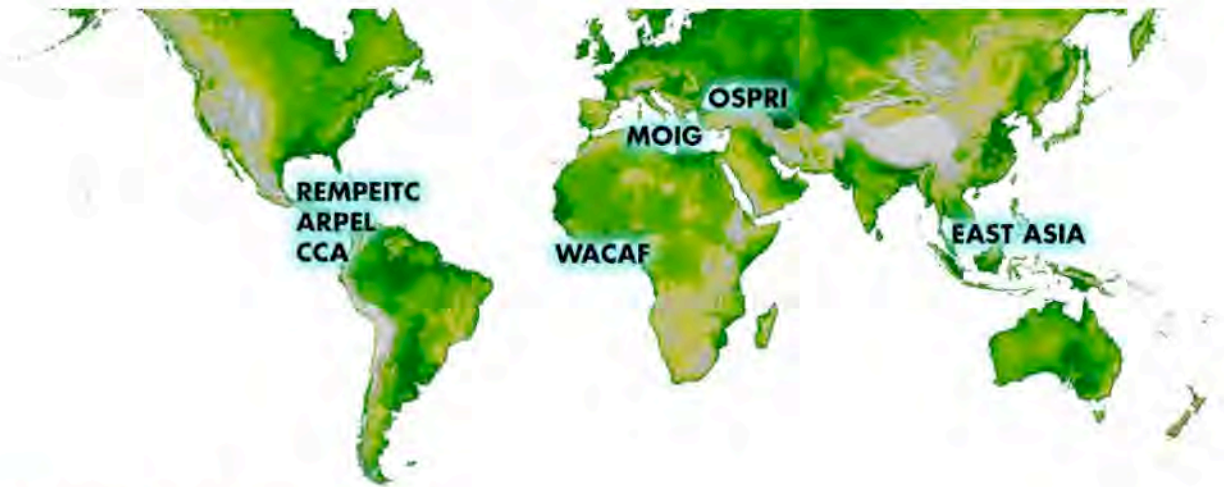
A series of successful regional seminars were held from 1991-1994 in South East Asia, the Mediterranean, Latin America, the Gulf, Africa, the Caribbean and North West Pacific to promote the concept of industry and governments "Working Together". The GI was formally launched in 1996 in Cape Town, South Africa.

Key messages are delivered to industry and government representatives through joint IMO/IPIECA workshops and training sessions. To obtain a long-lasting effect, active support is required from the

most senior policy makers and managers in both government and industry, as well as those directly responsible for exercising and implementing the national contingency plans.

The GI acts as a catalyst to initiate activities all over the world. The IMO handles the intergovernmental liaison and IPIECA facilitates industry involvement, working together to develop a focused work programme. Governments, local industry, donor agencies and NGOs provide regional and local input.

Increasingly, GI projects are organised on a regional basis with focal points established for West and Central Africa (GI WACAF Project); the Mediterranean (Mediterranean Oil Industry Group); Caspian Sea and Black Sea (Oil Spill Preparedness Regional Initiative) and the Caribbean region. A similar initiative is being considered for the South East Asian region.



**Figure 1: GI Regional Groups:**

#### *The Mediterranean Oil Industry Group (MOIG)*

MOIG is comprised of oil companies and associations from countries bordering the Mediterranean. Officially institutionalized in Tunisia in January 2004, MOIG is a regional oil industry forum designed to encourage sustainable oil spill prevention, preparedness and response in the Mediterranean region. It is important to highlight that MOIG in itself is *not* an oil spill response provider, but a forum which enables best practice sharing among its members.

MOIG provides a regional industry interface to the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), which is based in Malta. REMPEC aims to strengthen oil spill preparedness and response capabilities of the coastal States in the Mediterranean region. Its objectives, functions and work programme are defined by the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean). It was set up within the framework of the Regional Seas Programme of UNEP since 1976 and is administered by the IMO. Please see below a graph which illustrates the relationship between MOIG, IPIECA, IMO and REMPEC.

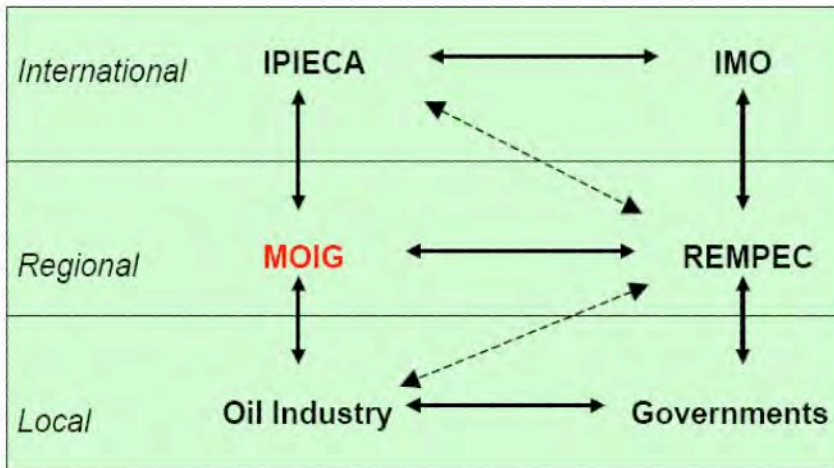


Figure 2: Relationship between MOIG, REMPEC and GI partners

The membership of MOIG has grown since its inception and the group now has representation in the majority of countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. All oil and gas companies are actively encouraged to participate in MOIG activities, allowing for the continuing development of a network of industry in-country focal points. MOIG is unique among the other GI programmes in encouraging the engagement of oil spill response providers in the region which the oil industry depends on. These companies are able to join MOIG as 'Associate Members'. Although they do not have voting rights in MOIG, they contribute a great deal to the group through provision of their extensive technical expertise.



Figure 3: Map of the Mediterranean region

Source: [www.europe-map.org](http://www.europe-map.org)

### *MOIG Activities to develop Oil Spill Preparedness in the Mediterranean Region*

There have been improvements in regional arrangements by way of exercises, workshops, training, etc, with support given by MOIG members and external organisations. The sustained effort has addressed regional cooperation issues pertaining to oil spill response. However, gaps in oil spill preparedness still exist in the Mediterranean region. Although many countries have ratified the IMO OPRC 90 Convention, implementation remains an issue.

During a MOIG workshop held in Malta in May 2007 alongside the 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the REMPEC Focal Points, delegates discussed the integration of industry and government contingency plans. One of the recommendations of the workshop was to organize a joint government-industry workshop on preparedness and response to marine pollution to exchange information on the status of preparedness and response in the region.

This joint workshop will be held from 11-12 May 2009 in Marseille. The objectives of this event are to:

- Strengthen cooperation between governments and industry in the Mediterranean region; and
- Provide recommendations for short/medium and long term common activities to increase the preparedness and response capacity in the Mediterranean.

To achieve these objectives, MOIG and REMPEC circulated questionnaires to industry members and government focal points respectively, requesting information on preparedness, response and cooperation arrangements.

With the support of facilitators and consultants, MOIG and REMPEC have combined the results of both government and industry questionnaires with a view to better understand the level of preparedness in the region, taking into consideration the "Mediterranean risk". Based on the results of the survey, issues for discussion during the workshop have been identified. Individual interviews with a consultant have also been arranged for the governments of each country and industry representatives will join the interviews based on geographic interest. This will encourage an exchange of information and views on preparedness and response issues in each State.

Recommendations for short/medium and long term common activities for the industry and governments will be drafted by workshop participants towards the end of the workshop to build on the outcomes of the event.

### *Conclusions*

The Mediterranean Sea has a high oil spill risk profile. It is vital to raise awareness about oil spill issues among the oil industry and governments operating in the region, and encourage cooperation between both parties.

The Mediterranean Oil Industry Group (MOIG), working in collaboration with REMPEC and partner international organisations, aims to improve the capacity of countries in the Mediterranean region to prepare for and respond to oil spills.

The joint MOIG/REMPEC workshop held from 11-12 May 2009 will provide a unique opportunity to review the level of oil spill preparedness in the Mediterranean region and compliance of governments and industry with the OPRC Convention; and also to work towards strengthened cooperation between industry and governments in the region.

A clear picture of the state of preparedness in the region from both government and industry perspectives will emerge from this event, which will be used to develop an action plan detailing common activities for industry and governments to enhance sustainable oil spill preparedness and response in the Mediterranean region.