

## **Vessel Management Issues in Turkish Straits**

The Turkish Straits are the bodies of water connecting the Black Sea and Mediterranean; comprising the Istanbul Strait (Bosporus), the Sea of Marmara and the Canakkale Strait (Dardanelles). This important international waterway within the territorial waters of Turkey, passing through the heart of Istanbul, is used for shipments of a wide variety of cargos aboard some 55,000 vessels a year.

Management of the Straits falls on the Turkish authorities based on the Montreux Convention of 1936. Despite a common believe that said convention prevents application of international agreed rules, a series of measures have imposed on top of the said and underlying convention. Additional measures, some more controversial than others, have also been imposed by the Turkish administration to address concerns relating to safe transit of vessels through the Straits. These include LOA restrictions as well as separate transit restrictions for vessels carrying hazardous cargos or derivatives thereof. The latest and more significant development in respect to straits management was the introduction of Vessel Traffic Service (VTS), which became operational in 2004.

Unfortunately, following the introduction of more stringent safety and environmental maritime rules in US & EU during the last decade the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean became a “dumping ground” for sub standard vessels and operation. This fact is very much reflected in the type of vessels transiting the Turkish Straits and in to the Black Sea where very few terminal operators apply the simplest for of vetting and screening of vessels calling to their terminals.

To address the safe management in the Turkish Straits, it is not only a matter of looking at the management of traffic through the Straits but to the region as a whole. Improving standards in the Straits requires the dedicated engagement of many international and regional organizations from both governments and industry. The key to successful implementation lies in a genuine partnership and all parties working together.

It is with satisfaction I can report that the experiences in Turkey clearly demonstrate how improved exchange of information and genuine cooperation between industry and governments can improve regional maritime standards, strengthen incident prevention processes and procedures and reduce the risk of oil spills from all shipping. Chevron has taken an active part in this effort. We have led or participated in different industry initiatives, through OCIMF, IPIECA and others, to build awareness of associated issues and promote the use of the highest operating standards for oil tankers as well as other vessels transiting the Straits.

Whilst our efforts may be focused on prevention, I am also pleased to report to this forum about the success of the industry’s regional oil spill preparedness initiative that has been established (OSPRI) covering the Caspian and Black Sea Region. OSPRI is another good example of how industry can work jointly with regional governmental efforts such as the Black Sea Commission, as well as at the national level in Turkey.