

ROPME
SEA KAPS



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MEMAC
FIRST SYMPOSIUM/WORKSHOP
ON REGIONAL OIL SPILL
CONTINGENCY PLANNING



(SHARJAH, UAE , 25-29 APRIL 1998)

INTRODUCTION

The First Symposium/Workshop on Regional Oil Spill Contingency Planning was held at the Holiday Inn Resorts, Sharjah, UAE under the patronage of H.E. Mr. Hamad Al-Midfa, Minister of Health and Chairman of the Federal Environmental Agency of the UAE, with the participation of H.E. Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Awadi, the Executive Secretary of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME). The Symposium /Workshop was organized by the Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Center (MEMAC) of ROPME.

The Symposium /Workshop was attended by 17 regional and international experts who gave lectures and consultations to more than 50 participants nominated by the ROPME Member States.



OPENING OF THE WORKSHOP

In his opening speech, H.E. Mr. Hamad Al-Midfa, Minister of Health and Chairman, Federal Environmental Agency welcomed the experts and the participants and said: "The Federal Environmental Agency in the UAE has always been keen in collaborating with ROPME and other regional states and organizations towards taking appropriate measures to combat oil pollution. It has issued a Decree Law called "The Law on Protection and Development of the Environment". It is an integrated federal law which includes a number of different rules, regulations, standards and specifications related to the safety of the marine environment. It is considered as a major endeavour which is to be finalized before the end of 1998. The Federal Environmental Agency is also preparing a National Environmental Strategy and an Environmental Framework which includes an Oil Spill Contingency Plan to combat marine pollution by oil and other harmful substances". He added by saying that "The Government of the UAE has issued a Ministerial Decision on preventing substandard ships and barges from carrying any types of oil in the UAE waters"

His Excellency concluded by saying that, "We, in the UAE, are well aware that there are several environmental problems which require regional and international co-operation in order to be solved. Hence, the Government of UAE has joined the regional and international conventions and protocols related to the protection of the marine environment"





Audience With H. E. Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi, Ruler of Sharjah

On the occasion of the Symposium, a delegation led by H.E.Mr. Hamad Al-Midfa and H.E.Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Awadi and made up of the experts and representatives of delegates had the honour of meeting H.E. Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi.

His Excellency Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi emphasized the moral and religious obligations of man to his environment. He gave examples on how individuals and societies can be good stewards of nature and the need for practicing environmental conservation in our daily lives.

The experts commented after the audience with H.E. Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qasimi that the wisdom and enthusiasm for environmental protection expressed by H. E., were an inspiration to them all.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF ROPME SPEECH

His Excellency Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Awadi presented his speech by welcoming the experts and delegates. He said, "The problem of oil pollution has been a major chronic source of worry. Since the establishment of ROPME 20 years ago and today, on the occasion of the Year of the Ocean, there is a need to reflect on where we stand now and why. In the year 1978, the eight Member States of the Region made a pledge to their people and to the world that "The Contracting States shall, individually and/or jointly, take all appropriate measures in accordance with the present Convention and those protocols in force to which they are party to prevent, abate and combat pollution of the marine environment in the Sea Area".



During the 1978 Meeting, the Plenipotentiaries of the Eight Member States also signed the Protocol concerning Regional Co-operation in Combating Pollution by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency". Accordingly, MEMAC was established with the objective of facilitating and coordinating mutual aid assistance in case of oil spill emergencies.

He also added "Looking from a vantage point, an observer cannot help but wonder why we have not accomplished these objectives over the past 20 years. We at the ROPME Secretariat, being optimistic like all environmentalists, try to see the slow but definite progress as a positive sign. We feel that the Region as a whole is approaching the critical point of turning towards a unified action in addressing the problems of oil pollution, through adopting a preventive approach and advocating practical and sustainable schemes of waste management. Judging by the excellent papers to be presented at this Symposium, I am pleased to say that you are showing us the way to sail closer towards safe and clean waters. This gathering will also offer a unique opportunity to exchange experiences and views between the international and regional experts. The large number of participants which has exceeded 50, is an indication of the importance of the issues being addressed in this Symposium".

DIRECTOR OF MEMAC SPEECH

Captain Abdul Monem Al-Janahi, Director of MEMAC also welcomed the participants and said, "The Symposium/Workshop is a wide gathering of 17 regional and international experts and more than 50 participants representing the ROPME Member States. There is no doubt that these participants will benefit from the discussions carried out during the Meeting. It is an opportunity to consult with the Experts on different administrative, technical and legal matters related to Oil Spill Contingency Planning. They will also gain experience on how to solve problems faced by them during the process of combating oil spills. They would also have an opportunity to evaluate their oil spill contingency plans. Meanwhile, the experts themselves will enrich their own experience by ideas, comments and discussions of the national experiences."



He added that "The Symposium/Workshop will help MEMAC its endeavour to fulfill its objectives and functions as a Center for Mutual Assistance and Co-operation among the ROPME Member States. It will also help MEMAC in identifying future programs dedicated for the benefit of this Region".

ACTIVITIES OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The Meeting was divided into two sessions; the Symposium which was held in the first day and the Workshop which occupied the following four days. The Symposium highlighted the international state of the different techniques, technologies used, legal mechanism and the present situation in ROPME Region. It also highlighted matters such as Harmonization of Port Procedures, Port Control, Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC); Framework Guidelines to facilitate and Co-ordinate Marine Emergency, Pollution Response Activities within the ROPME Region; Loan and Transboundary Movement of Personnel, Equipment and Materials in Cases of Emergency, Communications Network/Pollution Surveillance and Follow-up Actions; Advantages-Disadvantages of various Response Options; Disposal Options for Recovered Oil; Fate & Effects of Oil Pollution; Natural Resource Damage Assessment; Development of a Regional Manual for Compensation Claims; Civil Liability Convention of 1971 and Fund Convention of 1992; Preventing Marine Pollution-MARPOL 73/78 and requirements for Reception Facilities.

The workshop covered in detail the subjects introduced in the Symposium together with discussions of questionnaires completed by participants of the Member States in order to progress a coordinated response to marine emergencies in the Region.

The Workshop also included a field exercise in Oil Spill Combating procedures starting from an oil leakage and ending in legal procedures to be taken against the offenders.

PRINCIPAL RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WORKSHOP

A. Oil Spill Prevention and Control:

- * To encourage ratification of all relevant conventions related to Port State Control (PSC) at Regional level by Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) confirmed by national legislation.
- * To strongly encourage ROPME Member States to attend relevant IMO Committee Meetings to ensure ROPME affairs are better promoted and understood by others. In this context it is also recommended that ROPME/MEMAC seek IMO regional government observer status.
- * MEMAC to assist in completion of outstanding State Oil Spill Contingency Plans and to promote compatibility of all Plans.
- * MEMAC to develop a Regional Contingency Plan to establish strategy in respect of key factors, to have a significant role in facilitating efficient regional response and to establish a funding mechanism for regional oil spill response and other emergencies (These initiatives are part of the Annex to the Protocol to the Kuwait Convention).
- * MEMAC to develop a procedure covering transfer of loan resources as required by Oil Pollution Preparedness Response and Cooperation Convention (OPRC) and as perceived by the Kuwait Convention.
- * States to develop national oil spill response resources consistent with needs to meet threat as established by risk assessment
- * To avoid misunderstanding it is import to note that MARPOL 73/78 does not necessitate immediate provision of reception facilities but only a commitment to complete is sufficient for the agreement to be signed in good faith.
- * MEMAC should encourage States other than Oman to ratify MARPOL 73/78 and should coordinate these activities to ensure States are not commercially disadvantaged by independent ratification.
- * A meeting of the EC/GCC/ROPME/MEMAC task group on reception facilities was to be held the day after the workshop session. The Implementation Officer of the IMO assured the meeting of IMO's continuous support towards the establishment of reception facilities and ratification of the MARPOL 73/78 Convention in the Region.
- * National oil companies, loading terminals and ports are urged to take the necessary measures towards reducing oil pollution and the risk of accidents through:
 - Preventing sub-standard tankers, barges and other ships from calling at their facilities.
 - Insuring that non-segregated ballast tankers do not discharge their ballast without utilizing their oil discharge monitors.
 - Encouraging visiting tankers to discharge slops at their facilities without preconditioned criteria.

- MEMAC to promote the concept that satellite information received at ground stations within the region be made available to Member States for the benefit of the region as a whole.

B. Development of Guidelines for Pollution Damage Assessment

- * MEMAC to encourage Member States to ratify CLC and FC 1992 Protocols.
- * MEMAC to develop a regional oil pollution loan fund to assist Member States to mount an immediate response in the event of major oil pollution whilst national funds are activated.
- * MEMAC to consider preparation of a claims manual to assist Member States in drafting claims in an acceptable format and to give advice in respect of fines and penalties imposed by States.
- * MEMAC to develop a regional MOU on Port State Control establishing criteria for detaining offending ships to ensure uniformity. These efforts should be harmonized with other regional efforts to avoid duplication and overlap.
- * The Workshop also urges Member States to consider the establishment of special courts and court procedures for environment offenses especially those involving oil pollution by ships, that would expedite the legal process and reduce detention time of ships.

