



Finalization of the Regional Contingency Plan for Preparedness and Response to Major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Western Indian Ocean

14 – 16 April 2025

Nosy Be, Madagascar

Background

The risk of major oil spills continues to be a significant threat to the fragile ecosystems and coastlines of littoral States around the world. Time and experience have demonstrated the success in tackling a major spill is in ensuring a good level of preparedness for a timely, efficient, and coordinated response. The Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region is at risk from accidental oil pollution from vessels, oil exploration / production and the bulk transportation and handling of crude oil and related products. Incidents leading to oil pollution can result in serious ecological and socio-economic damage and disruption. Recognizing the benefit of mitigating oil pollution risks, the international community has supported the development of oil spill preparedness measures within the region, including encouraging the ratification and implementation of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO's) International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC Convention) and the Nairobi Convention's Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Marine Pollution in Cases of Emergency in the Eastern African Region (Emergency Protocol). By ratifying these intergovernmental agreements, countries in the WIO region have committed to the development of national and regional plans and procedures in readiness for possible oil spills.

Oil Spill Management in the WIO Region

The contracting parties to the Nairobi Convention have adopted decisions to support regional approach in capacity building in the oil and gas sector. Decision CP.10/6 on oil spill preparedness and response requested the secretariat, as part of the efforts to strengthen the regional response centres and oil spill coordination mechanisms, to support the review of national oil spill contingency plans, identification of capacity gaps in oil spill preparedness and response, and preparation of oil spill sensitivity maps for Contracting Parties, that require such support.

In March 2020, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat, through the SAPPHIRE project, collaborated with IMO and the IOC-COI in organising a regional workshop on cooperation in preparedness and response to marine spills in Eastern Africa and the Western Indian Ocean. The workshop generated a series of recommendations focused on implementing regional cooperation. Recommendation 1.6 requested the Nairobi Convention Secretariat to provide and/or facilitate support to member countries in the development and update, where necessary of National Oil Spill Contingency Plans, environmental sensitivity atlas/maps, dispersant policies, waste management guidelines and wildlife response guidelines, ensuring suitable linkage to the draft Regional Contingency Plan (RCP). The grounding of MV Wakashio in Mauritius highlighted the challenges presented by a significant marine oil spill.

In May 2021, the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) through the MASE programme organised a consultative meeting to discuss the way forward in the implementation of the recommendations of the marine pollution exercise held in Diego-Suarez in October 2019 and the March 2020



workshop in Zanzibar on cooperation and preparedness. The meeting agreed on an action plan supporting updating of national contingency plans to inform the draft regional contingency plan (RCP) which provides the operational tool for effective regional cooperation against marine pollution, among other actions.

In December 2021, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat's SAPPHIRE project supported the review of national oil spill contingency plans for the project countries except South Africa and provided a National Action Plan for the development of the national oil spill preparedness and response system. In addition, engagements and discussions were supported on options for regional oil spill cooperation in the WIO region. The primary challenge is reaching agreement on the how a regional mechanism can be structured, funded and implemented.

In May 2023, the Nairobi Convention Secretariat collaboration with Norwegian Coastal Administration (NCA) and IMO organised a regional training on incident command systems for oil spill preparedness and response. The training provided participants with knowledge and application of the incident management process, focusing on tools, practices and procedures that can assist and effectively manage an escalating incident. IOC has continued to support discussions and actions related to regional cooperation for oil spills, including tabletop and field exercises in 2023 and 2024. A major oil pollution exercise is scheduled in Kenya (7-11 July 2025) that will include the practising of regional coordination.

During the 11th Conference of Parties, the Contracting Parties to the Nairobi Convention requested the Secretariat in collaboration with partners to finalize and implement the Regional Contingency Plan for Preparedness and Response to Marine Pollution Incidents within the Region (Decision CP 11/12.5).

Objectives

The meeting will bring together Nairobi Convention and SAPPHIRE project focal points, experts responsible for oil spill preparedness and response issues as well as partners implementing oil spills intervention in the WIO region, to discuss the draft Regional Contingency Plan for Preparedness and Response to Major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Western Indian Ocean (WIO) region and its implementation plan and agree on steps towards adoption of the regional contingency plan at the 12th COP.

Outputs

Participants will provide comments and information towards finalization of the draft Regional Contingency Plan for Preparedness and Response to Major Marine Pollution Incidents in the Western Indian Ocean (RCP) and its implementation plan. In addition, the meeting will agree on steps towards adoption of the regional contingency plan and its implementation plan at the 12th COP.

Participants

It is imperative that participants at the meeting have appropriate responsibilities in relation to oil spill preparedness and response. Regional cooperation can involve various national authorities,



and it is emphasized that OPRC Convention article 6(1)(a) requires the designation within each Party of:

- i. the competent national authority or authorities with responsibility for oil pollution preparedness and response
- ii. the national operational contact point or points, which shall be responsible for the receipt and transmission of oil pollution reports
- iii. an authority which is entitled to act on behalf of the State to request assistance or to decide to render the assistance requested.

Representatives at the meeting should be from the above designated national organizations or have undertaken active engagement with these organizations. The aim is to ensure that the perspectives and inputs from these organizations can be integrated into the meeting's dialogue.

Format of the Meeting

The meeting will be held over 3-days from 14 – 16 April 2025. The meeting will comprise of presentations, information exchange and dialogue. There will be no field trip organized for this meeting. The working language throughout the meeting will be English.

Meeting logistics

Nairobi Convention Secretariat sponsored participants will be provided with an economy class air ticket and daily subsistence allowances for the duration of the meeting. Participants are responsible for applying for and meeting visa requirements for travel to Nosy Be, Madagascar. A more detailed logistics note will be shared with participants prior to the workshop.