
**MEDITERRANEAN ACTION PLAN (MAP)
REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY RESPONSE CENTRE FOR THE
MEDITERRANEAN SEA (REMPEC)**

Fifth Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and
Gas Group (OFOG) Sub-Group on Environmental Impact

REMPEC/WG.60/4
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Agenda Item 4: Regional offshore standards and guidelines

Draft Regional Offshore Standards and Guidelines on the Removal (Decommissioning) of Installations and the related Financial Aspects

For environmental and cost-saving reasons, this document will not be printed and is made available in electronic format only. Delegates are encouraged to consult the document in its electronic format and limit printing.

Note by the Secretariat

This document introduces the draft Regional Offshore Standards and Guidelines on the Removal (decommissioning) of Installations and the related Financial Aspects.

The draft contained in Appendix II to the present document has been developed building on progress made on the third draft provided as an attachment to REMPEC Circular Letter No. 15/2024 (October 2024).

Background

1. Article 23 of the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution resulting from the Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and Subsoil (Offshore Protocol) provides for the formulation and elaboration of international rules, standards and recommended practices and procedures and the adoption of guidelines, in accordance with international practices. In this context, the Mediterranean Offshore Action Plan (MOAP), adopted by the Nineteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols (COP 19) (Athens, Greece, 9-12 February 2016), provides, under Specific Objectives 7 and 8, for the development and adoption of regional offshore standards and guidelines.

2. In accordance with the provisions of the Offshore Protocol and its Action Plan, and following the adoption of the Programme of Work (PoW) for biennium 2022-2023 by COP 22 (Antalya, Türkiye, 7-10 December 2021), and the conclusions and recommendations of the Fourth Meeting of the Barcelona Convention Offshore Oil and Gas Group Sub-Group on Environmental Impact (OFOG) (Malta, 23-24 May 2023) REMPEC, launched the work of the Intersessional Correspondence Group (ICG) of the OFOG, on the development of *Regional offshore standards and guidelines on the removal (decommissioning) of installations and the related financial aspects*.

3. Following the adoption of the Programme of Work (PoW) for biennium 2024-2025 by COP 23 (Portoroz, Slovenia, 5-8 December 2023), REMPEC, continued the coordination of the work of the ICG in view of the submission of a draft Guidelines to the Fifth Meeting of the OFOG (Malta, 19-20 February 2025).

Work of the Intersessional Correspondence Group (ICG)

4. Following the work undertaken by the ICG launched in November 2022 (Circular letter No 09/2022 dated 24 November 2022) and the outcome of the Fourth Meeting of the OFOG, REMPEC disseminated, Circular Letter No. 13/2023 dated 20 December 2023, containing a second draft of the Guidelines.

5. Based on the feedback and comments received on the second draft, REMPEC has developed a consolidated third draft of the Guidelines, taking into consideration the feedback and comments received during the second round of consultations. The third draft of the Guidelines was circulated under Circular Letter No. 15/2024 dated 9 October 2024, for consultation of the OFOG Sub-Group on Environmental Impact Contracting Parties, partners and experts (ICG members).

6. Comments and recommendations on the submitted third draft were received by the Secretariat from one (1) CP to the Offshore Protocol, two (2) Non-CPs to the Offshore Protocol and one (1) accredited MAP Partner.

7. **Appendix I**, to the present document, summarizes the comments and recommendations received on the third draft.

8. In addition to comments, recommendations, and editorial changes, the main changes proposed to the third draft and marked in blue in the draft guidelines, to facilitate review, can be summarized as follows :

- .1 The second section has been renamed “Decommissioning process” instead of “Operator’s obligations”. Further editorial adjustments have been made to reflect the terminology generally contained in a guidance document and to further differ from the mandatory legislative terminology used in the Offshore Protocol;
- .2 The plain text of Article 20, paragraph 2, of the Offshore Protocol, has been added in paragraph 8 of the draft guidelines to emphasize the subject of pipelines. Correspondingly some adjustments were made in related paragraphs; and

.3 The formatting of Annex III has been reviewed for enhanced clarity.

9. Moreover, one accredited MAP Partner emphasized that paragraph 31 of the draft guidelines could be subject to interpretation and did not appear relevant should the decommissioning option being a reuse for habitat retention or creation at a different location.

10. Regarding the title of the standards and guidelines *Regional offshore standards and guidelines on the **removal (decommissioning) of installations and the related financial aspects***, the Offshore Protocol specifically refers to “Removal of installations.” That said, the scope of the draft guidelines goes beyond the single option of the removal of installations to encompass multiple options included under “decommissioning of installation”. Since the first draft of the guidelines decommissioning has appeared in brackets within in the title, the final title should be decided, with options to retain **removal of installations** alone, maintain **removal/decommissioning of installations both**, or replace removal of installations entirely by **decommissioning of installations**.

11. Associated with the feedback received on the second and third draft, one CP to the Offshore Protocol and one accredited MAP Partner called for clarification in relation to the binding character or not of the guidelines. In this regard, the Secretariat and the UNEP/MAP Coordination Unit would like to clarify that if the guidelines were issued by the COP, then the CPs must follow them by incorporating them into their national laws. It is important to note that a CP must have ratified the relevant Protocol in order to be bound by its guidelines. However, even if a CP has not ratified a specific Protocol, they are still obligated to follow the general principles outlined in the Barcelona Convention, as long as they have ratified the Convention itself. The level of enforcement of the Barcelona Convention and its Protocols can vary from one CP to another. In some countries, once a State ratifies an agreement or protocol, it automatically becomes part of the national law. In other countries, the text of the agreement or protocol needs to be converted into specific national laws. The same principle applies to guidelines.

12. The draft Regional Offshore Standards and Guidelines on the Removal (Decommissioning) of Installations and the Related Financial Aspects as prepared by the Secretariat, is set out at **Appendix II**.

Actions requested by the Meeting

13. **The Meeting is invited to:**

- .1 **take note** of the information provided in the present document and discuss comments provided in paragraphs 9, 10, and 11;
- .2 **examine and agree** upon the Final version of the Regional Offshore Standards and Guidelines on the Removal (Decommissioning) of Installations and the related Financial Aspects and **request** the Secretariat to submit it for approval by the next Meeting of the MAP Focal Points.

Appendix I

Comments and recommendations from the ICG on the third draft of Regional Offshore Standards and Guidelines on the Removal (Decommissioning) of Installations and the Related Financial Aspects

Comments and recommendations from the ICG on the third draft of Regional Offshore Standards and Guidelines on the Removal (Decommissioning) of Installations and the Related Financial Aspects.

| | Third draft submitted for a guidance document on Decommissioning | Suggestions / comments / concerns expressed following circulation of the document to the OFOG Members and Partners |
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| | <i>Generic readability of the document and specific terminology</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An accredited MAP Partner commented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o In general- if this document serves as a guideline, the language used should be reviewed, as ‘shall’ and ‘obligations’ sounds like a binding requirements/ obligation not just guidelines; o It is understood “<i>that this guideline will be reviewed by the Contracting Parties at the upcoming OFOG meeting and run through all the necessary procedures before being finalised.</i>” |
| Technical review | 1-Introduction <i>Paragraphs 1 to 12</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Non-Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol suggests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Amending paragraph 12.3 with “<i>...might appoint one or more competent authorities which would may be indirectly ...</i>”; - A Non-Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol questioned: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Paragraph 12.9.5: <i>Does this section refer to PLETs, jumpers, etc.? It may require further clarification.</i> - An accredited MAP Partner suggests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Paragraph 3 - suggest rephrasing to “<i>... help support in establishing environmentally sound concerned procedures...</i>” and to delete “<i>...already...</i>”; o Paragraph 8: Suggestion for additional text from Article 20 of the Offshore Protocol be added from its Paragraph 2; o Paragraph 12.9: To add: <i>This includes subsea production system.</i> |
| | 2-Operator’s obligation <i>Paragraphs 13 to 20</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An accredited MAP Partner suggests and commented: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Suggestion is made to rename the section to bind the Contracting Parties obligations, as the guidelines will not bind an operator. Associated comment: <i>"This framework shall apply to the assessment by the competent authority of the relevant Contracting Party of proposals for the issue of a permit for decommissioning..." Meaning it should be written that contracting parties need to get certain information in order to deliver the intent of these guidelines</i>”; o Paragraph 16 – rephrasing suggestion: “<i>... The Contracting party shall require that the Operator prepares a Decommissioning Plan which should include the documents and reports describing the current state of the installation ...</i>”; o Paragraph 17 - rephrasing suggestion: “<i>...Operators should conduct a multicriteria decision analysis <u>using a comparative assessment or similar methodology</u> of a comprehensive range of decommissioning options to determine the preferred decommissioning options. The comparative assessment shall consider <u>technical and engineering aspects and impacts on safety, environment, other users of the seas, and economic and social impacts in line with the IMO’s London Convention/London Protocol. ...</u></i>”. |
| | 3-Decommissioning of installations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol comments and suggests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Paragraph 36 – comments : “<i>we suggest remuneration and adding the new item connected with obligatory process of</i> |

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| <p>Paragraphs 21 to 42</p> | <p><i>preparation a Maritime Study for new (reuse or repurpose) project that should include at least the navigational, meteorological-oceanographic, and hydrographic characteristics of the marine area, i.e., the intervention site; technical-technological and traffic-navigation characteristics of the intervention in the marine area; maritime safety measures concerning navigation and the stay of maritime objects; protection of the sea from pollution by maritime objects approaching and within the intervention site in the marine area; and procedures for handling extraordinary circumstances affecting navigation safety and the sea protection from pollution.”;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paragraph 36 – suggestion to add: <i>“The parties shall take into account the elements of ref.36, applying the mandatory elements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process as described in national legislation based on the principle of what is best for the environment.”</i> ○ Paragraph 37: an explanation on what is an intermediate level would be appreciated; ○ Paragraph 41 – comment/disagreement; <i>this timeframe is too long and not suitable during removal operations. Reporting needs to be more frequent, and we suggest implementing daily reporting;</i> ○ Paragraph 41 – comment on “post environmental monitoring »: <i>“Perhaps a clearer definition is needed, as ‘post-environmental’ might not be the correct term. Typically, once decommissioning is complete, the company is no longer present in the area, making it challenging for the company responsible for the decommissioning to carry out this monitoring effectively.”;</i> ○ Paragraph 41 – editorial change: in Annex 3, cannot find anything related to environmental protection. The whole of Annex 4 is dedicated to environmental protection. <p>– A Non-Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol suggests:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paragraph 22: <i>In relation to the general guidance documents mentioned in the paragraph, suggestion is made to integrate reference of the documents.</i> <p>– A Non-Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paragraph 35: <i>We would appreciate clarification on whether the list of criteria is limited solely to the mentioned sections;</i> ○ Paragraph 37.2.i: <i>We would like to request clarification on whether the option for partial removal includes all associated infrastructure, such as raw gas pipelines and FPSO anchors.</i> <p>– An accredited MAP Partner made the following suggestions and recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paragraph 21 – rephrasing suggestion: <i>“Once the decommissioning option(s) have been decided with the approval of the Decommissioning Plan by the Competent Authorities, a Decommissioning execution plan will have to be defined, and approved, outlining the execution details required to achieve the programme objective(s);</i> ○ Paragraph 24: Recommend that no example be provided here. It is potentially misleading, in this case, suggesting that only deep-sea wells are problematic (technically) to sever; there are several other factors which could give rise to even greater technical difficulties. Consider removing this example; ○ Paragraph 28.ii – rephrasing suggestion: <i>repurposing of an installation <u>at the existing or alternative location</u>, for other commercial or research activities such as, <u>but not limited to, aquaculture, carbon capture and storage, habitat retention or creation, coastal protection, marine research and monitoring, recreational diving;</u></i> ○ Paragraph 29 – rephrasing suggestion: <i>“<u>The Contracting party should require</u> Companies or entities interested in the reuse or repurpose of an installation that is planned to be decommissioned, to submit their application of the reuse or repurpose</i> |
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| | | <p><i>project, prepared with an adequate level of information and detail to the competent authority”;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Paragraph 30 – suggestion to add: “...<i>may be submitted by companies, <u>joint ventures</u> or entities that have the appropriate general requirements ...</i>”. ○ Paragraph 31: This clause is unclear. What if the reuse is for habitat retention or creation at a different location? Why would you need a guarantee of cost for removal works after it was put in place as a habitat; ○ Paragraph 35 and 36: We don’t think that all potential options incorporate all of these criteria, therefore suggested to add “<i>where appropriate to the proposal</i>”; ○ Paragraph 37.2: We are not sure what this means. Suggest reference to IMO LC/ LP 41/17/Add.1: Annex 8: revised guidelines for assessment of platforms or other man-made structures at sea. 2019 Revised guidance for platforms.pdf. The IMO’s Guidelines and Standards for the Removal of Offshore Installations and Structures on the Continental Shelf and in the EEZ were adopted in 1989. They stem from Article 60 of UNCLOS III 1982. It states that ‘Any structure projecting above the surface of the sea should be adequately maintained to prevent structural failure. In cases of partial removal, an unobstructed water column sufficient to ensure safety of navigation, but not less than 55 m, should be provided above any partially removed installation or structure which does not project above the surface of the sea. ○ Paragraph 41 – rephrasing suggestion: “<i>The Operator shall send to the competent authority <u>a report at an agreed interval, during the execution of the decommissioning works and a final report within six months or other agreed timeframe of the removal works, including the post environmental monitoring results (Annex 3).</u></i>” ○ Paragraph 42 – editorial suggestion: “<i>Upon completion of the decommissioning work, <u>if necessary</u>, it is obligatory to carry out the environmental restoration of the sites affected by the removal work of the installations, based on the results of the environmental monitoring referred to in paragraph 41.</i>” ○ Suggestion to add a paragraph 43: “<i>Upon review of the closeout reports and satisfactory delivery of the decommissioning plan, the Competent Authority shall provide to the Operator approval of completion of the decommissioning of the installation</i>”. |
| | Annex I – Overview of the whole decommissioning process between the Operator and the Competent authority | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol comments and suggests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Suggestion to add the proposed diagram to address cases where the Contracting Party lacks legislation for the decommissioning process. In cases where the process is already established and described in national legislation, minor differences may exist. |
| | Annex II – Reuse or repurpose of installations at existing location – <i>required documentation</i> | – / |
| | Annex III – Removal of installations <i>Required documentation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol comments and suggests: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the first sentence, suggestion to include text in italic: “<i>The removal programme... shall <u>beside elements provided in point 14, contain at least the following data: ...</u></i>”; ○ End of page 18, comment in regard to “<i>removal of any debris and excavation around the foundation piles</i>”: This could be problematic, as after, for example, 25 years of exploitation, marin |

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ e currents may have dispersed any drilling debris. In such cases, removing the debris could cause harm to the seabed and benthic communities. Perhaps debris removal should only be required in case of potential environmental pollution. However, I fail to see how decommissioning would cause pollution from debris if no pollution occurred during the preceding 25 years; ○ Page 19 in regard to “<i>description of submarine pipeline cleaning/remediation operations</i>”: proposition to include text “...<i>that includes a list of chemicals planned to use during cleaning processes and plan and program for disposal of chemicals used.</i>”. <p>– A Non-Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Page 19 “<i>In case of complete in situ abandonment of the submarine pipeline ...</i>”: <i>As mentioned in the comments above, it remains unclear whether the reference applies to all types of pipelines, including raw gas, product gas, condensate, and umbilicals;</i> |
| | <p>Annex IV – Removal of installations <i>Environmental assessment of the removal programme</i></p> | <p>– A Contracting Party to the Offshore Protocol suggests adding in the introduction paragraph:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ “<i>The parties shall take into account the elements of Annex 4, applying the mandatory elements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process as described in national legislation, based on the principle of what is best for the environment</i>”; |

Appendix II

**Draft Regional Offshore Standards and Guidelines on the Removal (Decommissioning) of
Installations and the Related Financial Aspects**

Table of Contents

| | |
|------------|---|
| 1. | Introduction |
| 1.1 | Legislative background |
| 1.2 | Definitions and terminology |
| 2. | Decommissioning process |
| 2.1 | Decommissioning plan |
| 3. | Decommissioning of installations |
| 3.1 | Decommissioning execution plan |
| 3.2 | Permanent plugging and abandonment/decommissioning of wells |
| 3.2.1 | Well decommissioning |
| 3.3 | Decommissioning of the installations (platforms, pipelines, subsea assets, etc) |
| 3.3.1 | Reuse and/or repurpose of an installation at existing location |
| 3.3.2 | Partial and full removal of installations |
| 3.3.2.1 | Removal programme |
| 3.3.2.2 | Environmental assessment of the removal programme |
| 3.3.2.3 | Major Hazard Report |
| 3.3.2.4 | Final close-out Reporting |
| Annex I: | Overview of a whole decommissioning process between an Operator and a Competent authority |
| Annex II: | Reuse or repurpose of installations at existing location – <i>required documentation</i> |
| Annex III: | Removal of installations – <i>required documentation</i> |
| Annex IV: | Removal of installations - <i>Environmental assessment of the removal programme</i> |
| | |
| | Bibliography |

List of Abbreviations / Acronyms

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| DECC | Department of Energy & Climate Change |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| GESAMP | Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection |
| IMO | International Maritime Organization |
| IOGP | International Association of Oil and Gas Producers |
| NOPSEMA | National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority |
| OSPAR | Oslo Paris Convention - Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-east Atlantic |
| UNCLOS | United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea |
| well P&A | Well Plugging & Abandonment |

[Draft]

**Regional Standards and Guidelines on [Removal] [Removal/Decommissioning]
[Decommissioning] of Installations and the Related Financial Aspects**

1. Introduction

1. These Regional Standards and Guidelines on the [Removal] [Removal/Decommissioning] [decommissioning] of Installations, and the Related Financial Aspects; hereinafter referred to as Guidelines or Guidance document, are developed within the framework of the Offshore Protocol, which is aiming at the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution resulting from exploration and exploitation of the continental shelf, seabed and subsoil. They specifically focus on offshore installations related to oil and gas activities.

2. Along with the experience gained, the time passed, and the urgent need for actions to face the environmental changes occurring in the Mediterranean Sea, it is perceived that older hydrocarbon fields and related installations may become less or at all productive and a possible source of marine pollution, as defined by the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP¹).

3. Consecutively these guidelines intend to provide guidance to **support** establishing sound environmentally concerned procedures in the Mediterranean Region that would appropriately apply to existing offshore installations and related installations producing, compressing, giving transit, and servicing hydrocarbon fields (decommissioning of depleted hydrocarbon fields).

4. The guidelines include options for reuse, repurpose and removal of these installations with the objectives to protect the marine and coastal environments under a common regulatory framework, based on sustainability and safety principles, possibly fitting in the different national legislations of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention.

1.1 Legislative background

5. This guidance document has been derived from the national legislation of a Contracting Party to the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), with complements from international best practices as outlined by organizations and institutions such as, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Secretariat of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-east Atlantic (OSPAR), and the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers (IOGP), as well as from countries with mature oil and gas industry with well-developed regulatory frameworks such as Italy, the Netherlands, UK and Norway.

6. It is to recall that the decommissioning of redundant offshore oil and gas drilling and production facilities is regulated by host Contracting Party license requirements or local regulations. International law may also be applicable if the host Contracting Party is party to relevant global or regional conventions such as the London Convention 1972 and the 1996 protocol to the London Convention or conventions and other instruments agreed by the IMO.

¹ IMO/FAO/UNESCO-IOC/WMO/WHO/IAEA/UN/UNEP Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP): "... direct or indirect introduction by humans of substances or energy into the marine environment (including estuaries), resulting in harm to living resources, hazards to human health, hindrances to marine activities including fishing, impairment of the quality of sea water and reduction of amenities".

7. All countries around the Mediterranean Sea have signed up to the Barcelona Convention. As such, the Barcelona Convention and its supporting Protocol on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil (Offshore Protocol), provide the overarching regional legal driver unpinning this guidance document.

8. Article 20 “*Removal of Installations*” of the Offshore Protocol, stemming from Article 60 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), provides, [in its paragraph 1](#), requirements for Operators to “*remove any installation which is abandoned or disused in order to ensure safety of navigation, taking into account the guidelines and standards adopted by the competent international organization. Such removal shall also have due regard to other legitimate uses of the sea, in particular fishing, the protection of the marine environment and the rights and duties of other Contracting Parties*”. [Article 20, paragraph 2](#), of the Offshore Protocol specifies that “*The competent authority shall require the operator to remove abandoned or disused pipelines in accordance with paragraph 1 of this Article or to clean them inside and to abandon them or to clean them inside and bury them so that they neither cause pollution, endanger navigation, hinder fishing, threaten the marine environment, nor interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea or with the rights and duties of other Contracting Parties*”.

9. Article 23 of the Offshore Protocol provides for the formulation and elaboration of international rules, standards and recommended practices and procedures and the adoption of guidelines, in accordance with international practices.

10. In this guidance document, and as defined in paragraph 12, removal of an installation means the actions taken to comply with Article 20 of the Offshore Protocol, as recalled in paragraph 8 of this guidance document. By extension, as commonly employed in international terminology, the term decommissioning is used, with removal being one option assessed amongst others.

11. This guidance document provides further definition/clarification to the general obligations outlined in Article 20 of the Offshore Protocol.

1.2 Definitions and terminology

12. This chapter defines terms (in alphabetical order) that are relevant to the decommissioning framework. Technical references may use topic-specific terminology that differs from the Offshore Protocol definitions, and these should be clearly defined.

- .1 “Activities” concerning exploration and/or exploitation of the resources in the Offshore Protocol Area means *as defined in the Offshore Protocol*:
 - .1 Activities of scientific research concerning the resources of the seabed and its subsoil;
 - .2 Exploration activities:
 - Seismological activities; surveys of the seabed and its subsoil; sample taking.
 - Exploration drilling;
 - .3 Exploitation activities:
 - Establishment of an installation for the purpose of recovering resources, and activities connected therewith;
 - Development drilling;
 - Recovery, treatment and storage;
 - Transportation to shore by pipeline and loading of ships; [and](#)
 - Maintenance, repair and other ancillary operations.

- .2 Comparative assessment²: a type of multicriteria decision analysis that takes into account criteria such as potential environmental impact, potential impact upon human health and safety, technical and practical feasibility, economics considerations, potential impact on other users and society in the assessment of decommissioning options of the offshore installations.
- .3 Competent authority: the administration of a Contracting Party responsible for issuing the single permit for implementation of the decommissioning plan and programme of the installation. According to Article 28 of the Offshore Protocol some Contracting Parties might appoint one or more competent authorities which **may** be indirectly reflected in the appointment of a Decommissioning regulatory approval panel.
- .4 Decommissioning: associated with the oil and gas activities, decommissioning refers to the process of a timely, safe, and environmentally responsible removal of, or otherwise satisfactorily dealing with, installations from an offshore area that was previously used to support oil and gas operations in compliance with the applicable regulations.
- .5 Decommissioning regulatory approval panel means an appropriate panel of experts set by the Competent authority which is responsible for:
 - .1 Regulatory functions, such as evaluation and acceptance of decommissioning options, programmes, and plans;
 - .2 Supervision of compliance by operators, including through inspections, investigations, and enforcement measures; advising other authorities or bodies, including the licensing authority; and
 - .3 Preparation of reports; in cooperation with relevant authorities or contact points in member states.
- .6 Dry or depleted well: a well that is no longer required for hydrocarbon production and no longer contains economically viable amounts of hydrocarbons.
- .7 Flowlines: pipelines used to connect and transport products, whether produced by individual wells or from other platforms/plants to a collector or treatment facility.
- .8 Hydrocarbon field: a geological formation containing significant accumulations of hydrocarbons.
- .9 Installation means any fixed or floating structure, and any integral part thereof, that is engaged in activities, including, in particular *as defined in the Offshore Protocol*:
 - .1 Fixed or mobile offshore drilling units;
 - .2 Fixed or floating production units including dynamically-positioned units;
 - .3 Offshore storage facilities including ships used for this purpose;
 - .4 Offshore loading terminals and transport systems for the extracted products, such as submarine pipelines; **and**
 - .5 Apparatus attached to it and equipment for the reloading, processing, storage and disposal of substances removed from the seabed or its subsoil.

² Comparative risk assessment, as used in IMO's London Convention/London Protocol guideline.

Refer to Clause 3.8. pg 6:

<https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/OurWork/Environment/Documents/2019%20Revised%20guidance%20for%20platforms.pdf>

- .10 [Installation covers also the subsea production system.](#)
- .11 Major Hazard Report: report that the Operator is typically required to submit to their national authorities. This report aims to evaluate potential risks, consequences and mitigation measures related to major incidents that could have severe consequences for personnel, the environment, or surrounding communities by extension the report presents the safety and environmental hazard analysis of the decommissioning execution activities. The major hazard analysis includes assessment of the risk of marine pollution.
- .12 “Operator” means *as defined in the Offshore Protocol*:
 - .1 Any natural or juridical person who is authorized by the Party exercising jurisdiction over the area where the activities are undertaken in accordance with the Offshore Protocol to carry out activities and/or who carries out such activities; or
 - .2 Any person who does not hold an authorization within the meaning of the Offshore Protocol but is de facto in control of such activities.
- .13 Operator related terms: company holding the mining concession, hydrocarbon license (an exclusive licence permitting the development and operation of a hydrocarbon field/entity to which the hydrocarbon production concession has been granted), owner of oil and gas installations and pipelines.
- .14 Removal of an installation means the actions taken to comply with Article 20 of the Offshore Protocol (as recalled in paragraph 8 of this guidance document).
- .15 Repurpose: use of the installations for alternative functions, other than what the installations were originally designed for.
- .16 Resources: *as defined in the Offshore Protocol*, all mineral resources, whether solid, liquid or gaseous.
- .17 Reuse: re-use of installations for hydrocarbon activities.
- .18 Substructure: The underlying or supporting structure of a platform, supporting the topsides or superstructure.
- .19 Superstructure: or topsides, is the upper portion of a platform or rig that rests on the substructure. It comprises decks, modules, living quarters, control rooms, and other operational areas where drilling, production, and accommodation activities are conducted.
- .20 Umbilicals: connections used offshore between subsea equipment and platforms, or related installations, to convey control and production treatment fluids.
- .21 Well Plugging & Abandonment (well P&A): within the context of these guidelines on decommissioning, means to install barriers which reseal the reservoir(s) in a manner which permanently prevents the migration of fluids from the reservoir(s) to the outer environment.

2. Decommissioning process

2.1 Decommissioning Plan

13. This chapter provides for establishing sound environmentally concerned procedures structuring the dialogue between the various parties involved in decommissioning and therefore [identifying roles](#)

and responsibilities from the competent authority, of the Contracting Party, and from the Operator. This framework shall apply to the assessment by the competent authority of proposals for the issue of a permit for decommissioning.

14. The whole process should be supported by:

- i. A declaration of intent to decommission or a decommissioning notice from the Operator to the competent authority, followed by;
- ii. A submission, by the Operator to the competent authority, of the decommissioning plan which describes and provide justifications for the proposed decommissioning option (s), proposed execution timeline, cost estimates, financial securities etc.
- iii. A review and approval of the decommissioning plan by the competent authority with the support of the decommissioning regulatory approval panel;
- iv. A Submission, by the Operator to the competent authority, of the decommissioning execution plan, including an environmental and safety analysis (EIA/ Major hazard analysis);
- v. A review and approval of the decommissioning execution plan by the competent authority with the support of the decommissioning regulatory approval; and
- vi. A submission of the close-out report by the Operator to the competent authority.

15. Figure 1 set out at **Annex 1** provides an illustration of the whole decommissioning process.

16. The competent authority shall require that the Operator prepares a Decommissioning Plan which should include the documents and reports describing the current state of the installation. This should include as-built drawings, documents regarding the safety conditions, the prevention and preparation to mitigate against pollution, topsides and underwater inspections reports. It should also include a full description of the updated environmental conditions, including the seabed conditions and aspects related to cultural heritage.

17. The Decommissioning Plan specifically describes the proposed decommissioning solution and objectives for the installation and its components. Operators should conduct a multicriteria decision analysis using a comparative assessment, or similar methodology, of a comprehensive range of decommissioning options to determine the preferred decommissioning options. The comparative assessment shall consider technical and engineering aspects and impacts on safety, environment, and other economic and social uses of the seas in line with the IMO's London Convention/London Protocol. The Decommissioning Plan should include a summary of the comparative assessment as well as a description of the anticipated decommissioning solution for all the items of equipment, infrastructure and materials that have been installed or drilled.

18. The Decommissioning Plan shall be submitted to the competent authority and evaluated by the decommissioning regulatory approval panel appointed by the competent authority. In accordance with the decisions of the decommissioning regulatory approval panel, the Operator shall then submit to the competent authority a decommissioning execution plan as per chapter 3 of the present guidance.

19. From the date of the submission of the Decommissioning Plan, the Operator, of the installation to be decommissioned, shall maintain the installation until the completion of the decommissioning execution plan such that it does not cause harm to people and the environment.

20. In the event of a divestment, reuse or repurpose, the decommissioning liabilities should be transferred to the new Operator. The initial Operator shall provide all necessary information necessary for the continued operation, maintenance and eventual decommissioning of the installation where appropriate. There should be diligence check by the competent authority to assure that the new Operator can meet its legal commitments to decommissioning, including by assessing the financial and technical

capabilities of new Operator as part of divestment, reuse or repurposing approvals.

3. Decommissioning of installations

3.1 Decommissioning execution plan

21. Once the decommissioning option(s) have been decided with the approval of the Decommissioning Plan by the Competent Authorities, a Decommissioning execution plan will have to be defined, and approved, outlining the execution details required to achieve the programme objective(s). The Decommissioning execution plan will provide detailed decommissioning programmes for all the items of equipment, infrastructure and materials of the installation and its components.

3.2 Permanent plugging and abandonment/ Decommissioning of wells

3.2.1 – Well decommissioning

22. A well that is dry, depleted or no longer required for production must be permanently plugged and abandoned. Wells plugging and abandonment or well decommissioning is the first activity in the execution of the decommissioning programme, and typically must be completed before the installation is removed, reused or repurposed. The general guidance³ for well Plugging & Abandonment (well P&A) is to ensure the integrity of the abandonment is such that no fluid or flow is possible through the wellbore and that there is no communication from any permeable formation to the seabed via any casing annulus.

23. After cessation of production, while the Operator shall notify its intent to decommission, the Contracting Party should determine the abandonments periods.

24. As part of the closure of activities referred to in the preceding paragraph 22, the well casing, intermediate columns and production column shall be removed below the seabed by cutting and recovery. Deviations can be approved by the competent authority in relation with the technical specificities of the well and the technical feasibilities of the operation.

25. Completion of well P&A operations shall be subject to a suitable post-abandonment monitoring programme agreed with the decommissioning regulatory approval panel.

26. Alternative reuse, repurpose, or partial removal of installations may be authorized by the competent authority when requirements and safeguards are established.

3.3 Decommissioning of the installations (platforms, pipelines, subsea assets, ..., etc.)

27. After completion of well P&A, the execution of the decommissioning programme will be completed by the decommissioning of the installation which might be its reuse or repurpose, or its partial or full removal.

3.3.1 – Reuse and/or repurpose of an installation at existing location

28. The reuse and/or repurpose of an installation means:

- i. reuse of an installation at the existing or alternative location for hydrocarbon activities such as for hydrogen projects;
- ii. repurposing of an installation at the existing or alternative location, for other

³ As per support bibliography.

commercial or research activities such as, **but not limited to, aquaculture**, carbon capture and storage, habitat retention **or creation**, coastal protection, marine research **and monitoring**, recreational diving.

29. **The competent authority should require** companies or entities interested in the reuse or repurpose of an installation that is planned to be decommissioned to submit their application of the reuse or repurpose project, prepared with an adequate level of information and detail.

30. The applications referred to in paragraph 29 may be submitted by companies, **joint ventures** or entities that have the appropriate general requirements and technical, economic, financial and organizational capacity for the execution and implementation of the submitted projects, for any necessary maintenance and operations, and for eventual decommissioning. Applicants shall have, in the country whose internal and territorial waters are concerned, technical and administrative facilities adequate for the activities envisaged, or submit a declaration in which the legal representative undertakes, if conferred, to establish them. The corporate purpose shall show that the applicant's activities include the activities envisaged in the reuse/repurpose project.

31. The application referred to in paragraph 29 shall be accompanied by a statement in which the proposing party undertakes to submit, prior to the single permit for the execution of the reuse project, a bank or insurance guarantee commensurate with the value of the removal works post reuse/repurpose of the installations and of the environmental rehabilitation, as well as economic guarantees to cover the costs of any accident, commensurate with those resulting from the most serious accident in the different scenarios assumed during the study and risk analysis phase.

32. For the purpose of assessing the economic and financial capacity, the applicant shall submit the documentation in **Annex 2**, item **1**.

33. For the purpose of assessing the technical and organizational capacity, the applicant shall submit the documentation in **Annex 2**, item **3**.

34. For the purpose of assessing the technical and organizational capacity related to health, safety, environment and risk management, the applicant shall submit the documentation in **Annex 2**, item **4**.

35. The applications submitted, accompanied by the reuse or repurpose project as defined in paragraph 29 of this guidance document, shall be evaluated by the Competent Authorities, including for the purpose of comparing all projects (comparative assessment) referring to the same installations, on the basis of the following criteria, **where appropriate to the proposal**:

- .1 industrial and/or scientific and/or energy innovation promoted by the project;
- .2 general socio-economic impact (on a national and regional scale) and specific to neighbouring areas (competition) to the facilities to be reused and its spillover effects;
- .3 economic sustainability of the project;
- .4 implementable technological synergies between the features proposed in the new design and the existing structure;
- .5 environmental sustainability of the project, including assessment of aspects concerning cultural heritage and landscape and any cumulative effects with other existing structures;
- .6 facilities maintenance plan;
- .7 completeness and rationality of the proposed project;
- .8 planned time frame for project execution; **and**
- .9 ways of carrying out the work, including referring to safety and environmental protection, as well as decommissioning and restoring the state of the site.

36. The reuse or repurpose project shall include at least **the following where appropriate to the proposal**:

- .1 maritime study with reference to:
 - navigational, meteorological-oceanographic, and hydrographic characteristics of the marine area, i.e., the intervention site;
 - technical-technological and traffic-navigation characteristics of the intervention in the marine area;
 - maritime safety measures concerning navigation and the stay of maritime objects;
 - protection of the sea from pollution by maritime objects approaching and within the intervention site in the marine area; and
 - procedures for handling extraordinary circumstances affecting navigation safety and sea protection from pollution.
- .2 analysis of potential use conflicts (sea routes, marine protected areas, underwater archaeological cultural heritage, etc.);
- .3 post-reuse decommissioning and environmental rehabilitation project, including any work for different purposes, of the installations;
- .4 analysis of production potential at the site of interest relative to the chosen function(s) within the project (e.g., fish farming, agriculture, marine energy, etc.);
- .5 reasoned choice of the function(s) to be implemented in the platform compliance area and/or to be integrated into the platform;
- .6 complete graphical representation of the works envisaged by the project, highlighted in relation to the existing reused works, indicating any parts to be removed of the latter to be carried out at the expense of the Operator;
- .7 estimated total production, if relevant, expected from the proposed different use;
- .8 analysis of the environmental effects during construction, operation and decommissioning of the new installations/structures, platform and related installations, [applying the mandatory elements of the Environmental Impact Assessment \(EIA\) process as described in national legislation based on the principle of what is best for the environment](#), with reference to:
 - any changes in weather conditions, water quality, seabed and marine ecosystems;
 - natural resources, waste generation and disposal, emissions (including an analysis of the greenhouse gas emissions), and possible risks of serious accidents; [and](#)
 - underwater archaeological cultural heritage and landscape of the coastal territories neighbouring the works, especially with regard to the land-sea intervisibility ratio.
- .9 schedule of the work, including timelines and how it will be carried out to ensure safety;
- .10 analysis of costs, broken down by category; [and](#)
- .11 analysis of the social and economic impact of the project on an international, national and local scale.

3.3.2 - Partial and full removal of installations

37. The Partial and full removal of installations (Removal programme) considered in this chapter implies, among others, the following generic decommissioning options:

- .1 Full removal
 - i. Reuse at another location;
 - ii. Onshore or Offshore demolition with onshore recycling and disposal.
- .2 Partial removal with parts of the installation decommissioned in situ
 - i. Removal of any structure to [an intermediate level](#)⁴.

3.3.2.1 Removal programme

⁴ As per IMO LC/LP 41/17/Add.1: Annex 8: revised guidelines for assessment of platforms or other man made structures at sea. [2019 Revised guidance for platforms.pdf](#)

38. The Operator submits an application to the (competent authority) for permission for the full or partial removal programme prepared in accordance with the guidance and contents in **Annex 3** of these Guidelines.

3.3.2.2 Environmental assessment of the removal programme

39. Plans for the removal of installations, prepared by the Operator according to the contents in **Annex 4** of these Guidelines and accompanied by the information elements, are subject to an environmental review and approval by the competent authority.

3.3.2.3 Major Hazard Report

40. The Operator prepares the Major Hazard Report for the decommissioned installations removal operations, which shall be submitted to the competent authority. The competent authority evaluates the Major Hazard Report with the support of an appropriate decommissioning regulatory approval panel including expertise on safety of sea operations.

Removal work shall begin after approval of the Major Hazard Report.

3.3.2.4 Final close-out Reporting

41. The Operator shall send to the competent authority a report, **at an agreed interval**, during the execution of the **decommissioning** works and a final report within six months, **or other agreed timeframe**, of the removal works, including the post environmental monitoring results (Annex 4).

42. Upon completion of the decommissioning work, **if necessary**, it is obligatory to carry out the environmental restoration of the sites affected by the removal work of the installations, based on the results of the environmental monitoring referred to in paragraph 41.

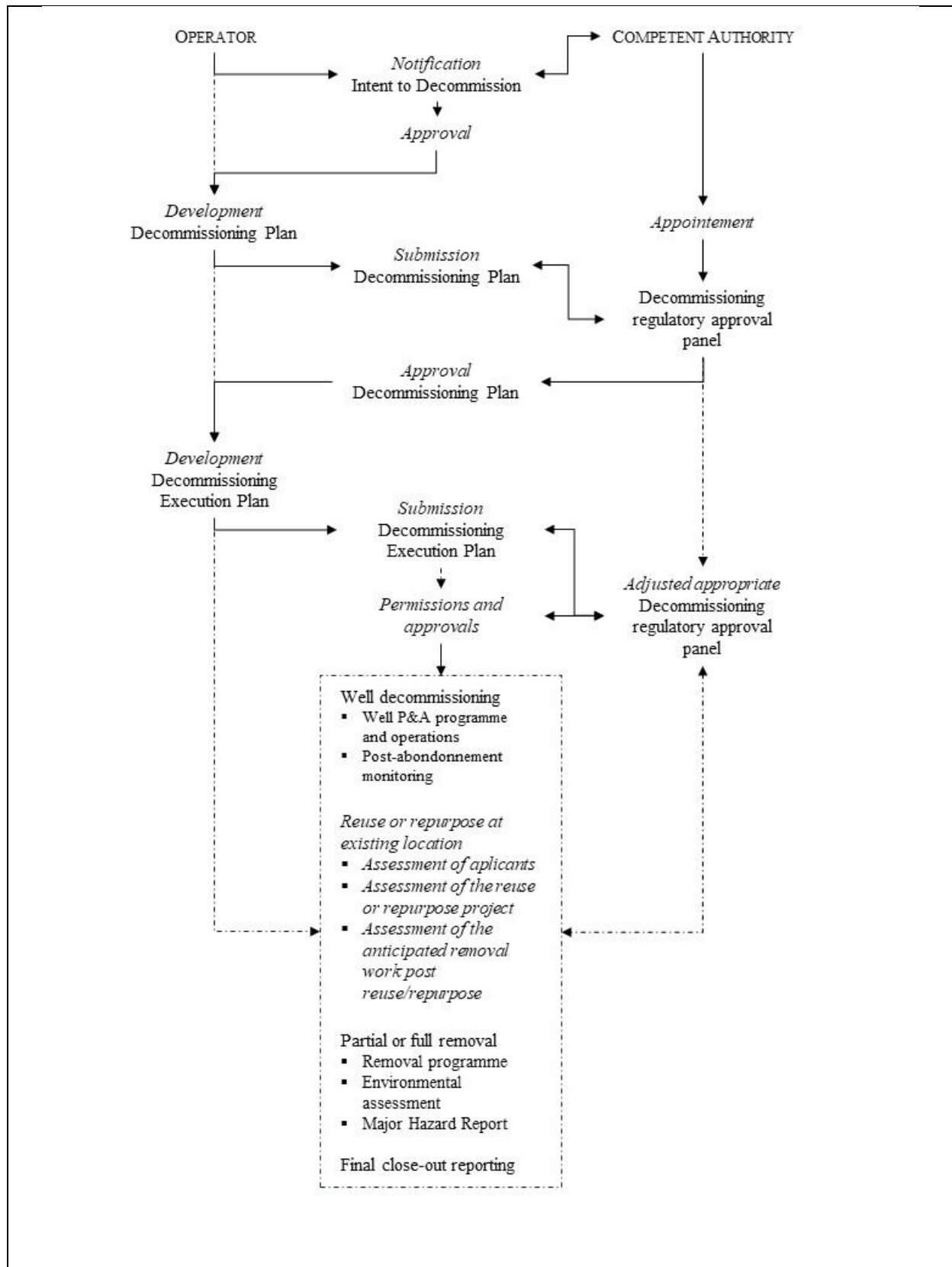
43. **Upon review of the closeout reports and satisfactory delivery of the decommissioning plan, the competent authority shall provide to the Operator approval of completion of the decommissioning of the installation.**

Appendix II
Annex I

Overview of a whole decommissioning process between an Operator and a Competent authority

Overview of a whole decommissioning process between an Operator and a Competent authority

Figure 1: Overview of a whole decommissioning process between an Operator and a competent authority



Note: in cases where the process is already established and described in national legislation, minor differences may exist.

Appendix II
Annex II

Reuse or repurpose of installations at existing location - *Required documentation*

Reuse or repurpose of installations at existing location - *Required documentation*

1. For the purpose of assessing the general requirements, the applicant based **in the country whose internal and territorial waters are concerned** shall submit:
 - a declaration that they are not subject to insolvency proceedings of any kind: bankruptcy, compulsory liquidation, arrangement with creditors;
 - a certificate with the following information about the applicant: name, company name, registered office, registered capital, VAT number and/or tax code or equivalent, website, name of the group it belongs to (if any), name of the parent company (if any), name of the beneficial owner, name and contact information of the legal representative and the person in charge of relations with the authorities; **and**
 - an updated certified copy of the articles of incorporation and bylaws.
2. For the purpose of assessing the economic and financial capacity, the following documentation shall be submitted:
 - Copies of the approved financial statements for the last three years of the applicant, or financial statements as of the time of incorporation of the company, for those incorporated for less than three years, with attached reports of the administrative body and the board of auditors and statutory auditors on the management of the company. Financial statements shall be audited by a statutory auditing firm or similar standards for companies based in another state;
 - report assessing the cost of decommissioning relative to the remaining value of the field; **and**
 - report assessing the credit rating of the applicant.
3. For the purpose of assessing the technical and organizational capacity, the following documentation shall be submitted:
 - report with a description of the main activities, with reference to the submitted project, carried out **in the country** or abroad (in the case of a newly established company, elements relating to the parent company or corporate group to which it belongs may be provided);
 - attestation regarding the organizational structure and resources employed in the activities described in the report referred to in the previous letter;
 - report outlining the technical skills acquired in the activity indicated in the project with reference to the projects carried out; **and**
 - any other documents they deem appropriate to demonstrate the adequacy of technical capabilities.
4. For the purpose of assessing the technical and organizational capacity related to health, safety, environment and risk management, the following documentation shall be required:
 - environmental policies of the institution:
 - i.* environmental management system and experience documentation with specific reference to environmental liability management;
 - ii.* environmental protection procedure activities (waste management, recycling, energy conservation, company and vehicle maintenance, ...);
 - iii.* documentation of the institution's health and safety policies (hazard identification and risk analysis, occupational health and safety procedures, ...); **and**
 - iv.* documentation of the institution's security policies.
 - any health, safety and environmental and risk management certifications; **and**
 - rules for supervision of health and safety and environmental contractors.

Appendix II
Annex III

Removal of installations - *Required documentation.*

Removal of installations - Required documentation.

The removal programme of installations, even if it is planned for only parts of them, according to a reuse project, shall, besides elements provided in paragraph 14, contain at least the following data:

1- General information

- general outline of the installations included in the removal programme (platforms, structures and submarine pipelines);
- result of preliminary verifications carried out and updated documentation;
- information regarding the location, type, and status of other facilities not involved in the removal programme but which may be indirectly affected during operations;
- information regarding weather and sea conditions, water depth, and seabed characteristics;
- information related to activities such as, for example, fishing, boating and other commercial activities performed in the area where the facilities subject to the removal programme are located; and
- any other background information deemed useful to the removal programme.

2- Description of the installations to be decommissioned included in the removal programme:

- substructures of fixed and floating installations (type, configuration, weights and dimensions);
- superstructures of fixed and floating installations (type, configuration, weights and dimensions);
- submarine systems and equipment (type, size, materials, details of foundation piles, and other information regarding potential interactions with other neighbouring systems and equipment);
- lengths, diameters, casing type and installation type of rigid/flexible submarine pipelines;
- details regarding the state of burial of submarine pipelines, concrete mats or bags, or other systems used to cover and protect them;
- details of systems that are integral to submarine installations such as manifolds, valves, clamps, umbilicals, telecommunication cables, electrical cables, etc.
- information on investigations carried out to verify the status and condition of submarine pipelines; and
- any other information deemed useful in providing further details for the removal programme.

3- Detail engineering :

- description of the identified removal option, based on a multi-criteria decision analysis, the selected removal method and the prepared waste reuse, recycling and disposal program;
- description of the type and categories of waste to be handled during operations;
- description of any items or materials that will be left in situ at the end of operations;
- in the case of partial removal of the substructure, details of the free water head that will be guaranteed at the end of the operations.

4- Estimated cost of removal;

5- Schedule of operations with start and end dates indicated;

6- Characterization of the area affected by the infrastructure removal programme and possible remediation project;

7- Documentation pertaining to the description of the underwater archaeological cultural heritage, as well as the cultural heritage and landscape of coastal areas when affected by the execution of removal works of land-related infrastructure and subsequent site restoration;

8- Environmental and post-removal monitoring program; and

9- Indication and description of preparatory and actual removal work.

Additional data to be described in detail or included:

1- Preparatory work for platform removal includes the following activities to be described in detail:

- cleaning and securing of equipment and lines including clearing of residual fluids and flushing;
- marking of cutting lines and cleaning of cutting areas;

- projection for the removal of any debris and excavation around the foundation piles;
 - preparation of superstructure and substructure for removal operations; and
 - prior checks for the protection of underwater archaeological cultural heritage.
- 2- Platform removal work includes the following activities to be described in detail:
- vessels used and their characteristics;
 - location and submarine cutting systems and equipment used and monitoring of operations;
 - description, size and weight of each part removed;
 - description of work and its sequence; and
 - activities planned as a result of preventive inspections for the protection of underwater archaeological cultural heritage.
- 3- The programme for the removal of submarine pipeline shall include:
- survey to check the condition of the submarine pipeline and the state of the seabed at the end of operations;
 - description of submarine pipeline cleaning/remediation operations;
 - vessels used for both cleanup operations and submarine pipeline recovery; and
 - activities planned as a result of preventive inspections for the protection of underwater archaeological cultural heritage.
- 4- In case of complete in situ abandonment of the submarine pipeline, the programme must provide at least:
- a survey to check the condition of the submarine pipeline;
 - description of submarine pipeline cleaning/remediation operations that includes a list of chemicals planned to use during cleaning processes and plan and program for disposal of chemicals used;
 - disconnection of pipeline ends from submarine wellheads and risers;
 - possible burying of pipeline sections or their alternative protection;
 - vessels used; and
 - activities planned as a result of preventive inspections for the protection of underwater archaeological cultural heritage.

Annex IV

Removal of installations - *Environmental assessment of the removal programme*

Removal of installations - *Environmental assessment of the removal programme*

The Environmental assessment shall be done in line with the Guidelines for the Conduct of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) under the Protocol for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution Resulting from Exploration and Exploitation of the Continental Shelf and the Seabed and its Subsoil – Decision 25/15. Furthermore, the parties shall take into account the elements of Annex 4 applying the mandatory elements of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process as described in national legislation, based on the principle of what is best for the environment.

The programme to remove the platform and associated decommissioned installations includes:

- a. description of the removal programme with a summary of the information in **Annex III**.
- b. description of the current status of affected environmental components prior to the start of preparatory and removal work, including but not limited to:
 - o location and description of marine protected areas, national parks, Natura 2000 network sites, areas affected by underwater archaeological cultural heritage, biological protection areas, areas affected by aquaculture facilities;
 - o protected natural areas, Natura 2000 sites, Important Bird Areas, wetlands of international importance, biological protection areas and areas otherwise subject to environmental protection;
 - o cultural heritage and landscape of coastal areas when affected by the decommissioning and removal of shoreline-related installations;
 - o weather-climate characteristics of the area concerned;
 - o physical, chemical characteristics of the water column;
 - o characteristics of the seabed (morphology, bathymetry) and surface sediments (physical, chemical and ecotoxicological characteristics);
 - o major benthic biocoenosis (with verification of the presence/distribution of habitats and species of conservation interest), demersal fish populations and nursery areas with special reference to species of commercial interest, marine mammals and reptiles, and avifauna; **and**
 - o main socio-economic activities (fishing, boating, maritime traffic) present in the vicinity of the platform and related facilities removal area.
- c. Identification and estimation of possible impacts on environmental components and socio-economic activities both direct and indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative impacts related to the platform and related structures removal works, including but not limited to:
 - o identification and descriptions of programme actions that may generate significant and adverse impacts on the environment (including but not limited to underwater noise, air emissions, water discharges, marine sediment handling, vessel presence, night lighting, accidental pollutant spills, transport of removed material, use of natural resources, underwater archaeological cultural heritage, etc.); **and**
 - o Environmental components affected by programme actions (atmosphere, seabed, water environment, flora, fauna, marine ecosystems, cultural heritage and landscape of coastal areas, socio-economic activities, etc.).
- d. Description of measures planned to avoid, mitigate and/or compensate for significant and adverse impacts on affected environmental components;
- e. Description of previous environmental monitoring activities carried out prior to the construction of the offshore oil platform and related infrastructure and during its operation;
- f. Environmental component monitoring programme; **and**
- g. Environmental safeguard measures planned during any accidental hydrocarbon spills and accidents (information from the Major Hazard Report may be used).

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