

**MEDITERRANEAN ASSISTANCE UNIT**  
**FOR COMBATING ACCIDENTAL MARINE POLLUTION**

**Antalya, 12-15 October 1993**

Source: "Report of the Eighth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention for the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea against Pollution and its related Protocols" (UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.3/5, Appendix II, pages 1-6), Antalya, Turkey, 12-15 October 1993.

Explanatory Note:

The decision to establish a Mediterranean Assistance Unit to combat accidental marine pollution (UNEP(OCA)/MED IG.3/5, Annex IV, D.8(a)2, page 12):

D. Implementation of the Protocol Concerning Co-operation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances, in Cases of Emergency.

8. Prevention and Combating Pollution from Ships

a) Protocol concerning Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency (Preparedness, response and cooperation to accidental marine pollution)

2. To establish a Mediterranean Assistance Unit to combat accidental marine pollution. The Unit could become operational within the limits of the budget allocated by the Contracting Parties. The Unit would be composed of national and/or national experts. The text on the establishment of the Unit appears in Appendix II of this report.

## **MEDITERRANEAN ASSISTANCE UNIT FOR COMBATING ACCIDENTAL MARINE POLLUTION**

With a view to implementing the Protocol concerning Cooperation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and Other Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency (Barcelona, 16 February 1976),

### **the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention decided to:**

1. **Establish** a Mediterranean Assistance Unit for combating accidental marine pollution which the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) will organize and activate within the limits of the budget allocated to it by the Meeting of Contracting Parties;
2. **Undertake** to make every effort to assist the organization and functioning of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit.

### **I. General Principles**

- 1.1 A Mediterranean Assistance Unit for combating accidental marine pollution shall be formed within the framework of the Protocol on Co-operation in Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea by Oil and Harmful Substances in Cases of Emergency.
- 1.2 The organization and the activation of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be the responsibility of the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) which shall assume this responsibility in accordance to the Protocol on Co-operation in Cases of Emergency, the various decisions taken by the Meetings of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention and in conformity with the provisions of this document.
- 1.3 The primary objective of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be to rapidly provide the services of selected experts to a Contracting Party which, in case of emergency, will request such assistance. By going to the scene of an accident the experts shall provide advice and technical expertise to the authorities with a view to assisting them during the initial phases to decide on the combating measures to take and on the assistance that could be necessary to request. Another role of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be to help the requesting State to implement the provisions for regional co-operation in case of emergency, particularly through the arrangements and procedures adopted by the Meetings of Contracting Parties aimed at facilitating co-operation and mutual assistance.
- 1.4 The Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be an "expert advice" capability established by the Contracting Parties to the Protocol on co-operation in cases of emergency which could be rapidly mobilized and activated at their request to serve the Mediterranean coastal States.

### **II Geographical Coverage and Scope**

- 2.1 The geographical coverage of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be that of the Protocol on Co-operation in Cases of Emergency.
- 2.2 The scope rationae materiae of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be combating accidental marine pollution by oil and other harmful substances. The Assistance Unit shall provide expert services in the following areas, among others:

a) response to pollution by oil

- Crisis management and organization of intervention:
  - . analysis, assessment and forecasting of oil slick behaviour, fate and movement;
  - . response planning and logistics;
  - . response strategy/tactical choices and options.
- Combating methods and techniques at sea:
  - . containment/recovery;
  - . use of dispersants and other treatment products.
- Shore clean-up techniques and methods.
- Treatment and disposal of wastes
- Financial documentation and claims for compensation

b) Response to pollution by harmful substances

- Crisis management and organization of intervention.
- Analysis, assessment and forecasting of fate and behaviour of:
  - . gas clouds
  - . floaters
  - . dissolvers
  - . sinkers
- Recovery of packages at sea
- Response to spilled chemicals depending on their behaviour:
  - . personnel protection;
  - . aquatic toxicity and rehabilitation;
  - . biogeochemical cycling;
- Decontamination
- Treatment and disposal of wastes
- Financial documentation and claims for compensation

### **III Composition**

- 3.1 The Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be composed of a selected limited number of highly qualified experts and centres of expertise, for each area of expertise. An expert or centre of expertise can be selected for more than one area of expertise.
- 3.2 REMPEC shall select the experts and centres of expertise using its own lists of experts and other means of information in its possession as well as in consultation with the competent national authorities and with other organizations which can give useful advice.
- 3.3 The experts and centres of expertise shall be selected for a duration of 2 years, this period being renewable. During this period, the experts and centres of expertise shall respond, in accordance with permanent instructions, to all the requests made in the case that the Mediterranean Assistance Unit is activated. The composition of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be published by REMPEC every two years and updated as necessary depending on the changes that need to be made.

#### **IV Activation**

- 4.1 The Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be activated by REMPEC at the request of the competent national authority in charge of response to accidental marine pollution or at the request of the authority which is in charge of dealing with mutual assistance in the case of an emergency (refer to REMPEC/RIS/B/1) on behalf of the State affected by the accident. The national authorities which request REMPEC to provide them with the assistance of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit, must endeavour to specify as precisely as possible what areas of expertise are required according to the circumstances of the case in order to decide jointly with REMPEC on the composition of the team to be sent to the site.
- 4.2 Depending on the circumstances and in agreement with the requesting State and within the limits of the financial resources available, REMPEC shall determine the duration and decide on the end of the mission of the member(s) of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit. If the situation dictates and if the corresponding financial arrangements have been agreed between the parties concerned, the presence of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit can be prolonged beyond the duration permitted by the financial resources available to REMPEC.

#### **V Organization**

- 5.1 In the shortest time possible, REMPEC shall establish permanent arrangements for the provision of prepaid air tickets to all Mediterranean destinations as well as for the issue of a visa when one is required.
- 5.2 The State requiring the assistance of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit, shall take all necessary measures to facilitate the mission of the members of the Assistance Unit. Such necessary measures concern:
- a) the immigration and arrival procedures as well as customs formalities in particular for data processing equipment and the associated documentation or computerized material;
  - b) accommodation and transport;
  - c) the provision of sufficient work space for the expert(s);
  - d) access to communication means.
- 5.3 REMPEC shall cover the initial costs of the mission of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit: air tickets, daily subsistence allowance; and possibly fees on a pre-arranged basis.
- REMPEC shall reserve the right, according to the applicable legal regimes, to seek reimbursement for the expenses thus incurred.
- 5.4 In accordance with the request of the competent national authorities of the State and in agreement with them, REMPEC shall determine the terms of reference of the mission of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit and shall give instructions to this effect. In their request, the competent national authorities shall specify the name, function and details of the authority the members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit must contact upon arrival. They shall also specify the authority or authorities to whom the members of the Unit must report.
- 5.5 The members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall maintain contact with REMPEC and shall provide REMPEC with daily reports. REMPEC shall give to the Mediterranean Assistance Unit all the support that it might need.
- 5.6 The Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall work in close co-operation with and be at the service of the public authorities responsible for the organization and the management of response. In order to accomplish their duty, members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall have access to available information, shall carry out the necessary investigations in co-operation and

with the support of the responsible national authorities and shall participate in meetings as necessary.

- 5.7 The members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall make a daily report containing an assessment of the situation, their analyses and conclusions and their proposals for actions, which they shall submit, to the authorities to whom they are reporting. The proposal for actions can be related to the organization of response, the tactical options, the methods and techniques of response and to experts, equipment and products that can be requested from other Contracting Parties or private entities. A copy of this report shall be sent to REMPEC by telefax. Members of the Assistance Unit shall submit a final report at the end of the mission.
- 5.8 In cases where the competent authorities request international assistance, the members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit, by their good cognizance of the regional system for co-operation, in liaison with REMPEC, shall assist these authorities.

## **VI Role and Responsibilities of members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit**

- 6.1 The role and responsibilities of members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall be limited to assisting national authorities in the decision making process. In this regard, their role shall be solely advisory. All decisions related to response operations as well as their consequences shall be the entire responsibility of the competent authority of the requesting State.
- 6.2 In their advice, the members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit shall endeavour to protect the interests of the requesting State, in particular the protection of the environment and resources, and they shall take into consideration the economic and financial implications.
- 6.3 During their missions, the members of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit have a duty of discretion. Unless otherwise specified, they shall not have direct contact with the general public or the media, this being the responsibility of the national authorities.

## **VII Duties of the selected experts and centres of expertise**

- 7.1 The experts and centres of expertise shall possess a complete and updated version of the Regional Information System. They shall be familiar with this system as well as with the regional arrangements for preparedness and response, specifically the provisions and procedures aimed at facilitating mutual assistance.
- 7.2 The experts and centres of expertise shall endeavour to inform REMPEC of the time they are able to allot so that the Centre can know in advance of their availability to serve as a member(s) of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit. If an expert is no longer available and is not in a position to respond to a request made as a result of the activation of the Mediterranean Assistance Unit, REMPEC should be informed immediately. In this case, REMPEC shall make arrangements to replace the expert.