



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Consultative meeting on marine pollution preparedness and prevention in the Western Indian Ocean under the MASE agreements 5 May 2021, Online workshop

1. Introduction

On 5 May 2021, the Secretariat of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) convened virtually, a first meeting, on marine pollution prevention and preparedness under the MASE agreements, in the margin of the 6th Steering Committee. The meeting was attended by countries in the Western Indian Ocean.

The aim of the meeting was to follow up on one of the recommendations of the Zanzibar workshop of 3-5 March 2020 and MASE signatory countries' Chiefs of Staff meeting during the 2019 maritime pollution (MARPOL) exercise in Antsiranana, Diego Suarez. The latter focused on the cooperation and preparedness of a marine pollution incident and the roles to be played by the two MASE centres, namely the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) and the Regional Coordination of Operations Centre (RCOC). These two Centres are the substantive regional tools resulting from the two MASE Agreements signed by the seven islands and coastal countries of the Western Indian Ocean: Comoros, Djibouti, France/Reunion, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles. This meeting was also in line with the decision of the 5th MASE Steering Committee to build on the achievements of past regional projects/initiatives, including the regional 'Oil Spill Response' project (1999 - 2004) and the 'Maritime Highway' project (2008 - 2012); funded by the World Bank and implemented by the Indian Ocean Commission.

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The meeting was held under the chairmanship of the Republic of Mauritius represented by the Permanent Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office, Mr R.S. Sonea, in his capacity as Chair of the Steering Committee of the two MASE Agreements countries. The meeting was attended by all the members of the MASE Steering Committee, as well as the countries involved in the two mentioned projects on maritime pollution and the maritime highway: South Africa, Mozambique, Somalia, representatives of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), the Nairobi Convention, the RCOC, the RMIFC, and the European Union, including the EUNAVFOR and MSCHOA, were also present. The list of participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

2. Aims and Objectives

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the way forward in the implementation of the recommendations of MARPOL exercise held in Diego-Suarez in October 2019 and the March 2020 workshop in Zanzibar on cooperation and preparedness in the event of a marine pollution incident, as part of the operationalisation of the marine pollution component of the Western Indian Ocean Maritime Security Architecture.

More specifically, the meeting aimed to:

1. Exchange on existing frameworks for prevention, preparedness and response to marine pollution incidents and reflect on a coordination mechanism between them;
2. Discuss a draft Regional Contingency Plan (RCP) as a tool for implementing regional cooperation.
3. Use the MASE agreements to operationalise and coordinate RCP procedures via the RCOC and the RMIFC;
4. Exchange on the updating of national contingency plans and alignment of these plans with the RCP;
5. Exchange and agree on a work plan, including capacity building and organisation of TTXs and FTXs.

3. Welcome and opening

The official opening ceremony started at 10:00 AM with the welcoming speech of the Secretary-General of the IOC, Mr Vêlayoudom Marimoutou, in the presence of high dignitaries including the representatives of the Prime Minister's Office of Mauritius, Mr O.K Dabidin, Secretary of Home Affairs, Prime Minister's Office and Chairman of the Steering Committee of the MASE agreements, as well as the

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Ambassador of the EU Delegation in Mauritius, Mr Vincent Degert. Representatives of the IMO, the Nairobi Convention, EU NAVFOR, EU CAP-Somalia and various delegates from all the countries of the Western Indian Ocean also attended the meeting.

In his welcome speech, the Secretary General emphasized on the need to prevent marine disasters while recalling the major oil spill caused by the MV Wakashio in August 2020 in Mauritius which had significant ecological and socio-economic impacts. He pointed out that countries in the region should focus their efforts to protect our maritime areas, our territories and our populations. He further thanked all the mobilised stakeholders for their interest and work.

The Ambassador of the European Union Delegation in Mauritius and Seychelles, His Excellency Mr Vincent Degert, supported the commitment and interest to fight against marine pollution. He emphasised that the new project for Ports Security and Safety of navigation would provide countries with better control through their ports. H.E. Mr Degert urged the region to learn from its past experiences, build on the initiatives and improve on what has been done, to be able to deal with any marine pollution incident in the future. He also encouraged regular and ad-lib cooperation and coordination. The region should prepare for mutual assistance. Training and exercises should be conducted regularly, according to him to better prepare States to respond to maritime threats. The Ambassador reiterated the EU's commitment to accompany these kinds of initiatives for the benefit of the region.

In his speech, delivered on behalf of the Chairman of the Steering Committee of the MASE Agreements, the Permanent Secretary of the Office of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Mr Sonea, recalled the adopted decisions of the last Steering Committee meeting. The Permanent Secretary urged the consultative meeting to focus on the concrete steps to operationalise the maritime pollution component within the framework of the MASE Agreements. He especially thanked the participation of the other regional States, the IMO and the Nairobi Convention, for reflecting together on the ways and means for collaboration and cooperation to fight against maritime incidents in our region.

4. Adoption of the agenda

The adopted agenda is available in Annex 2

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SUBJECT	DISCUSSIONS	CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>1. Existing frameworks for prevention, preparedness and response to marine pollution incidents (Annex 3)</p>	<p>The discussions facilitated by the consultant provided a good analysis and understanding of various existing frameworks for regional cooperation against maritime pollution. They also explored the effectiveness and use of the structure established under the two MASE agreements.</p> <p>The consultant's presentation (<i>Annex 4</i>) on the existing frameworks led to several comments from the participants and points to consider for the future:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to take into account the lessons learned from previous projects, initiatives or existing schemes such as ORSEC • State capacity and RETOS assessment • The special case of Somalia 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It was agreed that the MASE governance structure is a suitable regional framework, especially for cost-effectiveness. 2. There was a consensus, including the IMO and the Nairobi Convention, to continue the work under the MASE Agreements, which is allowed under them 3. It was agreed to use the document already circulated by the IOC and invite further comments for finalisation. 4. South Africa's SAMSA remains available to continue certain functions in the regional framework. 5. The EU and EU NAVFOR support the initiative, especially as the mandate of EU NAVFOR now allows it. 6. It was therefore agreed that the two MASE centres operate in this field according to their mandate 7. The development of capacity in this field was identified as a prerequisite

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- The need to ensure that the regional plan is in accordance with the respective National Contingency Plan.
- Countries do not have the same risks
- The imperative involvement of the Nairobi Convention.

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<p>2. Regional Contingency Plan (Annex 5)</p>	<p>The meeting enabled an analysis of the Regional Contingency Plan (RCP) draft, prepared by the Consultant and which had been distributed well before the meeting.</p>	<p>The recommendations for action were validated as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. The proposed Regional Contingency Plan was considered a good starting point but should be reviewed on the basis of the National Plans. In this regard, States were invited to provide relevant and necessary information to finalise the annexes of the RCP. 9. Liaise with <u>SEAIGNEP</u> and other sources to obtain existing information on oil spill preparedness and response at national level. 10. Facilitate a meeting to address any comments or proposed changes to the RCP. 11. The RMIFC will ensure that the platform is able to communicate in a timely manner and will enable the monitoring and control of vessels to prevent risks. 12. The meeting confirmed the need to finalise and approve the RCP which provides the operational tool for effective regional cooperation against marine pollution.
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<p>3. National Contingency Plans</p>	<p>The participants presented the situation regarding NCPs.</p> <p>It was noted that the assessment of NCPs with the RETOS tool has not been carried out yet. The experts and IOC requested support of countries for the realisation of this assessment.</p> <p>The NCPs of Somalia would be available soon, that of Mozambique in 2 months' time as the exercise was delayed due to the sanitary crisis. while that of Mauritius by December 2021.</p> <p>The IMO recalled that the regional plan was the coordination of the national plans. She encourages countries that have not yet developed their national plans to do so</p>	<p>13.The ultimate goal was to ensure that NCPs follow international best practices, are easily operational and provide a solid ground for their integration into the RCP cooperation procedures. In this context, the meeting noted the importance of the Readiness Evaluation Tool for Oil Spills (RETOS) which integrates all the assessment criteria for marine pollution prevention and preparedness.</p> <p>14.It encouraged countries that have not yet developed their national plans to do so. The meeting welcomed the initiative to use RETOS and requested assistance in updating contingency plans and in having adequate resources in terms of equipment and trained personnel. States were recommended to support the experts in this exercise.</p> <p>15.The Committee agreed that NCP must include national response systems that should identify the elements required to enable integration with the regional framework and that were not just "on paper" but could become operational.</p> <p>16.The most effective means of operationalisation was a programme of regional exercises coordinated by a regional centre or centres.</p>
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<p>4. Coordination and allocation of tasks RMIFC /RCOC (Annex 6)</p>	<p>The expert who has already reviewed the MASE agreements confirmed that the existing governance and structure of the MASE centres allowed for the addition of tasks related to regional cooperation on marine pollution response.</p>	<p>17.The meeting confirmed that the Mechanism for Regional Cooperation on Marine Pollution within the existing framework (MASE)was open to the participation of all countries neighbouring the MASE Agreement countries.</p> <p>18. It was agreed that the work plan, the distribution and allocation of tasks between the centres involved in the implementation of the RCP, should be discussed with the MASE Centres.</p>
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<p>5. Work plan (Annex 7)</p>	<p>The presentation of a Work Plan at the meeting confirmed the willingness of countries to develop an integrated national and regional capacity for Level 2 and 3 marine pollution incidents.</p>	<p>19. The meeting confirmed the need to proceed with the proposed Work Plan in order to follow-up on a financial feasibility for the WIO to develop effective regional cooperation through the implementation of the RCP, in parallel with coordinated national and regional procedures to facilitate access to international support in case of Level 3 incidents.</p> <p>20. On an overall level, the meeting agreed that the Work Plan should include Capacity building and the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-engineering the various national structures to respond adequately to an emergency situation • Providing countries with the means and equipment to respond to tier 1, 2 and tier 3 incidents at regional and international levels • Update of all national plans • Update of the regional plan • Organising regular exercises at national level • At least twice yearly a TTX and a large-scale exercise • Specificities of countries as each of them do not have the same risks nor similar flow of ship traffic - on one hand the southern region of the IO and on the other the WIO • Taking into account the richness of the region in terms of marine ecosystems that must be protected <p>21. This Work Plan would be regularly reviewed and refined and would be the subject of future exchanges.</p>
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<p>6. Conclusion and general recommendations</p>		<p>22. The IMO has expressed its willingness to work with the IOC in partnership with the Nairobi Convention to assist countries.</p> <p>23. The Nairobi Convention has expressed its willingness to support the region and to ensure that the fight is effective in the medium and long terms.</p> <p>24. EUNAVFOR, although its mandate is focused on piracy, weapons and drugs, has expressed its willingness to contribute to the fight against marine pollution in the future.</p> <p>25. The IOC General Secretariat would contact Tanzania on these findings and its possible participation in further work.</p> <p>26. In conclusion, it was agreed to set up a working group including the four non-MASE countries and the above-mentioned partners to follow up and implement the Work Plan. The IOC General Secretariat would continue to work with the experts and coordinate with the meeting participants.</p>
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To access the Annexes and Speeches, click [HERE](#)

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