



Regional Workshop for updating the Regional Oil and Chemical Spill Contingency Plan and its Annexes in South Asian Seas Region"

22 to 25 August 2016

Male', Maldives

Background of the workshop

Five South Asian countries namely Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka share the Indian Ocean and are part of the South Asian Seas Programme. With a view to protect the marine environment in the region, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) undertook a jointly funded project to assist the region in developing a South Asian Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan in 1989. A draft Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan and other background documents were reviewed by the regional stakeholders in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 14th to 16th December 1999 and the revised plan was shared with the national governments for their concurrence.

The purpose of this Contingency Plan is to establish a mechanism for mutual assistance, under which the national Authorities of Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka co-operate towards an integrated response to the marine pollution incidents either affecting or likely to affect the territorial sea, coasts and related interests of one or more of these countries, or to incidents beyond the available response capacity of each of these countries alone.

Accordingly, the revised draft plan and MoU were circulated to member countries in 2000 and so far four countries have already signed the MoU and the fifth one is in an advance stage of national approval. A NORAD funded project to enhance regional cooperation mechanisms on maritime pollution preparedness and response in the SACEP region, was launched during a meeting of competent national authorities, held from 26-28 February 2014 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The meeting brought together national experts from the key relevant competent national authorities of the project's beneficiary countries (Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) who presented their respective national preparedness and response systems for dealing with marine pollution incidents, in addition to discussing the nomination of project focal points, and updating of regional oil spill contingency plan.

In order to further progress this project, SACEP has completed 5 national workshops in each of the five member countries (in collaboration with IMO and with the financial assistance of NORAD). To make the plan complete, second regional exercise and workshop was held from 2-6 November, 2015 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The objective of the exercise and workshop was to examine the mechanisms for effective communication during an oil and chemical spill incident in order to facilitate the decision making process and enhance the effectiveness of the response. The workshop also reviewed the existing 'Regional Oil and Chemical Pollution Contingency Plan' that was finalized in the year 2000 and identified the areas of the regional plan that would need strengthening and further revision based on experiences from the five national workshops, regional exercise and the latest technological advances in incident preparedness and response. Overall, the



regional exercise and workshop provided a platform for the relevant national authorities responsible for spill preparedness, response and cooperation to discuss national issues as well as regional approaches to facilitate co-operation among coastal states to effectively respond to oil and chemical pollution incidents in south Asian region.

The next phase of the project is the final Regional Workshop for updating the Regional Oil and Chemical Spill Contingency Plan and its Annexes in South Asian Seas Region".

Objectives of the workshop:

- To finalize and consolidate the updates to the Regional Contingency Plan;
- To identify the need for future training activities and develop a three-year programme of trainings and exercises to enhance regional capacity building in spill preparedness and response;
- To raise awareness of the unique considerations and challenges associated with preparing for, and responding to, an HNS spill.