

## **HELCOM RECOMMENDATION 28E/12**

Adopted 15 November 2007  
having regard to Article 20, Paragraph 1 b)  
of the Helsinki Convention

### **STRENGTHENING OF SUB-REGIONAL CO-OPERATION IN RESPONSE FIELD**

#### **THE COMMISSION,**

**BEING AWARE** that the increasing maritime traffic is causing a potential threat of a pollution incident at sea,

**BEING ALSO AWARE** that spills of oil or other harmful substances can have a long-lasting harmful impact on the sensitive marine environment and the coastal areas of the Baltic Sea,

**RECOGNISING** the efficiency of an operational “three tier” approach for planning and response to pollution incidents in the Baltic, whereby minor oil spills are addressed by one Contracting State, spills of medium size are addressed by well-organised and timely action by several Contracting State located in the vicinity of the accident, and the largest spills are addressed by the co-ordinated efforts of all Contracting Parties and, if necessary, with use of external assistance,

**NOTING** the significance of sub-regional approach to ensure timely and well-organised emergency towing, fire-fighting and lightering and, if needed, response to a pollution incident, including shoreline response, and in that way to minimise environmental damage caused by an accident,

**NOTING FURTHER** that sub-regional co-operation is of crucial importance when effectively using the emergency and response resources,

**RECOMMENDS** that the Contracting Parties take necessary steps to assess the risk of oil and chemical pollution and on that basis review emergency and response resources on a sub-regional basis in order to ensure that:

1. there are sufficient emergency resources in the area to provide adequate emergency towing, fire-fighting and lightering capacity to a ship in need of assistance within a reasonable period of time;
2. there are sufficient response resources/capacity to ensure effective collection of pollutants in case of a “medium-size” pollution incident or to control large-scale pollution incidents until the assisting forces arrive on the scene;
3. there is adequate response capacity to enable effective shoreline response,

**RECOMMENDS ALSO** that the Contracting Parties draw up bilateral or multilateral agreements and/or response plans for major risk areas and/or dangerous objects located in the vicinity of their borders and where co-ordinated efforts are needed to ensure adequate response to pollution incidents,

**RECOMMENDS FURTHER** that the Contracting States cooperate by carrying out joint surveillance operations and/or flights by one Contracting State over the responsibility area of the other Contracting State(s) in order to ensure that the minimum HELCOM requirements on aerial surveillance are fulfilled,

**RECOMMENDS ADDITIONALLY** that the Contracting States endeavour to do their best in order to ensure that a ship in need of assistance would be accommodated in the most appropriate place of refuge without undue delay,

**RECOMMENDS FINALLY** that the Contracting States integrate shoreline response into national contingency plans, and cooperate by conducting trainings and organising exchange programmes to ensure swift and adequate response capacity and to develop best practices.

## Guidance for sub-regional plans to quantify needed emergency/response resources

The idea of enhanced sub-regional co-operation, which has been discussed and agreed in HELCOM RESPONSE, rests on a four-step logic:

- Analysis of the likely accident scenarios taking into account sub-regional specifics;
- Identification (both quantitative and spatial) of the emergency and response resources needed sub-regionally to respond to an accident of Tier 1 and 2 and how to deal with a Tier 3 accident until the assistance arrives;
- Comparison of the identified needs to the available resources and development of plans to meet the needs for resources in the sub-region in the most effective way;
- By the above standing steps, achieving adequate emergency and response preparedness in the most cost-efficient way.

Even though the risks and likely accident scenarios certainly vary sub-regionally, it might be beneficial to have a general discussion on certain aspects of the assessments in order to facilitate sub-regional actions:

- Likely maximum accident for which the sub-regions should be prepared;
- Principles for the estimation of the needed emergency and response resources as well as their preparedness and spatial allocation.

### *Emergency towing*

Every sub-region should have adequate emergency towing capacity to be able to handle the largest vessels sailing in the region in rough sea conditions (e.g. Beaufort 10-12 in the Baltic Sea).

Spatial allocation and preparedness should correspond to the time limits for approaching and securing a ship in distress along the major shipping lane(s) in the sub-region before it reaches shallow waters.

### *Emergency lightering*

Emergency lightering capacity (pumping capacity, intermediate storing and possible places of refuge) should be analysed for a lightering operation of the biggest ships sailing in the area (up to 150,000 tonnes).

### *Emergency fire fighting*

Emergency fire fighting capacity should ensure at least availability of Fire Fighters class 1 according to Det Norske Veritas (DNV) or similar (around 20,000 litres/minute).

### *Places of refuge*

Based on risk assessment in a sub-regional context, including evaluation of the environmental factors, adequate response capacities should be available for places of refuge.

### *Shoreline response*

Every sub-region should have adequate equipment and trained personnel to protect the coast, especially vulnerable habitats and areas (Baltic Sea Protected Areas, BSPAs) and to ensure immediate and appropriate action on shore.

Shoreline response capacity should be addressed and arranged in its complexity within sub-regional agreements between adjacent Contracting States. Such agreements are aimed at ensuring fast and sharp reaction when a second and/or third tier or transboundary pollution accident has occurred.

The logic described in HELCOM Recommendation 11/13 serves as a basis to analyse and utilise the personnel, amount and type of booms, skimmers, vacuum cleaners, washers and other relevant equipment needed to maintain readiness for actual operations in such accidents.

All priorities related to vulnerable areas (BSPAs) are to be pre-planned within sub-regional action plans; this may include wildlife response as deemed feasible.

#### *Response capacity*

Response capacity should be available for responding to a 1,000- 5,000 tonnes (depending on the likely accident in the area) oil spill at sea in favourable weather within 3 days. Local geographical and other specifics (e.g. archipelago area, shallow water, etc.) should be taken into account.

#### **Action Plan**

When the above standing analysis has been performed, there should be an action plan for how together to improve the capacity. Who buys what and when? How do the others get hold of it in an emergency situation, etc.

#### **Notification**

NB -There is no need for special alarm procedures, etc. Normal HELCOM routines should be applied, but of course it is permitted to call or mail the sub-regional partners as a first notification.