

INTRODUCTION

Operational and general guidelines for co-operation

The co-operation in combatting spillages of oil and other harmful substances in the Baltic Sea area is based on the Helsinki Convention and HELCOM Recommendations on combatting matters, adopted by the Helsinki Commission.

In accordance with the Helsinki Convention the Contracting Parties shall maintain ability to respond to spillages of oil and other harmful substances into the sea threatening the marine environment of the Baltic Sea area. This ability shall include adequate equipment, ships and manpower prepared for operations in coastal waters as well as on the high seas.

According to the Helsinki Convention the Contracting Parties shall agree bilaterally or multilaterally on those regions of the Baltic Sea Area, in which they should conduct aerial surveillance and take action for combatting or salvage activities whenever a significant spillage of oil or other harmful substance or any incident causing or likely to cause pollution within the Baltic Sea area has occurred or is likely to occur.

In cases where a Contracting Party is not able to cope with a spillage by the sole use of its personnel and equipment, the Contracting Party in question can request combatting assistance from other Contracting Parties starting with those who seem likely also to be affected by the spillage.

The Contracting Parties are advised in addition to this Manual to use the Bonn Agreement Manual on Securing Evidence on Discharges from Ships "Oil Pollution at Sea", as it contains a lot of valuable information for the detection, identification and quantification of oil slicks. Furthermore, reference is made to HELCOM Recommendation 19/16 concerning "Co-operation in investigating violations or suspected violations of discharge and related regulations for ships, dumping and incineration regulations" and to the HELCOM "Guidelines on Ensuring Successful Convictions of Offenders of Anti-pollution Regulations at Sea" (Baltic Sea Environment Proceedings No. 78), describing the co-operation between the Contracting States in the investigation of suspected violations with the overall aim to ensure and enhance the successful conviction of offenders. In addition, the identification of the polluter is of high interest for the responsible operation control authority in case of compensation for expensive clean-up costs and/or serious damage to the marine environment.

The following chapters are meant as help to improve the co-operation in response to marine pollution within the Baltic Sea area. They are meant both for On-Scene-Commanders/-Coordinators conducting multinational response operations and for authorities dealing with national and regional contingency planning.