

Topic: **OILSPILL Project Tabletop exercise “Prestige-like oilspill in vicinity of port of Mersrags, Latvia”**

Date: **14 August 2019**

Place: **Port Authority premises, Port of Mersrags, Latvia**

Minutes of the event:

**1. Welcoming word by event’s organizer**

Andrejs Zvaigzne, Leader of OILSPILL project team Latvia has opened the event, greeting participants and outlining “plan of the day” , emphasizing the goals and aims of Table top exercise: enhance awareness of national stakeholders about necessary resources and procedures for effective OILSPILL response.

**2. Welcoming words by OILSPILL Project Director.**

Lauri Ojala has greeted participants, provided general outline of OILSPILL project, stressed the importance of cross-border cooperation in framework of project as well as importance of common input and pro-active approach from all stakeholders of the project.

**3. Welcoming words by Chief of Port of Mersrags**

Janis Budreika, Chairman of the Board, Port of Mersrags authorities, has welcomed participants, also presenting general outline of port of Mersrags: location regarding other hubs, turnover of cargoes, statistical data, some initial risk assessment of pollutions.

**4. Introductory round**

The participants shortly introduced themselves.

**5. Briefing about OILSPILL project and Presentation of case studies by Marine Casualty investigation bureau**

Aleksandrs Pavlovics has provided detailed presentation about OILSPILL project. Has presented global, European and regional; statistics regarding pollution and oil spills. Provided description and chronology of Prestige disaster in November 2002, emphasizing failed performance of authorities tagged as “organized irresponsibility” by local mass-media. Arrangements for tabletop exercise has been explained. Brief exercises scenario has been repeated.

**6. Briefing on standing Latvian national oilspill response procedures**

Coast Guard Environmental officer Ojars Gerke has provided comprehensive outlook at oilspill national contingency plan, duties and responsibilities of governmental bodies, standing units of oils spill response, role of MRCC in combating oilspill, national exercises, case studies, international cooperation (i.e. annual exercise BALEX DELTA) and other elements and daily works of Coast Guard. Some aspects of data and information exchange during oilspill response have been covered: satellite images, prognostic software, oilspill recce aspects.

## **7. Briefing on modern OILSPILL response equipment by company Delta Green Line EU**

Deniss Bičkovs from DELTA GREEN LINE EU company has provided comprehensive presentation on new developments in matter of oil spill combating equipment, technique, recce, assets etc. New nature-friendly sorbents, oil absorbing mats, high capacity oil spill mobile equipment, new oil spot recce optical devices, drones and other innovations. Practical demonstration of mentioned equipment has been offered later on, during the exercise.

## **8. Briefing by Latvian Institute of Aquatic ecology**

Solveiga Kadike , Miks Papiritis have provided briefing about actualities, projects, daily works of above mentioned establishment. Presenters have introduced aspects of pollution's sediments in waters due to pharmaceutical, oil, fertilizers, plastics and other hazardous and semi-hazardous substances to be found in environment. Institute works on pollution measurements and monitoring algorithms, public awareness, estimation of long-term consequences and impact for nature etc. Interest in oil spill project has been expressed profoundly.

## **9. Briefing by WWF Latvia**

Magda Jentgena has explained purpose of WWF (fully independent NGO) : to protect nature, to preserve the biodiversity of species and ecosystems, to ensure the current and future use of renewable natural resources, to help reduce pollution and wasteful use of natural resources and energy. The mission of WWF is to build a future where people and nature live in harmony. WWF has global coverage. NGO operates through work with the society and lobbying. Organizations has appr 400 volunteers. WWF Latvia has expressed the readiness to accept prominent role in OILSPILL project.

## **10. Briefing from LATVENERGO on environmental issues**

Marta Utane has presented the vision of Latvenergo , which is one of the largest power suppliers in the Baltics, operating cascade of three dams /hydro stations as well as thermal energy generation, ensuring electricity distribution services and the lease of transmission system assets. Prominent oils spiil risks are presented throught the river of Daugava (crossing three states) . There were massive oilspills in 2008 from Belorussian factories. Risks of oil leaks during the operational and repair works of hydropower units, reconstruction works, transboundary pollution, historical pollution (penetration of oil products deep into soil and further contamination): all those are incentives of Latvenergo to join OILSPILL project actively.

## **11. Briefing of Latvian Association for Environmental management (**

Olga Melnichenko has described above mentioned NGO (13 organizations as members) working in matters of environmental protection. Specific interest in matters of pending *National Oiled Wildlife Response Plan* has been expressed in context of OILSPILL project.

## **12. Briefing of Finnish Environmental Institute (SYKE)**

Jorma Rytönen has provided presentation with the emphasis on legal and liability issues as part of the OILSPILL Execution Plan. After general presentation about SYKE, there was specified need (in framework of OILSPILL project) to have charting the national practices in how key legal issues such as liability in case of injuries or other

damage caused by or during oil spill combatting activities, followed by targeted workshops and finalized by sound cooperation strategies in order to work out effective legal platform for needs of the project. Several related projects (such as SOKO project) has been briefly covered, as well as short description of existing IMO standards to be used in sake of project efficacy.

### **13. Briefing by Estonian Fund for Nature**

Kadri Aller has provided the Estonian experience in matters of volunteer training, readiness and organizational issues of environmental movement. Elaborated system of volunteer response has been established in Estonia. Annual trainings and events are being organized, depending on available EU funding. The specific emphasize has been put by presenter on necessity to keep consequent, uninterrupted incremental trainings of volunteers every year at least, in order to upkeep accumulated expertise effectively.

### **14. Demo of Latvian Coast Guard oilspill response asset, Demo of Delta Green Line EU, oil spill response asset in action**

All participant had the opportunity to see mobile units of Latvian Coast Guard with skimmers, sorbents, steamers for heating of oil products, mobile tanks for oil recovery, suits and related equipment. Coast Guards representatives have provided briefing on operational readiness of oilspill response units, their location, capacity, operational procedures etc.

Company Delta Green Line EU has deployed their equipment in water (in harbor) for visualization of new absorbing mats, booms, absorbing materials, their capacity, sizes etc.

### **15. The tabletop exercise started:** Scenario time "X": Bunker RISTNA gets aground in vicinity of port of Mersrags , 3000 tons of crude oil to be discharged at sea. Factual weather conditions. Chronology of the exercise:

- a) Mersrags port authorities (Roberts Šilins , Janis Budreika) have reported about initiation of local "Emergency Board" within 2-3 hours since time "X" with the brief description of informational flow and intra agencies responsibilities (as they see it).
- b) Latvian Fire Service ( Uldis Kevers) has described initial activities after the accident: arrival of recce team from Talsi, deployment of brigades etc.
- c) Latvian Coast Guard provided input o framework of the exercise: arrival of first mobile oilspill response team at time "X" + 2 hours, followed by discussion about feasibility of such a time frame. Latvian representatives have discussed the MRCC Commetee initiation in for sake of pollution accident. Live discussion followed.
- d) The exercise has headed into direction of practical issues of Oil spill response at sea: timing, capacity of booms, capacity of oil recovery tanks, readiness of Coast Guard asset with the case studies from the past. Leader of OISSPILL project Latvian team Andrejs Zvaizgne has re-directed the discussion and common flow of the exercise into the issues of volunteer response instead of detailing technical issues of initial oilspill response at sea.
- e) Live discussion about volunteers response in Latvia, salient inputs of the participants: Latvian Fire Service ( Uldis Kevers) informed about aspects of deployment of volunteers in forestry (fires), Olga Melnichenko (Association for Environmental management ) has provided data on legal issues of volunteer response in Latvia, Heta Hyvärinen (Finnish red Cross) has provided comprehensive statement about existing Finnish system of volunteer response (along with 4

minutes video) demonstrating also organizational charts and basic documents. Agni Kadma (Estonian Ministry of Environment) put the emphasis on oiled wildlife management (supporting statement by case study video)

- f) Vivid discussion on cross-border cooperation in matter of volunteers' response has followed. In short: NGOs will act only if official request from authorities will follow. There are none standing documents in Baltic region about volunteer response.
- g) Aleksandrs Pavlovics (Transport accident investigation authority) has finalized the exercise with the conclusions as follows:
  - There are none dedicated NGOs ready for OILSPILL response at the coastline and rivers in Latvia;
  - The legal status of volunteers In Latvia (affiliated volunteer, spontaneous volunteer) is not clear, neither volunteers' liability issues are covered by local legislation;
  - If massive oil spill accident will happen in Latvian waters (as per exercise scenario): there are quite limited oil recovery metric-tones capacity.
  - Baltic States NGOs do not cooperate in matters of oilspill response: there is huge room for improvements
  - Latvian NGOs and authorities (besides forestry fires, when Fire Service deploy volunteers) do not cooperate at all.

All participant should take notes on the result of the exercise. Next step to follow: all presented within the exercise organizations agree to foster cooperation in such way, that next exercise could be held in 2020 in Port of Mersrag not as the "tabletop exercise" but "practical exercise" with involvement of initially trained and ready volunteers' groups and teams (as is the OILPILL project's goal)

16 . **OILSPILL Project Director Lauri Ojala** has provided final words about the exercise, stressing the importance of initial contacts among organizations, knowing of each other and expressed the hope to continue the project on dynamic path.

**17 End of the event.**