

Bonn Agreement Action Plan 2013-2016

Introduction

The Greater North Sea and its Approaches are one of the world's busiest international shipping areas. Increasing traffic densities, transportation of hazardous and noxious substances, larger ship sizes, offshore oil and gas activities and other human uses require close international cooperation to prevent and respond to pollution by oil and other harmful substances. Notwithstanding the Bonn Agreement framework for prevention, preparedness and response, accidental and illegal pollution of the marine environment remains a significant threat for the Greater North Sea and its Approaches. Lessons learned from more than 40 years operational, technical and scientific work of the Bonn Agreement show that efficient international cooperation is essential in dealing with such threats.

This Bonn Agreement Action Plan (BAAP) therefore sets out Strategic Aims, Operational Objectives and Actions which aim at strengthening the protection of the coastal and marine environment and ultimately achieving the Bonn Agreement's Vision of "A Greater North Sea and its Approaches free from accidental and illegal pollution from both shipping and other maritime activities".

The first BAAP was agreed by the First Ministerial Meeting of the Bonn Agreement in Dublin, Ireland on 24 November 2010 and this has now been reviewed and updated for the period 2013-2016. It provides a Vision, Strategic Aims and Operational Objectives to guide and focus the work of the Bonn Agreement, as well as specific measurable Actions and targets, that will be jointly implemented and achieved in the period from 2010-2013. The BAAP acknowledges the need to maintain well established systems and to continue work in hand necessary to continue the operational nature of the Agreement. At the same time, opportunities to enhance these efforts and to develop new directions are articulated. A number of key Actions have been identified which will be taken forward as a priority by assigned lead countries.

Vision

The Vision of the Bonn Agreement is of:

A Greater North Sea and its Approaches free from accidental and illegal pollution from shipping, offshore oil and gas operations and other maritime activities

The Greater North Sea and its Approaches support diverse and productive ecosystems which are essential for the daily lives of millions of people. They contain some of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. The vision of the Bonn Agreement is therefore to minimise, as far as practically possible, the threat of pollution from accidental and illegal pollution from both ships and other maritime activities.

To achieve its Vision the Bonn Agreement has agreed the following Strategic Aims:

Strategic Aims

A. Prevention of illegal or accidental pollution by collaboration and collective contribution to enforcement of maritime pollution rules and standards

Despite the wide range of measures taken in recent years, illegal and accidental pollution remains a significant threat for the Greater North Sea and its Approaches. Rules and standards, such as the designation of the North Sea as a Special Area under MARPOL Annex I, will not be effective unless properly enforced. Collaboration in pollution prevention and effective enforcement of international maritime pollution rules and standards are major tools in safeguarding the marine environment.

B. Promotion and establishment of efficient emergency preparedness

International and European obligations are in place to ensure that North Sea States are prepared to respond in the event of pollution incidents or to a threat of pollution, including by global protocols and regional joint responsibility zones. Cooperation between contracting parties, with other regional and international organisations is needed to identify synergies and avoid duplication. Appropriate knowledge, planning, training and operational testing of emergency systems is needed to ensure effective preparedness. The planning of counter pollution measures should take into account the best available environmental advice. Contracting Parties may recommend a minimum level of national response capacity, leaving the decision on the preparedness level to the individual state.

C. Organisation of optimum response capacities

Despite all efforts to increase maritime safety there will always be the risk of incidents. A combination of growing levels of maritime transportation and other human activities, transportation of hazardous and noxious cargos and offshore oil and gas operations are leading to increasing risks for the marine environment. Contracting Parties have already put considerable resources into adequate response capacities. To further improve efficiency, not least in financial terms, the further development of response capacities should be based on risk assessments, gap analysis and regional and sub-regional approaches. Coordinated research and development programmes should be promoted to ensure counter-pollution measures are executed with best available techniques and equipment and that decision making processes are supported with the best available knowledge, methods and supportive tools.

To achieve its Strategic Aims the Bonn Agreement has agreed the following Operational Objectives:

Operational Objectives:

Operational Objectives in relation to Strategic Aim A (prevention):

A.1 To undertake adequate surveillance of shipping and other potential polluting activities in the Greater North Sea and its Approaches and ensure efficient reporting of observations in the Bonn Agreement zones of responsibility;

A.2 To provide authorities and aircrew with up to date information on the planning and conduct of counter-pollution flights, also ad-hoc flight operations, within the Bonn Agreement area;

A.3 To ensure efficient] gathering of evidence in the case of pollution incidents and close cooperation with investigators and prosecutors on enforcement of maritime pollution rules and standards in the Greater North Sea and its Approaches;

A.4 To communicate and disseminate information on risks and prevention of illegal and accidental pollution to the public and expert level.

Operational Objectives in relation to Strategic Aim B (preparedness):

B.1 To support and promote common understanding of the way in which it is appropriate to respond to maritime emergencies and ensure awareness of national contingency systems and strategies, encompassing the various elements of response activities;

B.2 To maintain training of response staff and cooperation between combating units of the Contracting Parties and promote the preparedness for efficient multinational combating operations;

B.3 To ensure that national approaches to response action are consistent and properly coordinated to safeguard the marine environment and that priorities are established on the most appropriate basis;

B.4 To cooperate with neighbouring countries and maritime regions, and with other regional and international organisations, in order to identify synergies and avoid duplication.

B.5 To continue to evolve response capacity based on environmental risk analysis to keep up with the changing maritime risk

Operational Objectives in relation to Strategic Aim C (response):

C.1 To ensure that Contracting Parties have clear understanding of the ways in which the others respond to incidents, in order to promote the development of best practice;

C.2 To maintain and keep up to date common operational approaches to pollution incidents and promote the development of and common understanding of appropriate response strategies;

C.3 To promote, through all appropriate financing, coordinated research and development programmes on detection and response technologies, equipment and other operational means and on decision-making support studies and tools;

C.4 To ensure that balance of resources is maintained for response work in the Greater North Sea and its Approaches, based on regional or existing sub-regional risk-assessments.

Actions

To achieve its Operational Objectives, the Bonn Agreement has agreed the following Actions:

Actions in relation to Strategic Aim A (prevention):

A.1.1 Execute aerial and satellite surveillance operations, including national flights, regional flights, Tour d'Horizon flights and CEPCO/SuperCEPCO flights, to detect, investigate, gather evidence and monitor spillage of oil and other harmful substances;

A.1.2 Consider coverage and efficiency of aerial surveillance and analyse strategically surveillance needs, inter alia based on an evaluation of existing data sets of detections of observed oil pollution and other substances, and develop minimum recommendations on standards for aerial surveillance in the Bonn Agreement area;

A.1.3 Enhance an efficient standard of monitoring and reporting, utilising SafeSeaNet, and use the system to report detected pollution to the Bonn Agreement, as appropriate;

A.1.4 Consider promotion of optimum use of AIS, taking into account existing systems such as SafeSeaNet;

A.1.5 In cooperation with the European Maritime Safety Agency make optimum use of satellite images, e.g. through CleanSeaNet, in order to follow-up to first alert of detection of possible pollution;

A.1.6 Strengthen cooperation on the detection and observation of offences in relation to MARPOL Annexes applicable to the Bonn Agreement and the contribution to enforcement;

A.2.1 Maintain and keep up to date the Aerial Operations Handbook;

A.2.2 Develop an easy-accessible online version of the Bonn Agreement Oil Appearance Code (BAOAC), including photo atlas, for air crew and expert level as part of the Bonn Agreement website redevelopment;

A.3.1 Strengthen cooperation with the North Sea Network of Investigators and Prosecutors (NSN) and jointly:

- a. maintain and keep up to date the North Sea Manual on Maritime Oil Pollution Offences;
- b. consider holding meetings on areas of interest;

A.3.2 Assess how the long-term funding and organisation of the Bonn Agreement Oil Spill Identification Network (OSINET), preferably under the EU umbrella, in order to :

- a. improve knowledge and experience of relevant laboratories, including through inter-calibration exercises; and
- b. keep up to date analytical procedures and reference methods, including for oil sampling at sea and during Port State Control.;

A.3.3 Investigate the possibilities for co-operation with HELCOM relevant groups in back-to-back meetings to find ways for increased efficiency in cooperation between the regional agreements.

A.4.1 Maintain and keep up to date the Bonn Agreement website and dissemination of electronic publications (i.e. manuals, handbooks and reports).

A.4.2 Develop a Bonn Agreement Communication Strategy,

Actions in relation to Strategic Aim B (preparedness):

B.1.1 Maintain and update the different Chapters of the Bonn Agreement Counter Pollution Manual, including integrating the new routines related to the new EU Emergency Response Centre (ERC) and the response capacities of EMSA (i.e. vessels, equipment, etc.);

B.1.2 Promote information exchange on potentially polluting wrecks and the development of national databases;

B.1.3 Strengthen exchange of information on places of refuge; and by 2014 - to develop best practice with a view to establishing cooperative agreements on places of refuge also taking into account international coordination by the EU;

B.1.4 Exchange recent ETV risk assessments with a view to enhanced coverage and opportunities for a better coordination taking into consideration the regional and national perspective and availability of vessels;

B.1.5 Enhance readiness to receive/offer/transit international assistance making use of the EU Host Nation Support Guidelines

B.2.1 Plan and undertake regional and sub-regional operational exercises and training;

B.2.2 Organise a joint operational combat exercise (BONNEX DELTA), at least once during the period of the plan;

B.2.3 Maintain a system for graduated joint exercises to test and train cooperation in combating spillages;

B.3.1 Promote the development of national environmental advice systems and related exchanges of information – develop and identify best-practice for Contracting Parties' environmental advice systems and priorities for responses to incidents giving particular attention to cross-boundary cooperation;

B.4.1 Maintain information exchange with other regional and international organisations, in particular the EMSA, EPPR (Arctic Council), HELCOM, IMO, OSPAR Commission and REMPEC, or other relevant fora such as the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum, through attendance in Inter-Secretariat meetings, reciprocal reporting to the OSPAR Commission and, as appropriate, reciprocal attendance of key meetings

B.4.2 Strengthen cooperation with the OSPAR Commission and other international organisations involved in protecting the marine environment from pollution from shipping, offshore oil and gas operations and other maritime activities, taking into account the obligations under the Marine Strategy Framework and the Water Framework Directives¹;

B.4.3 Explore with Contracting Parties of the Lisbon Agreement how more permanent arrangement can be made for effective cooperation in dealing with issues covered by the Bonn Agreement in the Atlantic coastal waters south of the North Sea Area;

¹ Norway is not a member of the European Union. Norway contributes on the basis of equivalent national legislation and EU legislation by which they are bound as member of the European Economic Area (EEA).

B.4.4 Contribute to strengthening international implementation of the OPRC and its HNS Protocol.

B.5.1 Explore and exchange information on provision of reception facilities for oil or other materials recovered from accidents

B.5.2 Establish a joint vision on the future developments in maritime activities. This vision would look at; *inter alia*, the increasing size of vessels, renewable energy, offshore oil and gas industry, LNG fuels and port expansions.

Actions in relation to Strategic Aim C (response):

C.1.1 Maintain an efficient system for the management of requests for and offers of assistance utilising the Marine Pollution Common Emergency Communication and Information System (CECIS) of the European Commission;

C.1.2 Exchange information on lessons learned on incidents;

C.2.1 Maintain and keep up to date joint response plans to maritime incidents (DENGERNETH Plan, MANCHEPLAN, Quadripartite Zone Plan, NORBRIT Plan, UK and Ireland MOU);

C.2.2 Maintain information exchange on national wildlife response systems and include a Chapter on wildlife response in the Counter Pollution Manual;

C.2.3 Consider joint response plans for areas and activities currently not covered;

C.2.4 Strengthen communication and sharing of information on the joint response plans; and by 2014 – make available on the Bonn Agreement website summaries of the plans in English and French;

C.3.1 Promote research and development and information exchange on response technologies, equipment and other operational means, in particular on integrated surveillance sensors, oil spill drift forecasting and response technology to respond to accidents at night and in bad visibility under bad weather conditions, accidents involving heavy oil and chemical accidents;

C.3.2 Promote research on HNS response taking into account lessons learned from past proposals and the establishment of strategic links with R&D financing instruments;

C.4.1 Promote exchanges of information on national risk assessment systems

C.4.2 by 2015/2016 Finalise a Bonn Agreement area-wide risk assessment, through the implementation of the BE-AWARE II project, taking into account:

- a. environmental and socioeconomic sensitivity and adequate balances of resources at the regional and sub-regional level;
- b. experience, methodologies and results gained from the BE-AWARE I project and the BRISK project in the Baltic Sea; and

Implementation

To deliver the Bonn Agreement Action Plan the Bonn Agreement has agreed to adopt the accepted lead country approach and to incorporate Actions within the annual Programmes of Work. For Actions that fall outside the provisions of the Bonn Agreement general budget detailed costing estimates should be proposed. All possible funding instruments will be explored including special voluntary one-off contributions by individual (or combinations of) Contracting Parties, and funding instruments made available by the European Union.

Review

The Action Plan will be reviewed by the Bonn Agreement in 2015.