

MANUSCRIPT FOR COLONEL SULEIMAN AL BUSAIDY

LEGISLATION AND PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT IN OMAN

Slide 1

Thank you for inviting me to present at your Oil Spill Symposium, 2008, my objective is to share with you how the Ministry of Environment & Climate Affairs has been working tirelessly towards protecting the Marine Environment in the Sultanate of Oman.

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Slide 3

The Government has been continually updating its own legislation to safe guard the protection of its Marine Environment, the most significant royal decree is 114/2001.

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The Sultanate is continually updating its own National Contingency Plan to ensure that it will be an effective and efficient document to work from in the event of an emergency. The Government also insist that all companies who work in the petrol/carbon industry have a contingency plan in place which is inspected by the Government to ensure that it 'dove tails' in with the National Plan.

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Slide 8

Oman itself is undergoing major construction in both tourism and industrial projects across the country to aid its development and assist with boosting its National Economy.

The development of 2 major Ports, at Sohar and Duqm will encourage more shipping into the country and the development of tourist resorts at Ras Sawadi and Yiti, both of which have sites for residential homes available for expatriate and Oman nationals to purchase.

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The Sultanate has been granted a special area status from IMO as from July 2007 due to the abundant wildlife which nests, lives and migrates along its shores as discussed in the previous slide.

However, there is an immediate need to protect the shores of Oman, for example the Green Turtles have long established a nesting Ground at Ras al Hadd, which is situated 30 LM from the tanker lanes. This is just one of the reasons who the Min of Env is continually reviewing legislation to protect the wild life in the area .

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As you can see from the slide shown, traversing tankers on occasion flush their tanks into the open sea's at night whilst in Omans EEZ – this intern causes tar balls to be washed up on Omans beaches.

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The Ministry has monitored the effect this has on the wildlife and environment in general, and established the effect that this pollution is having on its beaches etc.

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Due to Oman's surveylance and strict legislation, it has managed to reduce the pollution from tar balls on Omans beaches. However, in the north of Oman, an area called Musandam is still effected by tar balls on a regular basis due to the tankers further up the gulf in the ROPME sea area flushing their tanks in the open seas and due to the currents, the pollution is washed down to Omans shores.

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Marpol, in an attempt to tackle this problem is planning to introduce new legislations into the area by 2011. All of the Gulf States will be granted special area status as of August

2008 and reception facilities will be established throughout the region by the end of 2009 in accordance of IMO regulations.

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These reception facilities will be able to accommodate all types of waste from vessels and tanker traffic.

A system will be introduced whereby when a vessel officially discharges its waste at a facility, be it ballast water, slops and sludge or general waste, it will be issued an official certificate which the vessel will have to produce at its next port of call.

All vessels operating in the Gulf will be unable to load oil or discharge their cargo within the ROPME sea area ports without producing this official certification, thus making the vessels more responsible and in the long term keeping the seas clean.

Without the official certification proving that the vessel has followed the international legislation it will be unable to operate in the ROPME sea area.

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Following the Prestige incident in Spain, the Oman government took it upon itself to introduce 6 refuge sites within its territorial waters. The decision was taken, due to Oman having such a lengthy coastline, to introduce the sites in less sensitive locations. Therefore in the event of a vessel being in trouble, it can be directed to one of these areas under guidance of the Ministry, to carry out minor repairs or its operations before continuing their voyages. By the Ministry actively assisting vessels in distress, it can almost dictate where operations are carried out and monitor their effects on the surrounding environment.

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The reception facilities will have the following guidelines to uphold to :-

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At present there is a reception facility based in Fujairah. However, it can only deal with sludge and oily water.

IMO insist that the reception facilities to be established in the region will be strategically placed throughout the gulf region in order for the demand from the vessels to be met and thus allowing the special area to be retained.

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In order to protect its natural environment MECA have pre-qualified 2 companies, who in their opinion have the capability to establish and operate an environment action centre in the Sultanate of Oman.

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