

## **PAJ OIL SPILL SYMPOSIUM 2016**

**Tokyo, Japan**

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2016**

Video address: Dr Stefan Micallef

Director, Marine Environment Division, International Maritime Organization

‘20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Implementation of the OPRC Convention’

I am honoured to be able to address you, at least virtually this morning, and for this I would like to extend my gratitude to our host Mr Yoshimura, Managing Director of the Petroleum Association of Japan. Primarily for his kind invitation to IMO to participate in this Symposium, but for also making it possible for me to say a few words to you in this manner. Although I am unable to be with you in person it was important for me to have this opportunity to say a few words and contribute in a small way to this important event recognising the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the implementation of the OPRC Convention. Principally because gathered together amongst you are some of the most ardent supporters and practitioners of the implementation of this important convention. Both you, and the government administrations and organizations you represent have contributed so much to its successes over the past two decades, I am therefore extremely thankful for the opportunity to both express my appreciation for your continued support as well as acknowledge how much we have achieved together in our goal of enhancing preparedness, response and cooperation for maritime pollution incidents globally.

Major incidents have been the starting point for so many of the conventions and regulations adopted through IMO, with the TORREY CANYON, almost 50 years ago, being the driver for many, including the wide-ranging International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, more commonly known as MARPOL, the Intervention Convention and the International Civil Liability and Compensation regimes. However, focus on the roles,

responsibilities and cooperation needs in preparing for and responding to incidents of major pollution, did not get its due consideration until the EXXON VALDEZ incident in Alaska in 1989. Once again maritime states were reminded of the serious threat posed to the marine environment by oil pollution incidents and of the importance of prompt and effective action in order to minimize the damage which may result. And once again, the IMO Member States came together, and adopted the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC) by a diplomatic conference on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1990, which entered into force five years later.

The convention was developed to emphasise the importance of effective preparation and the key role which the oil and shipping industries have in this regard and to recognise the importance of mutual assistance and international co-operation. Matters including the exchange of information, the preparation of oil pollution contingency plans, the exchange of reports of incidents which may affect the marine environment or the coastline of neighbouring States, and research and development, provided a pragmatic foundation for this new instrument. The very practical nature of this convention in setting out the requirements for preparedness and cooperation to facilitate a good response is acknowledged by many and is demonstrated by its widespread ratification.

In the 25 years since its adoption, the IMO Secretariat and a number of partner organizations, have organised well over 100 workshops, training courses and seminars, not to mention, the thousands undertaken independently by 108 member states, now parties to the Convention and other organisations. Over 25 guidance documents and manuals dealing with all areas of response and preparedness have been approved and published by IMO, 15 regional agreements and initiatives working toward facilitating cooperation and coordination in the field of spill preparedness and response, have been supported/established. And 3 model courses developed, one focussing on dealing with oil spill incidents, another on training people to teach this topic to others, in addition to a training course on response to incidents involving hazardous and noxious substances. Again,

not to mention the huge advancements made by individual member states to implement this convention to its fullest extent.

For a prime example of effective and responsible implementation of this Convention, we need look no further than Japan. Both industry and government, mindful of the risks posed by the high volume of maritime trade they engage in, have addressed their responsibility both national, regionally and beyond, through their contingency planning work in country and their participation in the NOWPAP – Northwest Pacific Action Plan in relation its work in marine environmental emergency preparedness and response. I should also mention the Japanese Coastguard, whose Strike teams have provided their expertise and resources at times of need in country and the wider region, and last but not least the ‘Major Oil Spill Response Programme’ implemented by PAJ for over 25 years now. Its stockpile and lending arrangements of oil spill response equipment, its research and development activities and sharing of information and expertise through its regular workshops and symposia have been hailed as landmarks of successful implementation of the OPRC Convention. This is by no means an exhaustive summary of the work undertaken in country in relation to the implementation of OPRC, but it nonetheless draws an impressive picture of the commitment and importance with which the challenge of enhancing spill preparedness, response and cooperation is undertaken.

I would also like to highlight the contribution of the oil industry associations such as IPIECA and ARPEL, amongst others. Their members have invested much precious time and effort in supporting research and development into various aspects of spill preparedness and response, developing best practices, and useful tools and guidance which they openly share, and which I think you learned more about earlier during the key note speech, summarising the work of the recent oil spill response joint industry project. They also play an important role in capacity building, most notably through our joint global initiative programme aimed at enhancing spill preparedness and response in developing countries. A programme also strongly supported by ITOPF, who have continually supported IMO in many of its capacity building initiatives and workshops and who openly and generously share their vast expertise and experience in this field. The global response network and response organisations including AMOSC and specifically OSRL have also made substantial contributions both

through their industry associations and individually in the development of guidance, operational tools and training. The response equipment manufacturers, environmental consultancies and individuals have also played and continue to play a crucial role in our collective efforts.

IMO is very fortunate to be amongst such strong and committed company in its work to support the implementation of OPRC globally, but despite all these notable achievements, there is still much to do, and many challenges to face. There are countries in the world without spill contingency plans, without equipment, expertise or resources to effectively respond to an incident threatening or polluting their shores. At the same time, amongst most government administrations and throughout many parts of the oil and shipping industries, resources and budgets are being squeezed, and there are ever increasing demands to do more with less. Thankfully the high profile, large scale incidents so prevalent in the 70's and 80's have significantly decreased in number, but this also creates a challenge to keep spill preparedness and response high on the agenda of both industry and government, and to maintain readiness and capacity to respond when the time comes, and when focus and priorities may be forced elsewhere. The answer may mean a greater focus on cooperation and collaboration, sharing expertise and experience and pooling resources; the main theme of this symposium 'Maintaining future effective preparedness against oil spills' could not be more timely. Whatever the answer, or the outcome of your deliberations, it is nevertheless incumbent on all of us, government, industries, users and beneficiaries of maritime transport to maintain an enviable record of being the most energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly means of transport and to continually strive to improve this reputation, through universal implementation of IMO conventions including OPRC, so that when things do go wrong we are best placed to react effectively.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of the Protocol on Preparedness, Response and Cooperation to Pollution Incidents by Hazardous and Noxious Substances, which in exactly the same way as the Convention, addresses the roles, responsibilities and cooperation needs in relation to spills of hazardous substances other

than oil. There is much work to do to assist the implementation of this protocol which in many ways, given the vast and diverse nature of the substances covered by it, can appear quite a daunting prospect for many government administrations. Again, there is an important role that the industries and organisations represented here today can play, with your in-house expertise in the health and safety aspects of producing, handling or transporting all manner of substances other than oil, including petrochemicals and gas. In addition to your research into its fate and behaviour under different environmental conditions, and effective monitoring instruments, not to mention your association and relationships with the broader chemical industry. I hope that we might emulate our successful collaboration under the OPRC Convention, to support our future work on this important Protocol.

On that note, and with great regret that I could not be with you in person, I will sign off. May I once again thank the Petroleum Association of Japan, and Mr Yoshimura, for hosting this valuable forum of information exchange, and I wholeheartedly wish you the very best for the remainder of the Symposium and an enjoyable stay in Tokyo.