



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DRILLING CONTRACTORS

MEMORANDUM

TO: Distribution

FROM: Alan Spackman, Vice President, Offshore Technical and Regulatory Affairs

SUBJECT: Report on the 11th Session of the IMO's OPRC-HNS Technical Group

DATE: 29 October 2010

The 11th session of the IMO's Technical Group under the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC-HNS TG 10) was held from 20 to 24 September 2010, under the Chairmanship of Mr. N. Quinn (New Zealand). It was attended by delegations from 22 Member nations, three intergovernmental organizations, two regional pollution response organizations and seven non-governmental organizations. The International Association of Drilling Contractors was not represented.

Issues addressed during the session that may be of interest to offshore drilling contractors included:

Oil Spill Waste Management Decision Support Tool

The Group agreed on the finalized Draft Oil Spill Waste Management Decision Support Tool, prepared by the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC). It was referred to the 62nd session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 62, July 2011) for approval.

Guidance on the safe operation and performance standards of oil pollution combating equipment

On the basis of a submission from the Islamic Republic of Iran, MEPC 60 added this item to the TG's work program. In support of this effort, Iran submitted a document covering a broad range of topics, including elements of occupational health and safety, equipment standards and minimum equipment requirements. The Group recognized that it would be difficult to reconcile these into a single guidance document.

The Group noted that a variety of national, international and industry standards and guidelines existed that would address some aspects of the topic. The Group also noted the concern expressed by some delegations that anything developed by the Technical Group may conflict with other existing standards.

The delegation of the Iran clarified that the intention of its proposal was to focus on the standardization of equipment and the identification of minimum requirements for the safe operation of oil spill response equipment.

The Group agreed that there was still a lack of a common understanding and agreement on the areas that should be covered by the proposed guidance and that further discussion was needed on the matter. The Group therefore invited Iran to provide further information and to submit an enhanced document to the next session to give examples of the hazards and minimum standards needed for equipment. The Group also asked participants to submit information on existing national and industry guidelines and regulations on the safety aspects of equipment, focusing on equipment standardization and minimum requirements for the safe operation of oil spill response equipment, and any suggestions for establishing standards similar to those that existed for personal protective equipment.

Guidance for oil spill response in fast currents

Having considered the draft prepared by the United States, the Group instructed the Secretariat to submit the draft Guideline for oil spill response in fast currents to MEPC 62 for approval.

Guidance on sensitivity mapping for oil spill response

The Group considered the draft Guidance on sensitivity mapping for oil spill response submitted by IPIECA and instructed the Secretariat and IPIECA to carry out any final editing and to submit the document to MEPC 62 for approval, with a view to publishing it as part of the IMO/IPIECA Report Series.

Technical guidelines on sunken oil assessment and removal techniques

The Group considered an initial draft guideline prepared by the United Kingdom that addressed sunken oil on the sea floor as well as oil found within sunken wrecks. The Group agreed that there was a need to develop such a guideline and that the topics of sunken oil on the sea floor and oil within sunken wrecks should be addressed separately, with the immediate guideline being confined to oil on the sea floor.

The Group concurred that this should be developed as an operational guideline, providing practical guidance for assessing and responding to incidents involving sunken oil. In terms of content, the Group agreed that it would also include references to other sources of information and a series of case studies. The Group re-established the Correspondence Group under the leadership of the United Kingdom to further develop the Guideline and submit a revised draft for consideration at TG 12.

Updating of IMO dispersant guidelines

Having reviewed information and lessons learned from both the Montara wellhead incident in the Timor Sea in 2009 and the Deepwater Horizon incident in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, as well as the efforts of a number of Member States, regional arrangements and industry organizations in updating their dispersant policies and guidelines, the Group agreed that work should be initiated on the Guideline. A Correspondence Group was established under the leadership of France to prepare a revised draft of the IMO dispersant guidelines for consideration at TG 12 and identify what changes may be required, if any, in the IMO Field Guide for oil spill response in tropical waters, as well as the IMO/FAO guidance on managing seafood safety during and after oil spills.

Oil spill response in Arctic and cold climate conditions

The Group noted that there had been a delay in the production of the IPIECA/API document on Oil Spill Response in Arctic and Cold Climate Conditions due to diversion of resources in connection with the Gulf of Mexico incident. IPIECA indicated that it expected to have the document completed by the end of 2010.

The Group invited IPIECA to submit the final version for consideration at TG 12.

Guideline for oil spill response – offshore in situ burning

The Group considered a proposal from the United States for the development of a guideline for offshore in situ burning, noting the recent experience gained through the successful use of in situ burning as a response method during the Deepwater Horizon incident in the Gulf of Mexico, concurred that this work should be carried forward as a priority.

The Group established a Correspondence Group under the leadership of the United States and asked that it submit a draft of the manual to TG 12 for review and comment.

Development of a method for undertaking environmental risk and response benefit assessments

The Group considered information from New Zealand describing a new method for facilitating and documenting environmental risk and response benefit assessment during a spill response and during pre-spill planning. The Group noted its usefulness and that it complemented the Manual on oil spill risk evaluation and assessment of response preparedness and considered that the proposed method would be a useful product to develop as an international tool.

The Group noted that the document was currently used for risk assessment to address floating oil, but that it was not used for dispersed oil. The Group also recommended that the section on the selection of stakeholders could be updated based on lessons learned from other recent spills.

The Group agreed to propose to the MEPC that the development of an international tool to be added to its work program.

The complete report of the Group is available on the IMO portion of the IADC Website at: <http://www.iadc.org/committees/offshore/IMO.html>. IMO-issued documents are password protected. IADC members should contact me to obtain the password.

Please feel free to contact me by phone (+1 713 292 1964) or e-mail (alan.spackman@iadc.org) with any questions you may have regarding this report.