

30 May 2013

**Input of the European Union and its Member States to the
Questionnaire on issues relating to the environmental effects related to waste originating from
chemical munitions dumped at sea.**

[in reply to Secretariat request DSD/2013/181]

Situation:

1.) *Is there an environmental risk for your country/region to be affected by waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea (WOCMDS)? Is so, what are the environmental challenges and effects posed by WOCMDS?*

Some information is available on risks posed by WOCMDS in various Seas bordered by EU countries and the issue has been identified as a problem so far especially in the Baltic Sea and in the North-East Atlantic.

More information on environmental challenges is available, for example through the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki Commission, HELCOM), based on the legally binding Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area (the Helsinki Convention). HELCOM has established an ad hoc expert group on dumped chemical munitions in 2010 that has elaborated a report on "*Update and Review the Existing Information on Dumped Chemical Munitions in the Baltic Sea*"¹. HELCOM is planning to publish this report in 2013.

In addition, the OSPAR Commission (OSPAR), based in the legally binding Convention for the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic, has been studying the issue of dumped chemical and conventional munitions since 2000. OSPAR published an 'Overview of Past Dumping at Sea of Chemical Weapons and Munitions in the OSPAR Maritime Area' in 2002 that was subsequently updated in 2005 and 2010². Details of the locations, types and quantities of materials dumped have been recorded in a database that is on the OSPAR website. In 2003 OSPAR agreed Recommendation 2003/2 on an 'OSPAR Framework for Reporting Encounters with Marine Dumped Conventional and Chemical Munitions in the OSPAR Convention area' that was subsequently replaced by updated Recommendation 2010/20³. The recommendation required the reporting of encounters with marine dumped chemical weapons and munitions that are recorded in the database referred to earlier⁴. In 2004 OSPAR published an updated review of 'Convention-wide Practices and Procedures in relation to marine dumped chemical weapons and munitions'⁵ including 'Guidelines for

¹ http://www.helcom.fi/environment2/hazsubs/en_GB/chemu/?u4.highlight=chemu

² http://www.ospar.org/v_publications/download.asp?v1=p00519

³ http://www.ospar.org/v_measures/get_page.asp?v0=10-20e_munitions.pdf&v1=4

⁴ http://www.ospar.org/v_publications/download.asp?v1=p00186 and

⁵ http://www.ospar.org/v_publications/download.asp?v1=p00185

Fishermen and Other Users of the Sea and its Coastline'. In 2008 OSPAR published a report on "The Assessment of the Impact of Dumped Conventional and Chemical Munitions"⁶. Finally, in 2009 OSPAR published the report "Implementation of OSPAR Recommendation 2003/2 Database on Encounters with Dumped Conventional and Chemical Munitions"⁷

2.) *Does the scientific community in your country/region examine the environmental effects related to WOCMDS? If so, what are the findings of such scientific researches?*

In 2005, the European Commission financed research on the issue through the Sixth Framework Programme project: Modelling of Ecological Risks Related to Sea-dumped Chemical Weapons (MERCW)⁸. The Baltic Sea research project 'CHEMSEA – Chemical Munitions, Search and Assessment', has also been partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund⁹.

Response to incidents:

3.) *Does your country/region have the experience in responding to incidents related to WOCMDS?*

Some experience is in the Baltic Sea (see footnote 1) and in the OSPAR region (see footnotes 2-7).

4.) *Does your country/region have the capacity to respond to incidents related to WOCMDS?*

Any country affected by an incident related to WOCMDS can address a request for assistance to the Emergency Response Centre (ERC) in the European Commission. ERC is a 24/7 operational hub of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism which facilitates co-operation in civil protection assistance interventions by pooling resources and expertise of the 32 participating states¹⁰.

5.) *Has your government/organization developed an action plan or built capacities to respond to incidents related to WOCMDS? If not, does your government/organization intend to do so in the future?*

The project CHEMSEA will update the existing guidelines and develop them further in order to reduce potential threats to the environment and fishermen. OSPAR prepared the 2009 report as a framework for the development of national guidelines on what to do when munitions are encountered to reduce risk to fishermen and coastal users¹¹.

Raising awareness and other actions:

6.) *Does your government/organization provide information on WOCMDS to civil society and industry? Does your government raise awareness on WOCMDS and how?*

HELCOM does.

⁶ http://www.ospar.org/v_publications/download.asp?v1=p00365

⁷ http://www.ospar.org/v_publications/download.asp?v1=p00439

⁸ <http://mercw.org/>

⁹ <http://www.chemsea.eu/>

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/policies/disaster_response/mechanism_en.htm

¹¹ http://qsr2010.ospar.org/en/ch09_09.html

7.) *Are there any partnerships between government, industry and civil society in your country/region on raising awareness, reporting and monitoring of WOCMDS?*

Please refer to the various projects mentioned above.

Cooperation:

8.) *Does your government cooperate with other States, regional and/or international organizations to assess or increase awareness of WOCMDS?*

The EU cooperates with other states in the framework of different regional sea conventions, such as the Helsinki Convention and the OSPAR Convention.

9.) *What would be, in your view, possible modalities for international cooperation to assess and increase awareness of WOCMDS?*

We see a particular need to build on the existing work of the Regional Seas Conventions. In addition, consideration could be given to creating a database of sea-dumped-chemical-munitions related and voluntary shared information (e.g., dumping sites, recorded environmental impact, best practices of reaction after accidental encounter, available technologies for destruction, etc.), paying specific attention to using and building upon, rather than duplicating, existing and ongoing work on the issue in the relevant Regional Seas Conventions. The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) could be involved in this process.