

FIRST VISIT OF DG TREN DIRECTOR-GENERAL MATTHIAS RUETE TO EMSA

On 25th February, the new European Commission Director-General for Transport and Energy, Mr Matthias Ruete, visited EMSA for an exchange of views with Executive Director Willem de Rooter and the management team. He also became better acquainted with the main tasks of the Agency, and gave an update on the discussion regarding Agencies within the Commission, and on the ideas behind the mid-term review of the general White Paper on transport. Continued close cooperation between the Commission and the Agency was emphasized during the discussions.

CLASSIFICATION SOCIETIES: EMSA TEAMS IN CHINA

The EMSA classification society assessment programme, in relation to directive 94/57, has entered into its second cycle of assessments, and this will put more emphasis on regional offices, plan approval and site offices, including visits to ships. In January, EMSA teams carried out assessments of a number of classification societies in China, and further assessments are planned in the country during spring 2006. With respect to the pilot project on visits to ships, a meeting with all EU Member States is planned for March 2006, at which time an evaluation of the project will be carried out with a view to further expand on these types of visits.

SHIP SOURCED CHEMICAL POLLUTION AT SEA: NEED TO IMPROVE PREPAREDNESS

EMSA is preparing itself to assist the Commission and Member States in tackling pollution preparedness and response problems relating to hazardous and noxious substances (HNS). Within the scope of this task, on 22-23rd February, the Agency held a workshop entitled "Ship Sourced Chemical Pollution at Sea: Preparedness and Response in Europe" in Brussels. The purpose of the workshop was: to discuss recent chemical accidents at sea and ongoing studies on the hazards of marine chemical transport; to evaluate preparedness in Europe and: to conclude on the necessary actions. The workshop was attended by

experts on response to chemical pollution at sea from Member State (MS) administrations, marine pollution response services and from the chemical industry. Extended discussions during the workshop led to the main conclusion that there is an urgent need to improve MS level of preparedness, and that a complementary action at European level by EMSA would be desirable.

HNS AND BUNKERS CONVENTIONS UNDER THE EMSA MAGNIFYING GLASS

On 21st February, EMSA organised a workshop with all Member States on the ratification and implementation of the HNS and bunkers conventions. Both conventions establish rules for civil liability for damage caused respectively by HNS substances and bunker oils. However, neither has yet entered into force, due to an insufficient number of ratifications. The objective of the workshop was to contribute to accelerating the ratification process in MS. Various experts gave presentations on specific elements of the conventions (including Mr Jacobsson, IOPC Funds Director) and described the approaches used to ensure the proper and harmonised implementation of the conventions. Attendees agreed that EMSA should continue to play a role in disseminating best practices. It was concluded that several MS expect to complete ratification in 2006. Others will follow in 2007.

WORK PROGRAMME 2006 PUBLISHED

This year, the EMSA work programme runs to 44 pages. In addition to the listing of 2006 operational and administrative tasks, it contains the current organisation chart, the 2006 budget and the indicative establishment plan. A hard copy version was initially distributed to 600 stakeholders and the document is available at: www.emsa.eu.int

LECTURE BY SIR ROBERT COLEMAN

Sir Robert Coleman, who was Director General for Transport at the European Commission during the 1990s, visited EMSA on 20th February. The main purpose of his visit was to give a lecture to EMSA staff on EU legislation, the EU decision making process and the background to the common transport policy. This lecture forms part of EMSA's wider staff training programme and was highly appreciated by the participants. A second course for new staff is planned in the autumn.

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