LATEST POLLUTION RESPONSE VESSEL

Emilio Perez Touriño, President of Xunta de Galicia (right), hosting the contract handover ceremony with the Mayor of Vigo Abel Caballero (standing) and Jesus Paz, President of the Vigo Port Authority (second from left).

On 4th December, Mr Perez Touriño, President of Xunta de Galicia, hosted EMSA Executive Director Willem de Ruiter, and Bernd Bluhm, Head of the pollution preparedness and response Unit, in Vigo, north-western Spain, for the contract handover of the Agency's latest contracted stand-by oil spill response vessel. The *Ria de Vigo* is based in Vigo and will cover the Atlantic coast from Porto (Portugal) to Brest (France). It will enter operational service in the first half of 2009, and while on stand-by, it will carry out its normal fishery control activities for the Galician regional government.

ASSESSING MARITIME EDUCATION

In 2008, the work on inspecting the maritime education, training (MET) and certification of seafarers involved inspecting the systems of both EU and non-EU countries, after inspections of EU Member States began in 2007. The EU work programme included visits to Portugal, Poland, Sweden, Greece and the Netherlands, while the non-EU systems inspected were those of Bangladesh, Singapore and Malaysia. In total, 8 national administrations and 24 MET institutions were inspected during the year.

2008 WAS AN INTERESTING YEAR

The Agency had another interesting year in 2008. This is a brief synopsis of some of the highlights:

January: On the basis of the October 2007 Council resolution, EMSA started to develop the EU LRIT (Long Range Identification and Tracking) Data Centre. The first step was the set up of an internal task force to define the system architecture, and the development of the data centre is now well underway. Also in January, the required 5 year evaluation of the

Agency was finalised. The report found that good progress had been made, and that EMSA has added value to the sector in general, and in particular to its main stakeholders (the Member States and the EU Commission).

February: French Prime Minister François Fillon visited the Agency.

March: A new procurement procedure was launched for the strengthening of the oil pollution recovery vessels network.

April: The first "in-house port state control seminar was organised, with the objective of further improving and harmonising the professional competency of PSC Officers.

May: The LRIT expert group met to finalise the technical specifications for the LRIT system. This will handle 9,000 ships, reporting their positions world wide four times a day.

June: Given the continued growth of the Agency, both in terms of tasks and staff, EMSA was re-organised. Three departments (each with three units) were created to handle also future growth and tasks more efficiently.

July/August: The EU LRIT Data Centre tenders were launched.

September: Antonio Tajani, the Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for transport policy, visited EMSA. 3 oil pollution recovery vessels entered operational service in the Mediterranean area.

October: The EMSA contracted vessel *Bahia Tres* was rapidly mobilised to deal with the oil spills following *Fedra/Tawe* accidents in and around Algeciras Bay, following a request from Spain.

November: The Board elected Jørgen Hammer Hansen as Chairman and Serghios Serghiou as Deputy-Chairman. The Agency also signed contracts for the development of the EU LRIT Data Centre.

December: The contracting of the *Ria de Vigo* (see first item) completed the oil pollution response vessel network.

54 POSTS PUBLISHED IN 2008

EMSA continues its growth and has had some 54 posts published on its homepage and in other relevant media in 2008.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2009 TO ALL

- Current EMSA open calls to tender can be seen at: Tenders
- Current EMSA vacancies can be seen at: Recruitment

In order to subscribe to this newsletter, please contact louis.baumard@emsa.europa.eu or andrew.stimpson@emsa.europa.eu