

ELEVENTH ORDINARY MEETING OF THE
RAC/REMPEITC-Caribe STEERING COMMITTEE
Agenda Item 9

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**HNS Management in Mexico and the Region:
A Necessary Prioritization**

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SUMMARY

Executive Summary: This document outlines an overview of the situation in Mexico and the Central American Region with regard to the management of HNS incidents in port areas and at sea.

Action to be Taken: Paragraph 2.2

1. General:

1.1. As an IMO external advisor (<https://www.mtcconsult.org/>) and current ISCO Representative in Spanish-speaking Latin America (<https://spillcontrol.org/latin-america-spanish-language/>) we have been working for several years with maritime and port authorities in different countries on the issue of HNS incident management in port and maritime areas. Within this framework, there are case studies, lessons learned and some specific advances in certain countries and regional administrations. However, there are many gaps in the management of the issue and it is not a priority for the responsible regional bodies and is left to the free will of each authority, which also entails the risk of lack of continuity in the specific efforts that one or another administration may make. HNS incidents in the region are repeated every year and have serious consequences for the safety of people and human life.

1.2. The following is the content of the presentation:

- **Introduction** - *Regional situation with HNS incidents in ports and at sea*
- *IMO (IOPC Funds) push with the HNS Convention and its 2010 Protocol*
- **Issues** - *Defining HNS: an increasingly complicated issue for the Region*
- *A new arrival: Mexico's National Contingency Plan – December 2023*

**REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTRE / REGIONAL MARINE POLLUTION EMERGENCY,
INFORMATION AND TRAINING CENTRE - WIDER CARIBBEAN REGION**

- *A Regional Case Study: Petcoke spill in Port Cortes*
- **Next Steps** - Support with the Adaptation NCPs & IMO Response: Update IMO-OPRC Courses and Exercises for HNS Incident Response at Sea and Ports
- **Final Recommendations** for the Region

1.3. Concrete signals are needed from IMO (RAC/Rempeitc Caribe) in Mexico and Central America to prioritise the issue of HNS incident management in port and maritime areas. So far, the issue is marginal for the Maritime Authorities and for the regional bodies involved, which are only concerned in the management of oil spill incidents.

2. Action:

2.1. First of all, authorities (national and regional) need to be made aware of the difficulties involved in handling this type of incident and its implications in terms of resources and expertise required, time and money. To this end, the adaptation of current Contingency Plans is urgent, and the model of Mexico's latest National Contingency Plan (December 2023), which is presented in this presentation, is of interest. With gaps in certain areas, it nevertheless has the virtue of being adapted to the definitions of the 2010 Protocol of the HNS Convention and requires the analysis of specific risks with HNS, which is absent in all other plans. Secondly, an urgent adaptation of the OMI Model Course 4.05 - OPRC-HNS - Introductory Course on the Response to HNS in the Marine Environment (2011 Edition) is required. It must go beyond the basic theoretical aspects and contemplate specific Case Studies for different types of HNS, specific prevention and response aspects according to differentiated behaviours, etc. Finally, a concrete and immediate action is recommended and it is the translation into Spanish of the Operational Guide on the Response to Spills (MEPC 80), approved by IMO in 2023. Apart from the above, we want to highlight the existence of the HELCOM- REMPEC Marine HNS Response Manual (<https://helcom.fi/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Marine-HNS-Response-Manual-interactive.pdf>), which we understand is the best openly available field guide on the management of HNS incidents at sea.

2.2. Proposal for consideration. According to what was previously described, ISCO is in a position to support IMO (RAC/REMPEITC) with its specialists in the indicated recommendations, for which we remain available.