

EU LRIT TASK FORCE SET UP

On 1 December 2007, the Agency internally set up a European Union LRIT Task Force, prior to an additional budget and staff being made available by the Budgetary Authorities in 2008. The task force has begun work on defining the system architecture. During January, it prepared the EU LRIT Data Centre Implementation Plan, which outlines actions for the different parties involved (IMO/IMSO, EU Member States, European Commission, EMSA), and these will be discussed with experts from the European Commission and Member States in the coming weeks.

NEW SAFESEANET VERSION DEPLOYED

EMSA has just successfully deployed a new version of SafeSeaNet (SSN v1.9). Version 1.9 is a major improvement, and is the outcome of a long process that began in early 2005. Major system weaknesses were detected during an external assessment carried out at the time, and specific improvements were identified to stabilise and correct the SSN application. The new version was developed using industry proven technologies which comply with the most recent standards, and SSN V1.9 is expected to significantly improve the system performance, scalability, robustness and software maintainability. The new version creates a faster system which is able to deal with the expected rise in the number of messages, and which is able to facilitate SSN evolution in terms of upgrading and integration with other systems.

EMSA ASSISTS WITH KOREAN SPILL



Around 200,000 volunteers took part in the clean-up

The collision between a crane barge and the tanker *Hebei Spirit* off South Korea on 7th December resulted in approximately 11,500 m³ of crude oil being spilled from the tanker, seriously contaminating up to 320 km of coastline. Following a request for assistance from the South Korean authorities, Mr Bernd Bluhm, Head of the EMSA Pollution Response Unit, joined a UN Joint Rapid Assessment

Team (JRAT) which was sent to the region. He carried out an in-depth assessment of the at-sea response operations (observing by air, land and sea), and provided recommendations for an appropriate way forward. The JRAT provided the primary input to a UN report which was subsequently passed to the Koreans. The team was particularly impressed with the large number of volunteers involved in the clean-up (more than 200,000), as well as with the professional assistance and support provided to them.

EMSA WORKS ON SHIP SCRAPPING

EMSA participated at the National IMO Workshop on the Draft Convention on Ship Recycling in Mumbai, India, from 7-11 January. The workshop was combined with a visit to the ship breaking yards on the beaches at Alang. The number of yards where demolition work was underway was limited, due to a recent order from the Indian Supreme Court which requires certain environmental and safety precautions to be provided prior to recycling. The breaking industry and Gujarat Maritime Board exhibited the willingness to actively improve the conditions for ship dismantling, and were happy to have relatively open and transparent discussions on the subject. EMSA presented various options for the certification and third party verification of ship recycling facilities in order to promote compliance with the future convention. This is in line with a study that the Agency has recently launched on this topic.

5 YEAR EVALUATION FINALISED

The required five year evaluation of EMSA was finalised this month and EMSA Executive Director, Willem de Ruiter, took the opportunity to publicise the results to the staff at a meeting on 19th January. He said that the Agency has built up a solid relationship with EU Member States, the EU Institutions and the shipping industry, and that the evaluation showed EMSA to be in a good position on most points. He also said that he anticipated that 2008 will be "an interesting year," as the Agency will have to manage significant growth in its activities at the same time as it moves to its permanent headquarters building in the city centre of Lisbon. The total number of staff working at the Agency is expected to approach 200 by the end of the year.

In order to subscribe to this newsletter, please contact Louis Baumard or Andrew Stimpson:
louis.baumard@emsa.europa.eu
andrew.stimpson@emsa.europa.eu