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Progress report

EPPR Working Group Report to SAOs, October 2016 in Portland

September, 2016

Introduction

EPPR held its first meeting of 2016 in Montreal, Canada. 48 participants attended representing all Arctic States, three observer states (Italy, Singapore and South Korea), one observer organizations (WWF), 1 Working Groups (PAME), and 1 invited guest from the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators.

The meeting focused on follow-up activities from the last EPPR meeting in Reykjavik. Project updates and project proposals were discussed. On June 13, the second functional table top exercise of the MOSPA Agreement was held, with participation from all Arctic States and four Observers. On June 14, two breakout sessions were held, the first, an EPPR-IOGP workshop on the development of international standards and application for the prevention of oil spills from offshore oil in the Arctic, and the second, a meeting of the recently established EPPR SAR Expert Group. EPPR Heads of Delegation also met in advance of the plenary sessions on June 15-16. The relevant sections of the AmaroK (the AC Tracker) were updated after the meeting.

Agreement on Cooperation on Marine Oil Pollution Preparedness and Response (MOSPA Agreement)

On June 13, 2016, under the leadership of the United States, the 2nd functional table top exercise (TTX) of the MOSPA Agreement took place. The TTX was considered a success, and EPPR has approved the After Action Report (AAR) which highlights observations, recommendations and best practices. The AAR will provide the background for the next exercise planning cycle. EPPR HoD are in the process of establishing the 2017-2019 Exercise Design Team that will lead and prepare the next TTX under the Finnish Chairmanship. It was further decided to establish a Marine Environmental Response (MER) Experts Group to address AAR recommendations and further MER initiatives.

EPPR – SAR Mandate: Approach and Way Forward

On June 14, 2016, the second meeting of the EPPR SAR Expert Group (SAR EG) took place. The meeting was chaired by Norway and attended by the Arctic States and three Observers. It was agreed that a small group, led by Norway, would meet intersessionally to reaffirm the decisions from Svalbard (May 2015) and define the mandate for the SAR EG. The outcome of these discussions will be shared with EPPR HoD for approval before EPPR II. The EPPR Chair, with input from the U.S., Kingdom of Denmark, and Norway, responded to the follow-up memo to EPPR from the Arctic Zephyr coordinators. The TFTA requested input from the SAR EG to author a short (2 page) chapter for the final report to Ministers. Text was submitted to the TF Chairs in advance of the meeting in Copenhagen in September. Countries were asked to update the SAR EG contact list to ensure that intersessional work can take place.

Follow-up on the Framework Plan on Oil Pollution Prevention (FP-OPP)

At the SAO meeting in Anchorage (October 2015), it was agreed that EPPR has the lead on prevention, with PAME as co-lead. Norway and Canada have drafted a report and implementation matrix to identify follow-up activities that support objectives in the Framework Plan. Follow-up activities are already taking place and the report has been circulated to AC working groups and relevant stakeholders to capture details of this work. This information can also be used to identify gaps in follow-up and encourage development of initiatives in these areas. The report/matrix, and a two page fact sheet, will be put forward as an EPPR deliverable for the 2017 Ministerial meeting.

Cross-Cutting activities

- EPPR welcomed the participation of PAME representatives at its meeting in Montreal, finding it useful for sharing information and identify areas where closer coordination would be mutually beneficial.
- EPPR has participated in the meeting of the three standing Task Forces (TFSC, TFAMC and TFTA) and agreed that representation at future meetings would be beneficial. Follow-up information was provided to the TFTA and TFAMC.

Current projects

ARCSAFE: The goal of this project is to promote cross-border prevention, preparedness and handling of maritime incidents or accidents which may involve a potential release of radioactive substances. EPPR agreed to have a deep dive on ARCSAFE at EPPR I, 2017 with a potential focus on a response scenario to an accident involving a radiological release on a ship.

Field Guide for Oil Spill Response in Arctic Waters: EPPR approved the draft table of contents for the updated version of the guide. The project is on track and if completed on time (January 2017), will be submitted as an EPPR deliverable for the 2017 Ministerial meeting. The updated Field Guide will include the addition of new sections on “Health and Human Safety in the Arctic”, “Wildlife Response in the Arctic”, and “Logistics and Response Strategies in the Arctic”. Improvements will include, (1) updated information in a useful tactics-focused document, (2) complement the recent strategy-focused 2015 EPPR “Guide to Oil Spill Response in Snow and Ice Conditions in the Arctic”, (3) restructure some sections to reduce the size of the document and provide a logical flow to the material, and (4) improve the “friendliness” of the document by adding a “User Guide” at the beginning as part of the Preface or Introduction.

International Standards for Petroleum, Offshore-Oil and Maritime Industries: The aim of the project is to give a brief introduction to how standards for the offshore and maritime petroleum industry are developed, maintained and followed up. The report, “Standardization as a tool for prevention of oil spills in the Arctic” is being finalized and will be circulated to EPPR for intersessional approval. A summary report will be developed and submitted as an EPPR deliverable for the 2017 Ministerial Meeting. This project has linkages to implementation of the Framework Plan on Oil Pollution Prevention.

Prevention, Preparedness and Response for Small Communities: The project team (Norway, U.S., Canada and AIA) have further developed the scope of work based on the results of the workshop held in October 2015. The implementation strategy engages communities in a self-assessment of their preparedness for oil spill response, as well as risk and impact. The outcomes from the project will be: (1) greater awareness of risk and preparedness at a local level, and access to best practices, (2) the ability for national governments to address misperception or lack of awareness, and (3) the identification of gaps in preparedness relative to risk.

Development of a Database of Arctic Response Assets: This project will create a stand-alone, searchable database of major response assets in the Arctic. The database will be linked into Arctic ERMA, displaying both government and industry owned equipment. The project is on track, and will be completed by the end of the year. The database and user manual will be an EPPR deliverable for the 2017 Ministerial meeting.

Conditions on Oil Spill Circumpolar Response Viability Analysis: The goal of the project is to estimate how often different types of response systems can be effectively deployed in different areas of the Arctic based on historical metocean conditions. It was agreed that a quantitative assessment approach would be utilized, presenting outputs as a percentage of time favorable, marginal and not favorable for the selected response techniques. The report will be finalized in October 2016 and will be submitted as an EPPR deliverable for the 2017 Ministerial meeting.

Safety Systems in the Implementation of Economic and Infrastructural projects: The goal of the project is the improvement of industrial and environmental safety related to economic and infrastructure projects, primarily the development of hydrocarbons on the Arctic continental shelf and hydrocarbons transportation. In support of these projects, SAR and Oil Spill Response exercises are undertaken annually. “Arctic 2016” was held April 12-18, 2016, and highlighted the practical issues of conducting SAR operation in the Arctic in winter conditions.

Arctic Rescue: The focus of this Russian-led project is to elaborate best practices, recommendations and key elements of the emergency risk assessment system and the system for improving safety of potentially hazardous facilities. On April 6-8, 2016, the conference “Challenges in emergency preparedness and response in the Arctic: Safe Arctic Settlement”, took place in Zvenigorod, Russian Federation.

Next meeting

The next EPPR meeting will be in December 6-8, 2017, in Copenhagen, Denmark.