



Date: 19 December 2007

**Hebei Spirit Oil Spill - Republic of Korea (ROK)
Situation Report No. 3**

This situation report is based on information received from the joint European Commission – United Nations rapid assessment team on site and from their contacts with the national authorities of the Republic of Korea (RoK). In addition, the report includes information received from the International Maritime Organization, JICA and the secretariat of the Ramsar Convention.

I. Situation

1. On 7 December 2007, a crane-carrying barge hit the Hong Kong-registered tanker "Hebei Spirit", which was anchored approximately eight kilometres off Malipo in the Taean district on the west coast of the RoK, after a wire linking the barge to a tugboat was cut. Three of five containers on the "Hebei Spirit" were punctured, releasing an estimated 10,500 metric tonnes of crude oil into the sea. On 8 December, waves of crude oil began washing ashore, affecting seabirds and threatening various fish farms. Three different types of crude oils were spilled: Iranian heavy oil, Hupper Zakun and Khafji Oil booms were put in place to protect sensitive areas for marine farming. The effect of booms could be limited due to the high tides and weather conditions. The oil spill is currently moving south due to tides and wind, therefore, the focus of the operation is on constraining its further spread south.

II. National Response

2. The Government of RoK declared a state of disaster on the first day of the incident and immediately launched an emergency operation. A central operations room was established in Seoul to provide information and serve as a clearinghouse for international and national liaison and coordination.
3. A major clean-up operation is underway with many parts of the coastline successfully cleaned, including rocky beach areas. As of 14 December, 9,225 metric tonnes of oily waste (sand, oil, rags to absorb oil) and a further 1,528 metric tonnes of oil/water mixture, containing an estimated 550 metric tonnes of oil, was collected. The Korean Maritime Pollution Response Corporation (KMPRC), the Korean Coastal Guard, local authorities and the military forces (approximately 7,000 people) are involved in the recovery operation. Approximately 200,000 people, mostly volunteers, have been involved in the clean up. In addition to the use of 327 vessels, 17 airplanes and 13 helicopters.

III. International Response

4. A joint European Commission-United Nations rapid environmental assessment team was on site since 15 December. The expert team assessed the area by boat and helicopter jointly with the Korean Coast Guard.
 - No free floating oil at sea was observed. There were smaller patches of sheen that are too small for mechanical clean-up. The continued use of dispersant was also discouraged by the

- team. Site assessments of beach and rocky shores were also undertaken, where clean up operations with volunteers are underway.
- The team will provide further training and onsite assistance of shoreline environmental assessment for the Korean Ocean Research and Development Institute.
 - Waste processing sites were also visited. There are 15 incineration facilities accepting solid waste. To date, a total of 1,173 tonnes of waste was accepted of which approximately 20% was incinerated.
 - Onsite coordination meetings were held between the RoK authorities and agencies with the various international response teams.
 - In general, the expert teams were impressed with the professionalism and efficiency of the clean-up operations and coordination of the RoK authorities.
 - The EU/UN team is expected to present their findings in Seoul in the coming days and intends to depart on 22 December.
5. Under the framework of the NOWPAP (Northwest Pacific Action Plan) Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan, the Director of the Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness and Response Regional Activity requested assistance, with the following results:
- China pledged 65 tonnes of chemical and biological agents and absorbents. One vessel with 20 tonnes arrived in the Daesan port on 14 December. China also deployed an expert of the Shanghai Maritime Safety Administration.
 - The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) dispatched a team of six experts of the Japanese Disaster Relief (JDR) Programme. The team arrived on 15 December and plans to stay until 23 December. Emergency supplies, 40 tonnes of absorbent cloth, is expected to arrive on 19 December.
 - Russia pledged 50 tonnes of absorbent cloth.
 - The United States Coast Guard/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) sent a four-person team to examine the oil spill and assist the clean-up.
 - On 18 December, the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands made an offer of assistance to the Minister of Environment to identify expert advice with the rehabilitation of wetlands habitats, if required.
 - A private sector company from Singapore, EARL, provided six clean-up experts with a specialized decontamination aircraft and other equipment after signing a relevant agreement with the RoK.
 - Coordination meetings were held between the authorities, UNDP, the joint EC-UN team, the Korean Coast Guard, the Japanese team and the US team.
 - The International Maritime Organization offered assistance to MERRAC and is on stand-by. The IMO continues to monitor the situation and remains in close contact with the Joint UNEP/OCHA Environment Unit.
6. This situation report, together with further information regarding on-going emergencies, is also available on the Reliefweb: <http://www.reliefweb.int>

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