

London, 26 May 2020

Dear Focal Points,

**Subject: Marine spill preparedness and response considerations during the
Coronavirus Pandemic**

The International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness Response and Cooperation (OPRC 90) highlights the importance of government and industry working together to plan, prepare and respond to oil spill incidents. It is in this spirit that IMO and IPIECA, as the principals underpinning the Global Initiative (GI) Programme, reaffirm their commitment to support national authorities to remain prepared for marine pollution incidents especially during these challenging times.

During the COVID-19 crisis, governmental authorities face many competing challenges and are rightly prioritising efforts to protect the health and safety of people. We have seen many countries restrict access at their borders and limit travel networks to prevent the spread of the disease, and more will surely follow. These measures may, however, have unintended consequences during a spill incident for which international assistance is required and we must be mindful that a pandemic lockdown may inhibit a timely response to oil pollution incidents and, consequently, efforts to mitigate impacts to people, environment and communities, business and commerce.

The risk of an oil spill or other consequences arising from a maritime accident remains ever-present and consequently, preparedness and response capacity building efforts are particularly important in order to foresee and overcome any barriers to response that could be encountered, should such an incident occur during the current pandemic.


During this unprecedented crisis, IPIECA and IMO continue to engage with the international preparedness and response community, and encourage Member States and stakeholders to keep abreast of the latest [COVID-19 guidance provided on the IMO website](#). Furthermore, IMO and IPIECA wish to provide assurance that all possible options to continue providing capacity building and technical assistance in preparedness and response are being explored. Notably, the GI (Global Initiative) and other Regional Programmes, which encourage the implementation of the OPRC 90 Convention, are adapting their programmes to provide remote assistance. Through communication technology and innovative delivery solutions, the aim is to continue to share relevant and trustworthy information and to pursue the implementation of technical cooperation where possible.

IMO and IPIECA would therefore encourage Member States and stakeholders, where they have capacity to do so, to engage with the GI projects and other relevant Regional Programmes, to seek assistance in preparing for a possible spill response during this pandemic, or to help sustain capacity building efforts more generally. By working together, we aim to continue to support national efforts to improve oil spill preparedness and response capability.

On behalf of the IMO/IPIECA Global Initiative,



Mr Hiroyuki Yamada,
Director, Marine Environment Division,
IMO



Mr Brian Sullivan
Executive Director,
IPIECA