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## **International guidelines for environmental emergencies response: implications at bilateral level**

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### **Introduction**

Sudden-onset disaster or accident resulting from natural, technological or human-induced factors, or a combination of these, that cause or threaten to cause severe environmental damage as well as harm to human health and/or livelihoods.

- UNEP Governing Council, 2002

Climate change leading to more severe weather conditions, it is expected an increase in the number and scale of natural disasters.

Response to environmental impacts of natural disasters and industrial accidents requires a level of technical expertise, beyond the capacity of individual states

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### **Introduction**

JEU commissioned a study examining operational aspects of providing and receiving international environmental emergency assistance

Development of Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies that built on other procedures, guidelines and mandates

Tool for mobilization, deployment, receipt and provision of international environmental emergency assistance

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### **Purpose of the Guidelines**

To be used as a reference guide for countries to

Improve their framework for preparedness

To advise both providing and potential recipient countries on how to mobilize, receive and/or provide international assistance in the event of an environmental emergency

Aim: to ensure international assistance is provided rapidly and efficiently if and when needed

Endorsed during the AGEE 8 meeting

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### **Challenges**

Little of knowledge among states

Global system of National Focal Points have not been successful

Wide variety of procedures among states

Development of routines founded on a network of contacts without written procedures

142 questionnaires – 14 replies

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### **Approach**

A desktop study of seven international response systems with well tested operational procedures

A comparative analysis of:

- National Focal Points
- Emergency Alerts
- Requests for international assistance
- Receipt of international assistance
- Provision of international assistance

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### **National Focal Points**

Majority of defined responsibilities: provision of assistance

Alerts and facilitation of incoming assistance:

typical responsibilities of recipient countries' NFPs

Cooperation with UNDAC/INSARAG

EC MIC remains the main focal point in Europe, and, where possible, the existing NFPs for the EC-MIC also serve as the operational NFPs for environmental emergencies

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### **Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies**

The Guidelines address international environmental emergency assistance (tasks and responsibilities) in a cycle which includes the following six stages:

- Preparedness, Alerts, Requests, Receipt, Provision, Post-Mission

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### **Emergency Alerts**

The stage when awareness about an incident potentially requiring international environmental emergency assistance is established

- The nature of environmental emergencies: humanitarian and environmental
- Proactive approach and combination of alerts and requests
- Rapid information exchange through web based platforms, i.e., Virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC)

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### **Requests**

The stage when a country formally asks for international environmental emergency assistance

- The "Assistance Request Report" is not used extensively
- Existing practice should be formalized
- Phone number for 24-7 duty officer, e.g., OCHA Emergency Duty Officer
- Guidance with technical aspects and "Assistance Request Report"

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### **Receipt**

The Stage when a country receives international environmental emergency assistance in its own national territory

- How to enter with staff and equipment in as smooth as way as possible?
- International treaties, conventions, agreements, e.g., "Model Customs Facilitation Agreement", but limited number of states access their use
- NFPs should facilitate the receipt and departure of international environmental emergency assistance.

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### **Provision**

The stage when international environmental emergency responders assist a country with specific resources to mitigate the impact of hazards or accidents

- Wide Network of environmental experts from donor countries
- Tools: Flash Environmental Assessment Tool (FEAT) Hazard Identification Tool (HIT)
- Existing best practices with regard to provision of assistance should be maintained, e.g., UNDAC Missions, cooperation with EC MIC

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### **Conclusion**

Implications at bilateral level:

- A "system" that works
- Guidelines build on existing procedures
- A merge between the real and the ideal
- Clarifies procedures and defines roles = increase of efficiency

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### **Overall Recommendations**

Encourage countries to put the risk of environmental emergencies on their agenda

To contribute to shaping the methodology to be even more effective to assist victims of environmental impacts

To adopt the *Guidelines for Environmental Emergencies* as an integral part of their national disaster management framework

To improve the national focal points network

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**THANK YOU!**

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