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| **Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods  and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals 23 June 2021** |
| **Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods**  **Fifty-eighth session**  Geneva, 28 June-2 July 2021 Item 14 of the provisional agenda **Other business** |

Progress report on South Africa’s AN Task Group response to the August 2020 Beirut Port catastrophic explosion of ammonium nitrate

Transmitted by the Responsible Packaging Management Association of Southern Africa (RPMASA)

Introduction and background

1. This paper is to provide Sub-Committee with a progress update to informal document INF.51 presented in December 2020 on the South African initiative to evaluate current regulations, and practices in place, so as to prevent a similar type of incident / catastrophe happening in South Africa, as well as to address measures to improve the safety of dangerous goods in storage and transport.
2. Following the Beirut catastrophe, a public-private partnership which was formed between regulators and industry experts, co-chaired by the South African Department of Transport (SA DOT) Maritime and RPMASA. The initial core Task Group was expanded to include other regulators and now consists of representatives from all modes of transport, together with the SA Police Explosives Unit, SA Port Authority, SA Port Terminals, SA Maritime Safety Authority, DOT Maritime, Roads, Road Traffic Management Corporation, Road Traffic Inspectorate, Rail Regulator, SA Civil Aviation, National Department of Labour for Regulation of Major Hazards Installations, National Department of Environment for storage facilities, National Disaster Management Centre and Emergency response and the Fire Protection Association.
3. The five Expert Working Groups (EWGs) include regulators and industry experts from each of the companies who manufacture ammonium nitrate in South Africa, have met regularly and made steady progress with a number of recommendations, several of which are in the process of implementation:

EWG 1. Data Gathering – imports, exports, storage facilities,

EWG 2. Legal – what regulations under who’s jurisdictions and possible gaps,

EWG 3. Monitoring and Enforcement – who monitors what, penalties and gaps,

EWG 4. Risk Assessment, Emergency Preparedness & Response - Regulated & Industry initiated,

EWG 5. Training & Awareness Raising – mandatory and voluntary.

1. Key outcomes include recognition of:

(a) the value and need for the regulators to know each other across functions and sectors, and to collaborate and cooperate outside of their silos,

(b) the need for greater awareness of all applicable dangerous goods regulations and the importance of COMMUNICATION to raise awareness of what dangerous goods are, and the potential risks along the supply chain,

(c) importance of identifying gaps to fill, and filling them,

(d) need to raise awareness of mandatory dangerous goods training e.g. IMDG and Cargo Transport Units (CTU) packing for shoreside personnel, to reduce accidents and incidents in ALL Transport modes,

(e) need to keep regulations and national standards up to date and aligned for seamless transition between modes and regulators jurisdiction – ref Dec UN INF 25, and session report,

(f) need for stronger monitoring and enforcement,

(g) urgent need for greater awareness and training of responsibilities, and consequences of non-compliance, ref current X-Press Pearl disaster[[1]](#footnote-2);

(h) need to improve the quality of training for all along the supply chain – ref Dec 2020 UN report item.

1. Additional positive outcomes include the N DOT Roads requiring the SA Bureau of Standards to update all its dangerous goods national standards, and to keep them up to date:

(a) to be aligned with the latest revision of the UN Model Regulations, and

(b) to include training for all who work with dangerous goods as per Chapters 1.3 and 1.4.

Note: the South African national dangerous goods standards are incorporated into the National Regulations of the National Road Traffic Act.

1. There is general agreement that this Task Group work should be extended in future to encompass all classes of dangerous goods and that the EWGs will continue to meet regularly to progress and evaluate needs including:

(a) strengthening relations to fill gaps and reduce replication of efforts,

(b) capacity building and awareness raising,

(c) strengthening operational practices,

(d) improving access to quality Training and filling the gaps in regulations, and

(e) extend experience and expertise to other countries in our region; together with other needs identified to keep South Africa safe.

7. We would appreciate information on similar initiatives in other countries which could possibly provide information to assist us, or help guide our efforts, as well as any assistance with awareness raising, capacity building and training.

1. X-Press Pearl disaster: <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/sri-lanka-files-initial-40m-claim-over-x-press-pearl-fire> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)