IOPC FUNDS
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WEB-BASED CLAIMS HANDLING SYSTEM

Note by the Secretariat

Summary:	In 2014, based upon the findings of a wide-ranging review in 2013 of the IOPC Funds' Web-based Claims Management System (WCMS), the Secretariat commenced a major upgrade of the system and developed a new web-based Claims Handling System (CHS). The new CHS was presented to the governing bodies at their April 2016 sessions. The 2013 review had found that a key improvement to the new CHS would be the introduction of a facility to enable claimants to submit claims online. The Secretariat has also now developed an online Claims Submission System (CSS) which completes the upgrading exercise and will greatly improve the efficiency of the claims submission process for victims of spills. To further support the operational and administrative function of the CHS, the Secretariat has also created a virtual office for use during incident response. It removes the need for a fixed IT infrastructure and provides remote access to local claims handling office personnel, experts and other parties appointed to assist in a particular incident. This document provides details of the key features of the new CHS, the development of the CSS and the creation of the virtual office as part of the Funds' emergency response plan.
Action to be taken:	<u>1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly</u> Information to be noted.

1   Introduction

1.1   As with any compensation regime, claims management is a fundamental part of the administration of the IOPC Funds. The introduction of the Web-based Claims Management System (WCMS) in 2007 allowed for a significant improvement in the management, control, claims handling efficiency and costs monitoring, which was particularly evident in supporting data input in the *Hebei Spirit* incident.

1.2   In reports to the governing bodies, the Audit Body and the External Auditor noted the benefits of an online claims handling system and indicated the need for periodic reviews of the system.

1.3   In 2013, in order to ensure that the WCMS remained relevant and benefitted from advances in information technology, the Secretariat undertook a comprehensive review of the existing system.

The review was conducted with the input of the staff of the Secretariat who manage incidents through WCMS, as well as personnel from local claims handling offices, external consultants and other parties who had actively used the system in their incident-related work.

1.4   In 2014, based upon the results of the review, the Secretariat commenced an upgrade of the system. Part of the upgrade involved the introduction of a new web-based Claims Handling System (CHS). The review also identified the future need for claimants to submit their claims online. Taking this into account, the Secretariat undertook to develop a Claims Submission System (CSS) in 2016. The CSS is now fully integrated with the CHS to support the administrative and operational requirements of any future incident. Both systems have been designed and built in accordance with internet security best practice and the Secretariat's IT security testing systems and procedures.

2   Key benefits of the new CHS

2.1   Key performance indicators (KPI)

2.1.1   Since the main reason for the need to upgrade the system was the unprecedented high volume of claims experienced in the *Hebei Spirit* incident, the incident management aspect of the new CHS has been strengthened by the introduction of tailor-made key performance indicators (KPI) dashboards and instruments for processing a large number of claims simultaneously.

2.1.2   These dashboards allow claims managers to monitor large amounts of data concerning an incident, measure change in that data and analyse the data in a variety of ways helping to gain valuable insights and drive accurate decision making. The system is easy to navigate allowing information to flow in an optimal way for the claims managers to capture and use. From the point of view of managing the incident, the possibility of monitoring and measuring performance helps identify opportunities for improving management of the incident. For example, the system will place the manager in a position to promptly determine the levels of staff and experts required in order to adequately respond to claims as they arise, improving the speed and accuracy of the compensation process.

2.2   Business intelligence capability

2.2.1   An advance business intelligence capability has been integrated within the system to allow claims managers to create, issue and update reports that support the short and long term tactical and strategic decision making of the organisation. The claims managers will be able to quickly obtain a clear picture of particular issues that will enable them to react accordingly in an expedited manner. A good illustration of how this reporting system will work might be an incident with a large influx of claims from fisherfolk. The system will quickly generate reports on the number of fisherfolk involved and what type of products within their business are most affected. Focused market research into a particular area will improve the Secretariat's capacity to respond to victims and accelerate the process of assessment of their claims.

2.2.2   Information datasets have been extended to support the management information and business intelligence demands of the Secretariat across all areas of incident handling. Other examples are in respect of the cost and performance of experts and identification of potential duplicate/fraudulent claimants and claims.

2.3   Batch data processing

The system has been greatly enhanced to improve operational efficiency, data integrity and data handling. Data operations may now be carried out against thousands of records in a single action by grouping claims and treating them as one entity for processing purposes. This is of particular importance when dealing with large volumes of data entries and updating operations such as: claimants/claims registrations, claims status updates, adding payment records and operations involving the entry of the costs and times of experts' reports against claims assessments.

2.4   Online collaboration

Given the international user community involved in claims handling related to an incident, great emphasis has been placed upon improving and introducing collaborative systems that facilitate information exchange creating a single repository for all claims-related data and correspondence so that all the necessary and relevant claims information will be immediately available to claims managers and experts.   In addition, the system may be easily configured to automatically communicate to claimants changes to the status of their claims.

3   Key benefits of the CSS

3.1   The CSS has been designed to guide claimants through the claims submission process via an easy to use, intuitive interface. It is anticipated that this will greatly facilitate the efficiency of the claims submission process and also improve access to incident-specific information and related material such as the claim form and guidance on the claims submission process.

3.2   Group or class action type claims submissions may now be made using the new system. The system allows claimants to pause and save their progress at any stage throughout the claim submission process. Supporting documentation may be uploaded directly at the time of submission or may be provided on request at a later date. Once a claim has been submitted no further action by the claimants may be taken in relation to that claim.   Any further action must be done by correspondence with the shipowner's insurer/IOPC Funds' Secretariat or the claims handling office. Claimants have the facility to view and check the status of their claims submissions at any time.

Internationalization

3.3   The system has been designed so that separate parts of the system may be easily configured in a local language and be deployed in different geographical regions to enhance the user experience and to maximise system performance.

4   Virtual office

The IOPC Funds now has in place a solid emergency response plan that follows the best data management practices. Incident response will be supported by a virtual office that removes the need for a fixed IT infrastructure. The system will be accessible remotely by local claims handling office personnel, experts and other parties appointed to assist in a particular incident. Data will be managed in accordance with best security practices. The possibility of having office resources accessible remotely will greatly improve the management of the claims and distribution of technical information about the spill.

5   Implementation of the CHS, CSS and virtual office

5.1   The CHS has been fully tested and it has recently been deployed for use in supporting the operational requirements of the *Trident Star* incident.

5.2   The CSS has been fully integrated with the CHS to support the administrative and operational requirements of any future incident.

5.3   The virtual office is ready to support those personnel involved in managing any future incident involving the IOPC Funds.

6   Action to be taken

      1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly

      The 1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly are invited to take note of the information contained in this document.

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