



International Oil Pollution  
Compensation Funds

Agenda item 3	IOPC/MAY26/3/4	
Date	2 April 2026	
Original	English	
1992 Fund Assembly	92AES30	
1992 Fund Executive Committee	92EC86	●
Supplementary Fund Assembly	SAES14	

## INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE IOPC FUNDS—1992 FUND

### PRINCESS EMPRESS

#### Note by the Secretariat

**Objective of document:** To inform the 1992 Fund Executive Committee of the latest developments regarding this incident.

**Summary:** On 28 February 2023, the *Princess Empress* (508 GT) sank off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, the Philippines. The oil spill affected the coasts of Oriental Mindoro and the islands of Semirara and Liwagao.

The limitation amount applicable to the *Princess Empress* in accordance with the 1992 Civil Liability Convention (1992 CLC) is SDR 4.51 million, but the owner of the *Princess Empress* is a party to the Small Tanker Oil Pollution Indemnification Agreement (STOPIA) 2006 (as amended 2017)<sup><1></sup>. Under STOPIA 2006, the 1992 Fund has legally enforceable rights of indemnification from the shipowner of the difference between the limitation amount applicable to the tanker under the 1992 CLC and the total amount of admissible claims up to SDR 20 million.

The 1992 Fund and the Shipowners' P&I Club opened a central claims submission office (CSO) in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro, and set up a number of temporary collection centres in different areas.

Claims related to this incident have exceeded the limit of liability of the shipowner under the 1992 CLC and the STOPIA 2006 limit of SDR 20 million.

**Recent developments:** The CSO has registered a total of 40 869 claims, mainly in the fisheries sector, with a total claimed amount of PHP 4 038.93 million<sup><2></sup>. Details regarding the status of the different categories of claims are given in section 5 of this document.

The three-year anniversary of the incident was 28 February 2026.

<1> From this point forward, references to 'STOPIA 2006' should be taken to read 'STOPIA 2006 (as amended 2017)'.

<2> The claims have been submitted in several currencies but for reporting clarity the figures are given in Philippine pesos. Currency conversions are calculated using the FX rates applicable as at 25 May 2025 when the Director was authorised to pay claims.

During the most recent visit to the Philippines in January 2026, the Director and two other members of the Secretariat met with a number of government agencies who were encouraged to commence court action to protect their compensation rights from becoming time-barred, given the imminent three-year anniversary of the incident.

In December 2025 the Shipowners' P&I Club informed the 1992 Fund that the Club had lodged a letter of understanding (LoU) for the equivalent of SDR 4.51 million with the corresponding Philippines authority, in order to establish a limitation fund. The equivalent of the limitation amount as at 17 December 2025 is PHP 363 670 871.48.

With the three-year anniversary of the incident in 28 February 2026, a number of claimants have brought legal action to protect their compensation rights.

**Action to be taken:** 1992 Fund Executive Committee

Information to be noted.

## 1 Summary of incident

Ship	<i>Princess Empress</i>
Date of incident	28.02.2023
Place of incident	Oriental Mindoro, the Philippines
Cause of incident	Engine failure
Quantity of oil spilled	Unknown
Area affected	Oriental Mindoro, Western Visaya
Flag State of ship	The Philippines
Gross tonnage	508 GT
P&I insurer	Shipowners' P&I Club
CLC limit	SDR 4.51 million
STOPIA/TOPIA applicable	STOPIA 2006 applies up to SDR 20 million
CLC + Fund limit	SDR 203 million

## 2 Incident

- 2.1 On 28 February 2023 whilst on voyage to Iloilo from Limay, Bataan, the Philippine-flagged *Princess Empress* (508 GT) sank in rough seas off the coast of Naujan, Oriental Mindoro, the Philippines, whilst carrying 800 000 litres of fuel oil as cargo. Subsequently, an oil spill was detected around the location of the wreck which extended to other areas, causing pollution damage.
- 2.2 Full details of the incident can be found in the [Princess Empress online report](#).

## 3 Impact of the spill

- 3.1 The pollution damage resulting from the *Princess Empress* incident affected the coasts of Oriental Mindoro to varying degrees. The oil also travelled to the Caluya archipelago, which is situated south of Mindoro Island, affecting the islands of Semirara and Liwagao.
- 3.2 A high proportion of the population in the affected area relies on small-scale fisheries-related activities, including subsistence fishing.

- 3.3 Several of the areas affected by the pollution have tourism-dependent businesses.
- 3.4 A number of mangrove areas have been affected by the pollution, particularly on the island of Semirara.

#### **4 Visit by the IOPC Funds' Secretariat to the Philippines**

During the visits to the Philippines in September 2025 and January 2026, the Director and two other members of the Secretariat met with stakeholders on several issues. Meetings were held with a number of government agencies who were encouraged to submit their claims as soon as possible, so as to give sufficient time for their claims to be assessed and settled in order to avoid the time-bar deadline of 28 February 2026 and the need to bring court action to protect their compensation rights.

#### **5 Claims for compensation**

##### **5.1 Claims submission office (CSO)**

- 5.1.1 The 1992 Fund and the Shipowners' P&I Club opened a CSO to facilitate the submission of claims for compensation resulting from the incident. This central office was opened on 31 March 2023 and is located in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro.
- 5.1.2 Given the characteristics and extent of the affected area, in order to give an opportunity to claimants to submit claims, it was considered necessary to open temporary CSOs (collection centres) in different areas, some of which are not easily reachable.
- 5.1.3 The claims submission process involved staff of the CSO travelling to the temporary collection centre in the affected area to conduct a short, one-to-one interview with individual claimants, mostly fishers, to help them submit their claim. The main claims submission operation for individual claimants concluded in the second half of 2023, but the CSO in Calapan remained open for claimants to submit claims.
- 5.1.4 Efforts were made to compensate claimants in the fisheries sector as soon as assessments were ready. As with the collection of claims, a process was set up to reach legitimate claimants to provide compensation. These efforts have resulted in some 35 097 fisheries claims paid by March 2026.

##### **5.2 Claims situation**

The CSO has registered a total of 40 869 claims, mainly in the fisheries sector, with a total claimed amount of PHP 4 038.93 million<sup><3></sup>. The 1992 Fund and the Shipowners' P&I Club have approved the assessment of 37 017 claims at PHP 2 862 million. Following the approval of those assessments, 36 877 claims have been paid a total of PHP 2 783.48 million as of 12 March 2026. Payment of claims continues for the few outstanding claims that are not time barred. Some 3 829 claims have been rejected. More details regarding the status of the different categories of claims are given in subsequent sections. The table below provides a summary of the claims situation as at 12 March 2026.

---

<sup><3></sup> The claims have been submitted in several currencies but for reporting clarity the figures are given in Philippine pesos. Currency conversions are calculated using the FX rates applicable as at 25 May 2025 when the Director was authorised to pay claims.

Claim Category	Claims		Approved at more than zero		Rejected	Paid	
	No	Amount (PHP)	No	Amount (PHP)	No	No	Amount (PHP)
Clean-up and preventive measures	80	2 016 860 870	73	1 704 068 595	6	52	1 636 331 759
Fisheries	37 885	1 896 037 178	34 931	1 145 651 066	2 935	35 097 <sup>&lt;4&gt;</sup>	1 146 429 730 <sup>&lt;4&gt;</sup>
Property damage	3	308 900	0	0.00	3	0	0
Tourism	2 901	125 727 890	2 013	12 328 560	885	1 729	5 609 074
<b>Total</b>	<b>40 869</b>	<b>4 038 934 839</b>	<b>37 017</b>	<b>2 862 048 221</b>	<b>3 829</b>	<b>36 878</b>	<b>2 788 370 563</b>

### 5.3 Clean-up and preventive measures

- 5.3.1 Claims related to clean-up and preventive measures totalling the equivalent of PHP 2 016.86 million have been received. Following an assessment of the claims the total paid amount, including the amounts paid by the shipowner's insurer, is PHP 1 636.3 million.
- 5.3.2 Included in the payment for clean-up and preventive measures are the claims submitted by the shipowner regarding the costs incurred in respect of the various contractors engaged to carry out response operations at sea and onshore, including the survey of the wreck and the operation to remove the remaining oil from the wreck.

#### *Government claims*

- 5.3.3 The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has submitted claims totalling PHP 268.4 million for costs incurred in clean-up and preventive measures. The claim has been provisionally assessed at PHP 27.2 million, pending the provision of further information and clarifications from the PCG. The experts engaged by the Fund and the Club are now examining additional information provided.
- 5.3.4 The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has submitted a claim totalling PHP20.2 million for costs related to post-spill environmental and fishery food safety monitoring and assistance to fishers affected by the spill. This claim has been provisionally assessed at PHP14 million but the experts engaged by the Fund and the Club are examining further information submitted in support of the claim.
- 5.3.5 The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has recently submitted a claim for the costs incurred in sampling analysis, totalling PHP 1 732 950.00. This claim has been provisionally assessed at PHP 275 916.00, pending the provision of further information.

### 5.4 Fisheries

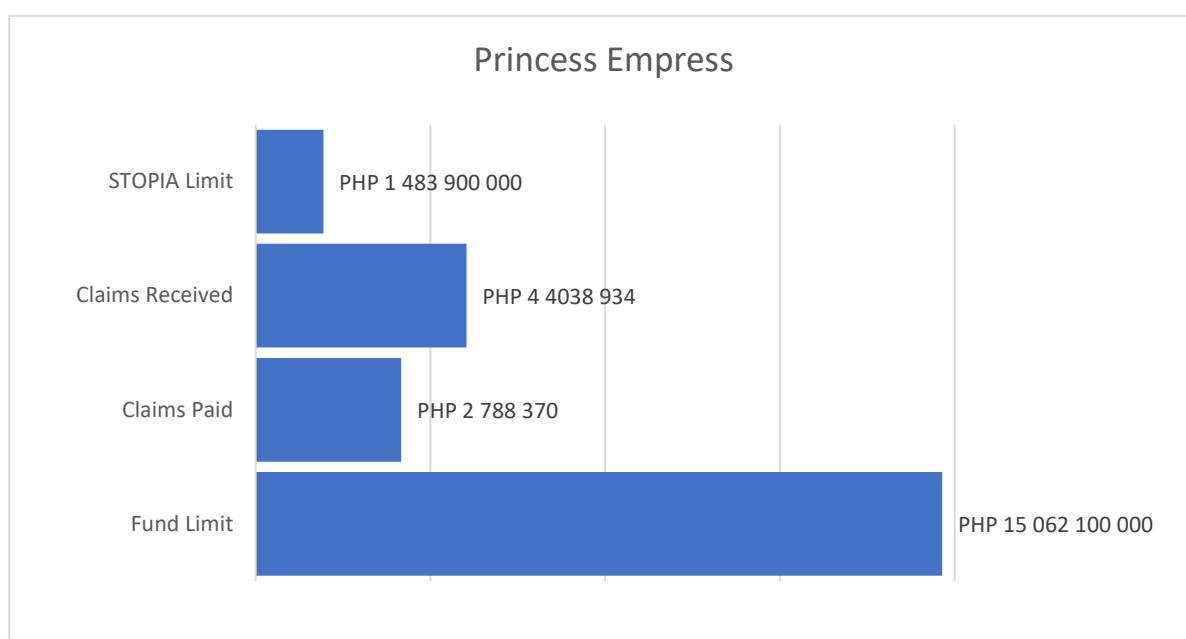
- 5.4.1 As at 12 March 2026, the CSO has registered 37 885 claims in the fisheries sector with a total claimed amount of PHP 1 896 million. The majority of the claims have little supporting documentation.

<sup><4></sup> The amount paid in compensation in respect of fisheries is higher than the amount finally approved for compensation due to the initial provisional assessment being in a relatively small number of cases higher than the final assessments.

- 5.4.2 The Shipowners' P&I Club and the 1992 Fund, through their international experts, engaged a team of fisheries experts from a local university to carry out a study of the impact of the spill on the fisheries sector in the affected areas in order to assess the claims.
- 5.4.3 Whilst the study and the subsequent assessment was being finalised a provisional assessment was carried out in order to be able to make provisional payments to claimants in the fisheries sector. Based on the provisional assessment, a process to provide provisional payments commenced in September 2023, as a result of which a total of PHP 117 million was paid to 8 825 fishers.
- 5.4.4 The fisheries study was completed in March 2024 which allowed the first final assessment of losses in the fishing category. A total of 23 238 claims from fishers were approved with a total amount of some PHP 707 million to be paid, taking into account the provisional payments already made.
- 5.4.5 In addition to the above, in October 2024 the 1992 Fund and the Shipowners' P&I Club approved the assessment of claims from 9 030 fish traders that had suffered losses due to lack of alternative products to sell during the fishing bans in the areas affected by the spill.
- 5.4.6 In February 2025 the 1992 Fund and the Shipowners' P&I Club approved an additional assessment of 2 697 claims, comprising claims from fishers and fish traders not previously assessed, and claims from the fish processing and marine farming sub-sectors.
- 5.4.7 In addition to the high volume of claims in the fisheries sector the payment process has been complicated by the fact that most claimants in that sector do not have bank accounts. This circumstance has forced the Secretariat to find alternative ways of payment eventually using an internationally renowned remittance company to enable claimants to receive the compensation owed to them. After each group assessment the process of paying all individual amounts to the claimants took months to complete, particularly for those assessments that included the highest number of claims. As a result of all the different assessments a total of 35 097 claims in the fisheries sector have been paid, with a total paid amount of PHP 1 146.43 million. Some 2 935 claims have been rejected.
- 5.5 Tourism
- 5.5.1 The CSO has received 2 901 claims in the tourism sector totalling PHP 125.7 million. Most of these claims were lacking the minimum supporting documentation to allow for assessment of the claims. It has been necessary for the expert engaged by the 1992 Fund and the Shipowners' P&I Club to visit the affected area several times in order to find ways to assess the claims.
- 5.5.2 As at 12 March 2026, 2 013 claims have been approved for a total of PHP 12.3 million, of which 1 729 claims have been paid, totalling PHP 5.6 million. Some 885 claims have been rejected since no evidence could be found of the claimants having suffered admissible losses due to the pollution.
- 5.5.3 Like in the fisheries sector, many of the claimants in the tourism sector do not have bank accounts and therefore the same payment system used in the fisheries sector is being applied for those claimants. The CSO is now planning for the payment of outstanding claims where the claimants have accepted the compensation amount offered in the assessments.

5.6 Summary of compensation<sup><5></sup>

	Incident currency (PHP)	GBP
<b>1992 CLC/STOPIA 2006 limit</b>	1 483 900 000	19 348 829
<b>1992 Fund Convention limit, including 1992 CLC (SDR 203 million)</b>	15 062 100 000	196 397 334
<b>Claims received</b>	4 038 934 839	60 294 398
<b>Claims approved</b>	2 862 048 221	42 725 491
<b>Claims paid</b>	2 788 370 563	41 625 610

**6 Limitation proceedings**

In December 2025 the Shipowners' P&I Club informed the 1992 Fund that the Club had lodged an LoU for the equivalent of SDR 4.51million with the corresponding Philippines authority, in order to establish a limitation fund. The equivalent of the limitation amount as at 17 December 2025 is PHP 363 670 871.48.

**7 Legal actions**

7.1 Seven government agencies, including the PCG, BFAR and DENR (see paragraphs 5.3.3-5.3.5), have brought legal actions against the shipowner, its insurer and the 1992 Fund to protect their compensation rights.

<sup><5></sup> Currency conversions are indicative only and intended to assist the reader. Currency conversions are calculated using the FX rates applicable as at 25 May 2025 when the Director was authorised to pay claims. SDR 1 = PHP 74.1977 and GBP 1 = PHP 66.9869. Figures are subject to change due to fluctuations in the exchange rates and intervening events.

7.2 A number of individual claimants and local authorities have also brought legal actions to protect their compensation rights. More details will be provided once the Fund has received all the information.

## **8 Director's considerations**

8.1 With the three-year anniversary of the incident on 28 February 2026, a key milestone has been reached with the great majority of the claims having been settled. This is a significant achievement, which can be attributed to the strong cooperation and commitment of all those involved in the compensation process.

8.2 The emphasis in the first two and a half years after the incident took place was to reach all individuals who had suffered losses due to the pollution. That was possible thanks to the hard work of the Secretariat, the Shipowners' P&I Club, and their coordinated efforts in the field through the Claims Submission Office and the temporary claims collection centres. In this regard, the Director is also grateful to the Philippine authorities for providing venues for the 'claims caravans', thereby assisting in the process of reaching claimants to distribute the payments.

8.3 The main government claims were submitted in late 2025, but a first, provisional assessment was achieved by the end of 2025. In the approach to the three-year anniversary of the incident, the focus has also been on assessing and approving local authorities' claims and on establishing a communication process to prevent valid claims from becoming time-barred.

8.4 We have now entered a new phase where we have started to see court actions against the shipowner, its insurer and the 1992 Fund, which brings new challenges. However, the 1992 Fund will continue to make every effort to engage with those claimants who have lodged actions, including the Philippine authorities, with the aim of settling those claims out of court.

8.5 Further updates on legal proceedings will be given at future sessions.

## **9 Action to be taken**

### 1992 Fund Executive Committee

The 1992 Fund Executive Committee is invited to take note of the information contained in this document.

---