



International Oil Pollution
Compensation Funds

Agenda Item 7	IOPC/MAR21/7/2	
Date	11 March 2021	
Original	English	
1992 Fund Assembly	92AES24	●
1992 Fund Executive Committee	92EC75	
Supplementary Fund Assembly	SAES8	●

INFORMATION SERVICES

Note by the Secretariat

Summary:

In December 2020, the Secretariat reported to the governing bodies that, as part of its commitment to increasing awareness of the international liability and compensation regime and improving engagement with all Member States, it had been exploring ways in which the organisation could widen its audience by creating information and training opportunities which are accessible remotely.

Since demand for such remote services has inevitably increased following the global COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on gatherings and travel have continued into 2021, the Secretariat has now begun to deliver such remote training events and is also planning to run the 2021 Short Course as an online event.

This document sets out further details of the Secretariat's planned remote activities in 2021.

Action to be taken:

1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly

Information to be noted.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At the December 2020 meeting, the Secretariat reported to the governing bodies that, as part of its commitment to increasing awareness of the international liability and compensation regime and improving engagement with all Member States, it had been exploring ways in which the organisation could widen its audience by creating information and training opportunities which are accessible remotely.
- 1.2 At that meeting, one delegation had pointed out that, in its view, it was important to continue to offer virtual training opportunities during the COVID-19 pandemic and to resume training away from London once travel restrictions ease. That delegation referred to the annual Short Course in particular and, in response, the Director had advised that the Secretariat would continue to examine the matter and work towards online training opportunities.
- 1.3 Demand for such remote services has inevitably increased following the pandemic and restrictions on gatherings and travel have continued into 2021. The Secretariat has, therefore, now begun to deliver remote training and information events as described in section 2 of this document. It is planning to deliver further webinars, run the 2021 Short Course as an online event (see section 3) and is exploring whether the Induction Course could also be provided online (section 4).

2 Webinars

- 2.1 As reported in December 2020, among the options explored by the Secretariat, was the possibility of organising a series of short webinars, open to a wide audience, covering the key areas which form the bases of the IOPC Funds and the work of the organisations, such as claims handling or oil reporting and contributions. Those subject-specific webinars are currently under development and further information on dates and joining instructions will be announced after the March 2021 meeting of the governing bodies.
- 2.2 The Secretariat had already gained experience contributing to webinars such as those organised by the GI WACAF project, EMSA and more recently by the Ministry of Environment, Quebec, Canada in January 2021 and is available to work together with any States that may consider it useful to organise similar online activities on claims and compensation, implementation issues, oil reporting and contributions, or the international liability regime in general.
- 2.3 Since it has not been possible to host any of the annual visits from universities and other educational institutions, the Secretariat has opted to maintain its support for interested students by providing online seminars on request. The first such event of 2021 was held on 19 February for students of Ghent University. The Secretariat also delivered presentations on 4 March relating to the 2010 HNS Convention for students of the University of El Salvador, Argentina and of a number of other Latin American universities. IMLI and WMU have also invited the Secretariat to deliver presentations in their online programmes.

3 2021 Short Course

- 3.1 The 2020 Short Course, which was due to be held from 8–12 June, was unfortunately cancelled as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (circular IOPC/2020/Circ.8).
- 3.2 At their December 2020 sessions, the governing bodies had noted that, having explored the possibility of providing remote access to the IOPC Funds' annual Short Course, the Secretariat had concluded that it would not be practical to do so and that it was instead exploring the possibility of running a second version of the course in an alternative location to facilitate the attendance of other States. However, this conclusion was reached on the basis that the course would be running, without restrictions, as a physical course in London, and that a hybrid course with additional participants joining remotely, would not be practical. The Secretariat did not, at the time, consider the eventuality that there would be no permitted physical presence of participants at all and, therefore, whether a fully remote short course would be feasible.
- 3.3 While the Secretariat remains of the view that the course is more beneficial to participants if it can be held in person, in London, having considered the practicalities and in consultation with the supporting partners of the course, the Secretariat is able to offer an adapted version of the course online this year on a trial basis.
- 3.4 In order for such a course to meet the same standards as its in-person, London-based counterpart, it would need to include to the extent possible the same level and variety of content, presenters and activities. To achieve this, the Secretariat has explored how to translate various aspects of the course to a remote environment.

Timing and duration

- 3.5 The Short Course, which is organised on an annual basis, normally runs for one working week in June i.e. Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00 pm each day. Over the first four days, the course covers a number of modules, and presentations are delivered by both the Secretariat and external partners with time set aside for question and answer sessions. The final day is dedicated to an interactive

tabletop exercise where participants have the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned throughout the week.

- 3.6 As the remote course will be open for participants from across the world, the timing of the sessions must suit the majority of time zones and run for a limited duration of time. Following the practice implemented for meetings of the governing bodies, sessions for the remote course could be scheduled to commence at 11.00 am and continue until 2.00 pm, London time. In order to account for the reduced working hours, the remote course could run over a two-week period which would allow the course to remain both dynamic and comprehensive.
- 3.7 As the remote Short Course will initially serve as a substitute to the in-person Short Course in 2021, the remote course will take place sometime in June as usual. Subject to the success of the remote course and dependent on the needs of Member States, it could in the future potentially run in parallel with the in-person Short Course over different dates.

Interaction, exercises and presentations

- 3.8 The Short Course is currently offered to a limited number of participants in order to encourage engagement and discussions in the subjects covered and foster a more interactive and flexible learning environment.
- 3.9 The remote course would also benefit from a limited number of participants for similar reasons, but also to help set it apart from other online seminars and workshops the IOPC Funds may organise as part of its outreach programme throughout the year.
- 3.10 In order to provide a similar dynamic structure in a digital space, the most suitable platform the Secretariat has identified to run the remote course is Microsoft Teams. Teams has two suitable meeting formats, namely, Teams meetings and Teams live events. Teams meetings enables effective interaction between all attendees and also includes a breakout room feature which divides participants into smaller groups which would be useful for collaborative team exercises. Teams live events is specially designed for webinars and presentations which are better suited for less interaction by participants.
- 3.11 The Secretariat is considering using both Teams meetings and live events depending on the presentation and module content to make the remote course more engaging.

Applications by participants

- 3.12 The application process for the remote course will remain the same as for the in-person Short Course, whereby nominations of participants should come directly from governments of Member States and should be accompanied by a completed nomination form and candidate's brief curriculum vitae. Spaces will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. For reasons set out in paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 above, the remote course will be open to a maximum number of 15 participants.
- 3.13 A circular will be issued shortly after the March 2021 sessions of the governing bodies, which will confirm the dates and programme of the remote course and contain the nomination form and further details on how to apply.

4 2021 Induction Course

- 4.1 With regard to the Induction Course, it was noted at the December 2020 meeting of the governing bodies, that since it is a much shorter duration than the Short Course, takes place in one location and involves internal speakers only, it could be an option to make the course accessible to remote users. Therefore, the Secretariat was considering developing short interactive online exercises that remote

users could undertake, allowing them to share the same experience to those on-site. However, as with the Short Course, at the time of considering this in 2020, the Secretariat had in mind that this would be a hybrid option under which a number of participants would still be physically present and a number would be accessing the course remotely.

- 4.2 The Secretariat is now considering whether this course could be delivered as a fully remote event if required and continues to investigate ways in which it could ensure remote users would be able to benefit from the Induction Course in the same way as local participants.

5 Action to be taken

1992 Fund Assembly and Supplementary Fund Assembly

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