



International Oil Pollution
Compensation Funds

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INCIDENTS INVOLVING THE IOPC FUNDS – 1992 FUND

MARINE HONOUR

Submitted by the Republic of Singapore

Summary:

On 14 June 2024, the bunker vessel, *Marine Honour*, was stationary alongside the containership, *Ever Blink*, at Pasir Panjang Terminal in the Port of Singapore when it was struck by the *Vox Maxima*. The allision caused a rupture in one of *Marine Honour's* oil cargo tanks and around 400 MT of marine fuel oil was estimated to be released into the sea.

This document outlines the Singapore Government's clean-up operations, including containing the oil spill in the immediate aftermath of the incident, conducting specialised cleaning for difficult-to-access areas, and the final phase to remove the oil remnants from beaches.

As at 3 September 2024, the clean-up operations were fully completed ahead of schedule.

The costs incurred for the clean-up operations are being computed for claims assessment. Based on the information available to date, the sum of the claims by the various Singapore Government public agencies is not expected to exceed the limit of the 1992 Fund Convention.

Action to be taken:

1992 Fund Executive Committee

- (a) note the Singapore Government's oil spill response and clean-up operations in the *Marine Honour* incident; and
- (b) support the Director's authorisation to commence the disbursement of compensation payments.

1 Background and immediate response

- 1.1 On 14 June 2024, a Netherlands-registered dredger, *Vox Maxima*, experienced a sudden loss in engine and steering control and struck a stationary Singapore-registered bunker vessel, *Marine Honour*, in the Port of Singapore. At the time of incident, the *Marine Honour* was alongside a container vessel, *Ever Blink*, which was berthed at the Pasir Panjang Terminal. The allision caused damage to one of *Marine Honour's* oil cargo tanks and around 400 MT of marine fuel oil was estimated to have spilled into the sea.
- 1.2 Upon notification of the incident, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) immediately responded by deploying its patrol craft to spray dispersants on the spill in accordance with established

procedures. MPA's first patrol craft arrived at the incident site 11 minutes after being notified. MPA also activated its oil spill response contractor, T&T Salvage Asia, to lay 200 metres of heavy-duty containment booms around the *Marine Honour* as a preventive measure in case of further oil spillage from the damaged vessel.

- 1.3 Parts of the spilled oil eventually landed along the southern shorelines of Singapore, including Sentosa, Labrador Nature Reserve, St John's Island, Lazarus Island, Kusu Island, Marina South Pier and East Coast Park, as well as some parts of the southern coast of Johor, Malaysia.

2 Systematic oil spill response and clean-up operations

- 2.1 Working in close consultation with international teams such as ITOPF, the Singapore Government adopted a systematic approach to the oil spill clean-up operations. These comprised three phases:

2.2 First phase

- 2.2.1 The first phase of the clean-up focused on removing oil slicks and contaminated sand from the surface of the affected beaches, and deploying containment booms to avoid further contamination. Specific beaches at East Coast Park, Labrador Nature Reserve, St John's Island, Lazarus Island and Kusu Island in Singapore, which were directly affected by the oil spill, were closed for general cleaning. Due to the clean-up operations at sea, businesses which offered sea-based activities or operate on affected beaches were closed. Where possible, the Singapore Government kept areas which were unaffected by the oil spill opened to the public to minimise business disruptions. Similarly, beachfront and food and beverage establishments at East Coast Park and Labrador Nature Reserve remained open as well.

- 2.2.2 MPA and its contractors adopted a multi-pronged approach leveraging predictive modelling of tidal and wind conditions, drones, satellite imagery and sightings from ships at sea and on-ground personnel to assess the possible movement of oil and confirm the location of large oil patches. Oil skimmers were deployed in the morning of 15 June 2024 to complement the laying of containment booms; these were initially not deployed in the first few hours of the spill as poor visibility due to thundery showers at the time of the spill did not allow response personnel to effectively spot the oil patches in the sea.

- 2.2.3 Aside from the containment booms laid around the *Marine Honour*, Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL), an industry-funded cooperative providing oil spill response services, deployed Current Buster systems i.e. floating containment and recovery devices deployed from a vessel. The use of drones helped to direct the Current Buster systems for more targeted collection of oil at sea, which facilitated clean-up efforts. Additionally, the National Parks Board of Singapore (NParks) deployed over 1.5 kilometres of oil absorbent booms initially to protect biodiversity-sensitive coastal and marine areas, including Berlayer Creek and the Rocky Shore along Labrador Nature Reserve. Such booms contained the spread of the oil and facilitated clean-up operations along the relevant affected beaches and shorelines.

2.3 Second phase

- 2.3.1 The second phase of the clean-up focused on more difficult-to-clean areas such as rock bunds, breakwaters, and oil trapped deeper in the sand which required the cleaning services of specialised contractors. The cleaning methods for the second phase were jointly decided by the oil spill consultants and cleaning contractors, and adapted accordingly based on the shoreline features of each affected area. The specialised cleaning was also done in conjunction with continued general cleaning at the beaches, as oil remnants still continued to be washed ashore.

- 2.3.2 An additional 1 600 metres of containment boom was deployed in Sentosa, Labrador Nature Reserve, East Coast Park and Southern Islands during the second phase to prevent additional oil from being washed ashore while landside clean-up operations of affected beaches and shorelines were ongoing. Seven more oil recovery assets were also deployed to skim and collect the remaining oil spillage off the water surface

to minimise further spread of the oil.

2.3.3 The Singapore Government progressively re-opened affected areas once on-site clean-up operations were completed. Siloso Beach at Sentosa was re-opened for water activities at the end of July 2024, one-and-a-half months ahead of the expected timeline. Some parts of East Coast Park also re-opened for land-based activities around the same time period. For sea activities, water quality was tested to ensure normalcy and stability for at least one week, before public advisories were issued on the resumption of water activities. During this period, Singapore's National Environment Agency (NEA) also conducted daily air quality tests using mobile detectors at affected areas to ensure the safety of the public and clean-up personnel.

2.4 Final phase

2.4.1 The final phase involved removal of oil remnants on land, such as tar balls from beaches, and careful inspection of the affected areas for any remaining oil stains. Close to 2 750 volunteers from public and grassroots organisations, including the government agencies; National Youth Corps, the Public Hygiene Council's R.I.S.E Champions Network and the NEA's Volunteer Corps, were mobilised to sieve and separate the tar balls.

2.4.2 As at 3 September 2024, the land clean-up operations were fully completed ahead of schedule. All affected beaches have since been re-opened to the public. In total, the land clean-up involved 800 cleaning personnel and removed over 3 750 tonnes of debris.

3 Impact of oil spill

3.1 Overall, strong coordination and teamwork among the relevant government agencies, industry partners, contractors and volunteers led to effective management and mitigation of the impact of the oil spill, which resulted in the completion of clean-up operations ahead of schedule.

3.2 To better understand the impact of the oil spill on business operations, the respective agencies such as Sentosa Development Corporation, which manages Sentosa and businesses on the Southern Islands, and NParks, one of the agencies that manages the beachfront along East Coast Park, proactively engaged their tenants and provided marketing and social media support to promote a return of footfall. The Singapore Government understands that affected businesses will make the relevant claims for economic losses arising from the oil spill.

3.3 Singapore's fish farms were unaffected by the oil spill. Preventive actions were taken and alerts were made to the fish farms. The results from food safety tests carried out by the Singapore Food Agency on coastal fish farms in the East Johor Strait, as well as imported fish and seafood, showed that local and imported fish remained safe for consumption.

3.4 Singapore's drinking water supply was unaffected. Regular tests showed that the drinking water quality readings remained normal and the operations at Singapore's desalination plants and freshwater reservoirs were unaffected by the oil spill.

3.5 While no significant impact on Singapore's marine biodiversity and wildlife has been observed thus far, assessments of the long-term environmental impact of the oil spill are still underway.

4 Learning points for future oil spills

4.1 Singapore has taken preventative steps over the years to enhance the safety of vessels to minimise the risk of accidents and oil spills in our waters. This includes putting in place mandatory safety training and shipboard drills for vessel crew on incident response, regular port State inspections to ensure vessel

compliance with international safety conventions, and strong collaboration with industry partners to develop a contingency plan for oil spills that is rehearsed every two years during an inter-agency exercise.

- 4.2 As shown in the *Marine Honour* incident, it is not possible to completely eliminate the risk of oil spills in Singapore's waters, and the Singapore Government takes every opportunity to undertake a thorough review after each incident to check and ensure that its oil spill response and contingency plans remain updated and robust.
- 4.3 As a member of the 1992 Fund, Singapore, through MPA, notified and engaged the IOPC Funds' Secretariat early in June 2024 shortly after the incident occurred. Since then, MPA and the IOPC Funds' Secretariat have regularly engaged each other in London and Singapore. Such engagements allowed MPA and the IOPC Funds' Secretariat to effectively discuss challenges or issues associated with the approach and management of claims for compensation.
- 4.4 The IOPC Funds' Secretariat was also invited to participate in the Singapore Shipping Association's webinar on 'Managing the Aftermath of Oil Spills' on 23 July 2024.

5 Claims for compensation

- 5.1 Claims for compensation by the Singapore Government would include all three phases of the clean-up operations.
- 5.2 The respective public agencies of the Singapore Government are in the process of consolidating their claims from the clean-up operations and will submit their claims for assessment in due course.
- 5.3 Based on the information available thus far, the sum of the claims by the various Singapore Government public agencies is not expected to exceed the limit of the 1992 Fund Convention.
- 5.4 Applicability of the Conventions
- 5.4.1 Singapore is Party to both the 1992 Civil Liability Convention (1992 CLC) and the 1992 Fund Convention.
- 5.4.2 Based on the latest information available, claims relating to this incident will exceed the limit of liability under the 1992 CLC. The owner of the *Marine Honour* is not a party to the Small Tanker Oil Pollution Indemnification Agreement (STOPIA), 2006 (as amended 2017). The 1992 Fund will therefore be called upon to pay compensation.
- 5.4.3 Claims for pollution damage caused by the discharge of persistent oil from tankers in Singapore are governed by the Merchant Shipping (Civil Liability and Compensation for Oil Pollution) Act 1998, which gives effect to the 1992 CLC and 1992 Fund Convention.

6 Action to be taken

1992 Fund Executive Committee

The 1992 Fund Executive Committee is invited to:

- (a) note the Singapore Government's oil spill response and clean-up operations in the *Marine Honour* incident; and
- (b) support the Director's authorisation to commence the disbursement of compensation payments.
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