



INTERNATIONAL
OIL POLLUTION
COMPENSATION
FUNDS

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| Agenda item: 7 | IOPC/OCT09/7/1/2 | |
| Original: ENGLISH | 29 September 2009 | |
| 1992 Fund Assembly | 92A14 | • |
| 1992 Fund Executive Committee | 92EC46 | |
| Supplementary Fund Assembly | SA5 | |
| 1971 Fund Administrative Council | 71AC24 | |

SECRETARIAT MATTERS

INTERNSHIPS WITHIN THE SECRETARIAT

Note by the Director

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| Summary: | <p>The 1992 Fund Secretariat receives, from time to time, requests for internships from both individuals and Member States.</p> <p>In light of the requests from Member States and an intervention at the October 2008 session of the 1992 Fund Assembly suggesting that the Director consider using the United Nations Associate Professional Officers' (APO) Programme or Associate Expert Programme, the Director has reviewed whether it would be possible and desirable for the Secretariat to accommodate requests for internships and/or to use the APO Programme.</p> <p>As a result of this review, the Director proposes that a suitable internship programme be developed and introduced.</p> |
| Action to be taken: | <p><u>1992 Fund Assembly:</u></p> <p>Consider introducing an internship programme.</p> |

1 **Background**

- 1.1 The 1992 Fund Secretariat receives, from time to time, requests for internships from both individuals and Member States. Such requests are not new; they have been received for many years. So far however, the Secretariat has not been able to accommodate any of the requests which have been received, nor have the governing bodies of the Organisation ever instructed the Director to do so or to investigate the possibilities for setting up an internship facility or programme.
- 1.2 The IOPC Funds' Secretariat has always, where possible, tried to accommodate Member States' wishes and will of course continue to do so. In response to Member States' wishes to be better acquainted with the day-to-day operations of the Funds, to have good working relations with the Funds and to have training provided to key nationals responsible for oil spill response, the Secretariat has over the years organised, and participated in, numerous seminars and claims handling workshops and will continue to do so to the extent possible.
- 1.3 At the 13th session of the Assembly of the 1992 Fund, held in October 2008, in the context of a discussion regarding document 92FUND/A.13/14/Rev.1 on Secretariat Matters, one delegation proposed that the Director consider using the Associate Professional Officers' (APO) Programme or Associate Expert Programme (document 92FUND/A.13/25, paragraph 16.14).

- 1.4 In light of the requests from Member States and the intervention at the 13th session of the 1992 Fund Assembly outlined above, the Director has reviewed whether it would be possible and desirable for the Secretariat to accommodate requests for internships and/or to use the APO Programme.
- 1.5 In view of the close relationship between the IOPC Funds and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), both historically and in connection with their day-to-day activities, the review by the Director has mainly concentrated on the programmes available within IMO. IMO operates an Internship Programme and also participates in the United Nations' Associate Professional Officers' (APO) Programme.

2 Review of the programmes available with IMO and other intergovernmental organisations based in London

- 2.1 The Internship Programme within IMO is open to students who are working towards their Masters or PhD. The programme is for periods from two weeks to three months and is not for the purpose of gaining work experience. The Internship Programme is geared to students who wish to undertake research into the activities of the Organization for the main purpose of writing their dissertation or to further their own research. Acceptance of students for internship attachment at IMO's Headquarters is subject to the clear understanding that their stay will entail no financial implications, legal obligations or liabilities for IMO. Information about IMO's internship programme is available on its website (www.imo.org).
- 2.2 The APO Programme offers candidates an opportunity to become involved in the work of the Organization and to carry out duties related to the work of the IMO Secretariat. The APO scheme is for attachments for a period of one to two years. The APO is paid by the Organization for the duration of the appointment and is subject to the Staff Regulations and Rules of the Organization as any other international civil servant. The sponsoring Government is responsible for the reimbursement to the Organization of all costs related to the appointment of the APO.
- 2.3 As far as the Director is aware, other intergovernmental organisations based in London which have a Secretariat of similar size to that of the Funds do not offer any internship programmes, though a few have offered opportunities for students or professionals to work on research based projects. These are not formal internship programmes and relate mainly to organisations dealing with commodities, which are not comparable to the IOPC Funds.

3 Director's analysis

- 3.1 The IOPC Funds' Secretariat is, for all practical purposes, an administrative body with a specific mandate to administer the 1992 Fund Convention. In respect of the core tasks of the IOPC Funds, the work of the Secretariat is in many respects similar to the running of an insurance company. The rest of the tasks carried out in the Secretariat are essentially of an administrative nature, necessary for the functioning of the IOPC Funds as an independent intergovernmental organisation.
- 3.2 For persons who are interested in carrying out research in respect of the IOPC Funds' operations, information is readily available from the IOPC Funds' web site and from the Document Server which holds all documents presented to sessions of the IOPC Funds' governing bodies. An additional source of information for the future will be the Records of Decisions Database once that is made available to the public. To the extent, therefore, that there are opportunities for individuals to undertake any research regarding the operations of the IOPC Funds, it is difficult to see why it would be essential for such research to be undertaken from within the Funds' offices.
- 3.3 The Secretariat, when contacted by students or young professionals who are undertaking research work, follows the practice of helping them by explaining the policies and practices of the IOPC Funds and providing guidance as to where to find the information required for their research. This is in line with the approach generally taken by the Secretariat in respect of requests for information about the IOPC Funds and its operations.

- 3.4 The APO programme could provide an opportunity for professionals to actually contribute to the work of the Secretariat and thereby obtain experience of the IOPC Funds and its operations, as the individual would spend a considerable amount of time participating in the actual work of the Secretariat. There are however, in the Director's view, other problems potentially associated with such a programme in the case of the IOPC Funds.
- 3.5 Contrary to IMO, which is predominantly a policy-making organisation, the IOPC Funds are dealing with considerable financial interests and many aspects of the Secretariat's work are of a sensitive and confidential nature, in particular those in connection with the core tasks of the organisation: claims handling and assessment, as well as oil reporting and contributions. It could be questioned, therefore, whether the involvement in such matters of an APO, put forward for a position within the Secretariat by a Member State for a limited period of time and being entirely financed by that Member State, might raise issues concerning the complete independence required of IOPC Funds' staff, in particular in relation to major incidents.
- 3.6 Properly carrying out the core functions of the IOPC Funds requires years of experience and a substantial degree of continuity, as claims handling and assessment in respect of an incident can be ongoing over a number of years and precedents are therefore continuously set, spanning various incidents over the years, in a variety of Member States. Taking on staff who lack sufficient experience and require intensive in-house training and supervision, for relatively short periods of time, has the potential to jeopardise the integrity of the work of the organisation. Permanent staff members, in particular those working in claims handling and assessment, will have very limited possibilities for supervising/mentoring short-term staff. In spite of the commendable idea behind the APO scheme, the time taken for supervising/mentoring APO's in a small Secretariat will inevitably be detrimental to the time that can be spent on the core tasks of the Organisation. It is important to note in this respect that the Organisation is already criticised, on a regular basis, by Member States involved in major oil pollution incidents, for the speed at which claims are assessed and paid. It is also important to note that the Secretariat is at present trying to deal with the workload caused by the problems addressed in document IOPC/OCT09/4/2 on procedures for the assessment of large numbers of claims for relatively small amounts.
- 3.7 Whilst it is recognised that the knowledge and professional experience of an APO could enrich the Secretariat and its operations, it must be taken into account that the Secretariat is small and that the roles within it are highly specialised. Furthermore, most of the Secretariat is engaged in administrative work related to the fact that the Funds are free-standing, independent intergovernmental organisations, which therefore need to cover a number of key administrative functions in-house. Since it is likely that Member States will be mostly interested in having an APO involved in what could be seen as the core activity of the Funds, ie claims handling and assessment, it has to be kept in mind that the staff engaged in that activity are only a small minority within the Secretariat. Considerations such as size and focus of the Organisation are much less pressing in the case of IMO, which has about ten times the number of staff of the Funds.
- 3.8 For the reasons set out above, the Director considers that the APO scheme would not be suitable for the Funds' Secretariat.

4 Director's proposal

In view of the continuing interest in the work of the Funds, the Director proposes that a suitable internship programme be developed and introduced, and that he will report the details of such programme to the next session of the 1992 Fund Assembly. It is his intention to explore the possibilities of co-operating, in the context of the 1992 Fund's internship programme, with organisations with whom the Fund is closely associated and has regular contacts. In that way, the programme may be given a wider perspective than that of the IOPC Funds alone and interns would have the opportunity to get acquainted with all aspects of the functioning of the international regime for liability and compensation for oil pollution damage.

5 **Action to be taken**

1992 Fund Assembly:

The 1992 Fund Assembly is invited:

- (a) to take note of the information contained in this document; and
 - (b) to consider introducing an internship programme.
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