



INTERNATIONAL  
OIL POLLUTION  
COMPENSATION  
FUNDS 1971 AND 1992

ASSEMBLY  
5th session  
Agenda item 17

92FUND/A.5/14  
10 October 2000  
Original: ENGLISH

ASSEMBLY  
23rd session  
Agenda item 15

71FUND/A.23/13

## WORKING METHODS OF THE SECRETARIAT

### Note by the Director

**Summary:**

The document deals with the implementation of the new structure of the Secretariat and of new working methods. Information is given on the developments since the October 1999 sessions of the governing bodies, in particular in the field of information technology. The question of whether a further evaluation of the working methods of the Secretariat should be carried out is addressed.

**Action to be taken:**

Decide whether a further evaluation of the working methods should be carried out at this stage.

### 1 Introduction

At their sessions in April/May 1998, the 1992 and 1971 Fund Assemblies took a number of decisions relating to a new structure of the Secretariat, the introduction of new working methods and the strengthening of the Funds' activities in certain fields (documents 92FUND/A/ES.3/21, paragraph 8 and 71FUND/A/ES.4/16, paragraph 4). The decisions were based on a review carried out by two external consultant firms and proposals presented by the Director made in the light of the consultants' report (documents 71FUND/A/ES.4/3, 71FUND/A/ES.4/3/1 and 92FUND/A/ES.3/7). The gradual implementation of the Assemblies' decisions commenced in the autumn of 1998.

## **2     Review carried out in 1999**

- 2.1     In the summer of 1999 the Director instructed one of the consultants who had carried out the review referred to in paragraph 1 above to review the implementation of the Assemblies' decisions. The consultant's report and a note by the Director on the issues involved were considered by the governing bodies of the 1992 and 1971 Funds at their sessions in October 1999 (documents 92FUND/A.4/14, 92FUND/A.14/4/1, 71FUND/A.22/14 and 71FUND/A.22/14/1).
- 2.2     The governing bodies decided that a further evaluation of the working methods should be arranged once the Secretariat had settled into its new premises (documents 92FUND/A.4/32, paragraph 16.7 and 71FUND/EXC.62/14/A.22/23, paragraph 16.6).

## **3     Present structure of the Secretariat**

- 3.1     As decided by the Assemblies, the Secretariat has budgetary appropriations for 27 staff members, 10 in the Professional and higher categories and 17 in the General Service category. One post in the Professional category, that of a Claims Officer, and one in the General Service category are vacant.
- 3.2     The Secretariat is structured in departments, namely the Claims Department, the Finance and Administration Department and the External Relations and Conference Department. The Director, the Legal Counsel and the three Heads of Department comprise a Management Team which manages the operation of the Organisations.
- 3.3     Under the new structure established by the Assemblies in 1998 the Director delegates considerable authority to the Heads of Departments and, as regards the handling of claims for compensation, to the Legal Counsel and the Claims Officers. This has enabled the Director to concentrate on matters of major strategic importance, policy issues, long term planning and high level contacts with Governments.

## **4     New posts established by the governing bodies in October 1999**

- 4.1     In October 1999 the governing bodies approved the creation of two posts in the Professional category, namely a Senior French Translator/Reviser and an IT Officer.
- 4.2     After consultation with staff and discussions within the Management Team, the Director will be issuing job descriptions for all staff members, reflecting the new structure of the Secretariat and defining the tasks and responsibilities of each staff member. In order to reflect the role of each staff member, new job titles will be introduced.

## **5     Developments since the October 1999 sessions of the Governing Bodies**

- 5.1     Since the October 1999 session of the governing bodies of the 1992 and 1971 Funds, the following major developments have taken place.

### *Translation services*

- 5.2     The Senior French Translator/Reviser took up her post on 1 January 2000. As a result of the IOPC Funds' having an experienced in-house translator, the situation in respect of the preparation of French language documents for the sessions of the various Fund bodies has improved significantly. In the context of the *Erika* incident it has also proved extremely valuable for the IOPC Funds to have within the Secretariat the capability of rapidly producing high quality French texts.
- 5.3     In the light of the experience gained from having a French in-house translator, the Director has proposed in the 2001 Budget (documents 92FUND/A.5/24, paragraph 3.1.13 and

71FUND/A.23/18, paragraph 3.1.13) to be authorised to engage a Spanish translator on a temporary basis on contract for a period of up to one year. This would make it possible to assess whether the Funds should create a permanent post of Spanish translator.

*Information technology*

- 5.4 The IOPC Funds undertook an assessment of their needs in the field of information technology (IT) in 1999. Following this assessment it was deemed necessary to develop an overall IT strategy.
- 5.5 The IT Officer took up his post on 17 January 2000. He has therefore been able to participate in the planning of the IT system in the new offices and to implement the decisions taken by the Director in this regard. The IT Officer has contributed to enhancing the Secretariat's use of information technology in general and is responsible for staff training in this field.
- 5.6 In connection with the relocation to new premises, it was necessary to re-design and upgrade the computer network infrastructure. A faster and more efficient computer system has been installed in the new premises which also connects those offices to the Funds' offices in the building of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The IOPC Funds' staff now have access to the internet and worldwide access to the computer network, facilitating their work when they are out of the office. Measures have been taken to protect the Funds against the negative consequences of a breakdown of the computer systems and back-up systems have been installed to maintain and preserve critical functions. Computer security has been enhanced and new technologies introduced to ensure the integrity of the Secretariat's information systems.
- 5.7 The software used by the Secretariat is being improved, which will provide a comprehensive system to support the decision making process. Information databases are being developed to facilitate the claims handling process. All claims handling databases will be merged in a single database to improve the management, analysis and reporting of claims data for all incidents. A multi-lingual claims handling database is also being developed to support claims handling procedures and assessments. The Secretariat now directly manages and controls all claims handling databases used by local Claims Handling Offices.

*Web site*

- 5.8 The IOPC Funds' website was opened in October 1999. It contains an explanatory information note on the international compensation regime, the IOPC Funds' Annual Report for 1999, the Claims Manual, a note on frequently asked questions on the IOPC Funds, a note on the Status of Conventions, information on Convention limits and news briefings issued after meetings of the IOPC Funds' governing bodies. There is also a note on the *Erika* incident. In view of the importance of the website as a source of information on the IOPC Funds, the website is being re-designed and expanded.
- 5.9 It is the intention that the documents issued for the Assemblies, the Executive Committee and intersessional Working Groups will be available to delegations on the internet during 2001.

*Monitoring of experts and Claims Handling Offices*

- 5.10 As recommended by the management consultants, the Secretariat has strengthened its monitoring of experts working for the IOPC Funds and has increased its involvement in the activities of local Claims Handling Offices.
- 5.11 The Head of the Claims Department has devoted significant time to the general monitoring of experts and the activities at local Claims Handling Offices. One of the Claims Officers has been

heavily involved in the examination of claims arising out of the *Aegean Sea* and *Nissos Amorgos* incidents, working closely with the various experts.

- 5.12 The Secretariat was heavily involved in the establishment of the Claims Handling Office in Lorient (France) set up on 12 January 2000 as a result of the *Erika* incident. The Claims Officer primarily responsible for the handling of the incident spent a number of weeks in the office during the first three months and has visited the office regularly thereafter. The Director has visited the office twice and the Head of the Claims Department has made regular visits to the office. The IT Officer has assisted the Claims Handling Office staff in improving the claims database. Other staff members have also spent a considerable time in Lorient to assist and gain experience of the workings of the office.
- 5.13 The Director, the Legal Counsel and the Head of the Claims Department have visited the Claims Handling Office in Kobe on several occasions for discussions concerning the examination of claims arising from the *Nakhodka* incident.
- 5.14 The expected large number of claims in the tourism sector arising from the *Erika* incident will result in a very heavy workload for the Claims Department. The Director and the Head of the Department are considering what temporary measures should be taken to handle this workload.

*External Relations and Conference Department*

- 5.15 At the October 1999 sessions of the governing bodies the Director mentioned that he intended to recruit to two posts in the General Service category in the External Relations and Conference Department, namely a Translation Administrative Assistant and a Clerk/Secretary (documents 92FUND/A.4/14/1, paragraph 6.2 and 71FUND/A.22/14/1, paragraph 6.2). Appointments to these posts were made during 2000.
- 5.16 The Head of the External Relations and Conference Department, Ms Hilary Warson, will be on maternity leave from 14 October 2000. Ms Catherine Grey has been appointed as Acting Head of the Department during this period.

*Redeployment of one post in the General Service category*

- 5.17 One of the posts in the General Service category, that of a secretary in the Claims Department, is vacant.
- 5.18 The experience gained from the operation of the Secretariat during the last twelve months has shown that there is a great variation in workload within the various departments. It has also emerged that more secretarial support is needed for the Director. After consultation with the Head of the Claims Department, the Director has decided to move the vacant General Service post to the Director's Office as assistant to the Director's Personal Assistant. The holder of this post will also support the other departments in cases of heavy workload or absence due to leave or sickness.

*Receptionist*

- 5.19 The Director is considering employing two persons part-time to fill the position of receptionist so as to ensure reception cover for the whole day without interruption. This arrangement will have only minor budgetary consequences, and the additional costs will be covered by the proposed appropriation for salaries in the 2001 Budget.

**6 Further evaluation of the working methods**

- 6.1 As indicated by the Director in his submission to the Assembly sessions in April/May 1998, the decisions on the new structure and working methods of the Secretariat have been implemented

gradually. In the Director's view further measures could be taken to obtain the optimum benefits of the new structure and the increased staff resources. In particular there remains a considerable amount of work to be carried out in the field of information technology.

- 6.2 The relocation of the Secretariat to the new premises has required considerable work during the period November 1999 – September 2000 and the Secretariat is still adapting to the new improved working conditions and facilities.
- 6.3 The Director takes the view that it would not be necessary to decide on any further evaluation of the working methods at this stage. The Assemblies may instead wish to instruct the Director to continue his efforts to implement progressively the new working methods so as to increase the effectiveness of the Secretariat by the optimum use of the staff resources and to report the developments to the Assemblies at their regular sessions.

**5 Action to be taken by the Assemblies**

The Assemblies are invited:

- (a) to take note of the information contained in this document; and
  - (b) to decide on whether a further evaluation of the working methods should be arranged at this stage.
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