

INAUGURAL ADDRESS BY DGICG FOR 14TH NOSDCP MEETING

1. IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE AMONGST YOU AGAIN AT THIS VERY IMPORTANT MEETING DEALING WITH MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION. THE PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVE OF THIS MEETING IS TO REVIEW OUR PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE CAPABILITIES WITH A VIEW TO PREPARE OURSELVES TO RESPOND TO ANY OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY WHICH MAY ARISE OUT AT SEA. THIS MEETING ALSO AFFORDS US AN OPPORTUNITY TO MONITOR THE PROGRESS MADE BY VARIOUS RESOURCE AGENCIES WHILST SHOULDERING THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AS PER THE PROVISIONS OF NOSDCP.

2. THE SIX MONTHS THAT HAVE PASSED SINCE WE MET AT THE LAST NOSDCP PREPAREDNESS MEETING HAS BEEN EVENTFUL AND THE EFFORTS MADE BY VARIOUS PORTS AND OTHER AGENICES HAS BEEN VERY APPRECIABLE IN THEIR ENDAVOUR TO PROTECT THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT INTERESTS FROM THE OIL POLLUTION THAT AFFECTED THREE PLACES SUCH AS THE SINKING OF MV ASIAN FOREST OFF NEW MANGALORE IN JULY, MYSTERIOUS SPILL THAT AFFECTED THE SOUTH GUJARAT AND NORTH MAHARASHTRA IN AUGUST, AND THE SINKING OF MV BLACK ROSE OFF PARADIP IN SEPTEMBER.

3. THIS FORUM HAS BEEN TIME AND AGAIN ADVOCATING FOR PREPAREDNESS IN THE FORM OF ESTABLISHING AN OIL SPILL CONTINGENCY PLAN AND TIER-I POLLUTION RESPONSE FACILITY TO ADDRESS ANY OIL SPILL THAT AFFECTS THEIR AREA OF OPERATION AND JURISDICTION.

THE OIL DEBRIS WASH OFF THAT AFFECTED THE SOUTH GUJARAT COAST COULD AFFECT ANY OTHER COASTAL STATE. THE PROMPT SHORELINE CLEAN-UP MEASURES TAKEN BY GUJARAT GOVERNMENT WAS OF VERY HIGH ORDER. HOWEVER THE OIL SPILL FINGER PRINTING AND IDENTIFICATION OF SPILLER WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE UNLESS A DEDICATED SYSTEM IS SET-UP BY POLLUTION CONTROL BOARDS IN THE RESPECTIVE COASTAL STATES.

4. THERE IS A GROWING CONCERN ON THE REGULATORY MECHANISM FOR CONTROLLING THE OPERATION OF THE IRON ORE BULK CARRIER. IN THE PAST TWO YEARS THREE SHIPS THAT PROCEEDED OUT TO SEA AFTER LOADING THE IRON ORE DURING THE MONSOON PERIOD HAVE SUNK. ONE OF THE VESSEL MV BLACK ROSE WAS AGED 32 YEARS OLD AND WAS FOUND OPERATING WITH A FORGED INSURANCE CERTIFICATE. OPERATION OF SUCH TYPE OF VESSELS IS A FINE RECIPE FOR DISASTER. HOWEVER, ALL CREDIT SHOULD GO TO THE PARADIP PORT TRUST FOR TAKING NECESSARY PREVENTIVE ACTION, INCLUDING ISSUING GLOBAL TENDER FOR REMOVAL OF OIL, PREVENTIVE BOOMING TO ARREST OIL SPILL DRIFT, DIVING OPERATIONS TO SEAL THE LEAKING BREATHER PIPES AND INSTITUTION OF SHORELINE PROTECTION MEASURES WHICH INCLUDED APPLICATION OF BIO-REMEDICATION AGENTS.

5. WITH REGARD TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TIER-I FACILITIES, I AM GLAD THAT TEN OUT OF TWELVE PORTS HAVE ATLEAST ESTABLISHED THE BASIC POLLUTION RESPONSE INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE OTHER TWO MAJOR PORTS ARE MAKING SOME HEADWAY. I WAS INFORMED THAT THE JOINT INSPECTION UNDERTAKEN BY THE COAST GUARD AND MINISTRY OF SHIPPING REPRESENTATIVES HAS AIDED THE PORT TRUSTS TO IDENTIFY THE WEAK AREAS AND ESTABLISH NECESSARY MEASURES ACCORDINGLY.

I THANK THE MINSITRY OF SHIPPING FOR UNDERTAKING THIS EFFORT AND I PROPOSE THAT THIS JOINT INSPECTION EFFORT SHOULD CONTINUE SO THAT THE MOMENTUM OF THE POLLUTION RESPONSE PREPAREDNESS IS ALWAYS KEPT UP TO HIGHEST STANDARDS.

6. THE SECOND NATIONAL LEVEL EXERCISE NATPOLREX-II, IN WHICH MANY RESOURCE AGENCIES PARTICIPATED WAS CONDUCTED VERY EFFICIENTLY. THE NATIONAL LEVEL EXERCISE IS AIMED SOLELY TO REVIEW OUR PREPAREDNESS AND IDENTIFY THE WEAK AREAS. I THANK THE RESOURCE AGENCIES WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE NATIONAL EXERCISE. HOWEVER THERE IS MORE SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT.

7 THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IS ACTIVELY PURSUING RATIFICATION OF THE IMO WRECK REMOVAL CONVENTION WHICH PAVES WAY FOR EFFECITIVE FUEL OIL AND WRECK REMOVAL WHICH MAY OCCUR IN ANY PART OF THE MARITIME ZONES. THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL SOUTH ASIA COOPERATIVE FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION (SACEP) HAS ESTABLISHED AN MOU FOR COOPERATION AMONG THE FIVE SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES SUCH AS PAKISTAN, SRILANKA, MALDIVES, BANGLADESH AND INDIA WILL COME INTO FORCE SHORTLY. THE MOU PROVIDES FOR INTERNATIONAL LEVEL TRAINING AND EXERCISES FOR THE MEMBER COUNTRIES WITH THE ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY IMO AND UNEP. WE NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR INVOLVING INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS ALSO. ANOTHER CONVENTION WHICH IS ALSO ON THE RADAR OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IS ACCESSION TO THE 1996 PROTOCOL TO THE LONDON DUMPING CONVENTION 1972. THIS CONVENTION LAYS DOWN CERTAIN STANDARDS FOR DISPOSAL OF MATERIALS AT SEA THAT INCLUDES THE OFFSHORE INSTALLATIONS. PRESENTLY THERE ARE NO SPECIFIC REGULATIONS ADDRESSING THE DISPOSAL ISSUES EXCEPT FOR OIL AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES DISCHARGED BY SHIPS. BY ACCEDING TO THE LONDON CONVENTION, WE WILL ABLE TO PROVIDE ALL ROUND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION MEASURES.

8. DURING THE YEAR, THE COAST GUARD IN COORDINATION WITH THE AMET UNIVERSITY CHENNAI HAS SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED THE FIRST IMO LEVEL-II POLLUTION RESPONSE TRAINING AS A PILOT PROJECT. BASED ON THE REQUIREMENTS FROM THE RESOURCE AGENCIES, THE COAST GUARD WILL COORDINATE THE ADVANCED POLLUTION RESPONSE TRAINING ACCORDINGLY. THE COAST GUARD HAS ALSO DEVELOPED A CONTINGENCY PLAN FOR HAZARDOUS AND NOXIOUS SUBSTANCES (HNS) TO EFFECTIVELY COORDINATE RESPONSE ACTIONS FOR HNS SPILLS AT SEA. I REQUEST THE PORTS AND OTHER AGENCIES WHO ARE INVOLVED IN HANDLING THE HNS CARGO TO ESTABLISH THE NECESSARY CONTINGENCY PLAN AND RESPONSE MEASURES.

9. I VISITED REPUBLIC OF KOREA IN SEPTEMBER THIS YEAR AND LEARNT FEW LESSONS ON THE MANPOWER AND RESOURCES MOBILISATION, DECISION MAKING PROCESS ADOPTED DURING THE MT HEBEI SPIRIT INCIDENT BY THE GOVERNMENT OF KOREA AND THE KOREAN COAST GUARD. A PRESENTATION ON THE POLLUTION RESPONSE MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA WILL BE DELIVERED TODAY BY THE JOINT DIRECTOR (FE).

10. COAST GUARD IS REVIEWING THE NOSDCP AND NECESSARY AMENDMENT WHERE REQUIRED WILL BE MADE TO MEET ALL THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN AND I REQUEST ALL CONCERNED TO FORWARD THEIR DETAILS SO THAT AN UPDATED PLAN IS MADE BEFORE THE NEXT NOSDCP MEETING FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

11. FINALLY I THANK ALL THE PORTS AND OTHER AGENCIES WHO HAVE PROACTIVELY ACTED UPON THE DECISIONS TAKEN DURING THE PREVIOUS MEETING LEADING TO ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NECESSARY POLLUTION RESPONSE FACILITIES IN THEIR AREA OF OPERATIONS.

OUR COLLECTIVE AND SINCERE EFFORTS WILL SURELY STRENGTHEN THE EXISTING MANAGEMENT OF OIL SPILL RESPONSE. JUST AS DYNAMIC AS OIL, OUR PREPAREDNESS NEEDS TO BE DYNAMIC AND CONTINUOUS. THE PLAN AND POLLUTION RESPONSE FACILITY SHOULD BE REVIEWED, RE-ASSESSED AND DRILLED REGULARLY SO THAT AN EFFECTIVE RESPONSE TO OIL SPILL CAN BE MADE COLLECTIVELY.

JAI HIND.