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Chile: working paper on the establishment of regional organizations to provide assistance in case of accidents resulting in pollution of the marine environment

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Chile: working paper on the establishment of regional organizations to provide assistance in case of accidents resulting in pollution of the marine environment

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1. It is common knowledge that the marine ecological environment has suffered serious damage from accidents in which huge oil tankers have spilled large quantities of hydrocarbons into the oceans, decimating the marine species, polluting coastal areas, adversely affecting tourism and upsetting the ecosystem of the areas concerned in countless other ways.

2. We need only recall the case of the *Torrey Canyon* in the Atlantic off the coast of the United Kingdom or those that have occurred in Chilean waters, such as that of the *Napier* and the most recent case of the Netherlands tanker, *Metula*, in the first narrows of the Strait of Magellan.

3. Since the damage caused by this type of accident may entail very high costs for the fragile economies of the developing countries, it is advisable to establish without delay systems for protection against, assistance in and the prevention of accidents at sea caused by tankers and other ships carrying pollutants which are dangerous to the environment.

4. Although the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) has dealt with such pollution in its conventions, the Chilean delegation considers it extremely important for regional stations to be established under the supervision of that organization; the stations should be technically equipped not only to prevent fuels from catching fire but also and above all to eliminate the effects of pollution of the marine environment caused by the spillage of large quantities of fuel ensuing from such accidents.

5. Regional stations should be set up in such a way that the scene of the accident may be reached with the speed usually called for in such circumstances.

6. These stations should be financed through contributions from the oil consortia and related agencies connected with such activities.

7. The Third Conference on the Law of the Sea is considered to be the appropriate body to recommend the establishment of such stations at the international and regional level.