

THE LONDON CONVENTION AND PROTOCOL:

THEIR ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION TO PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

LONDON CONVENTION AND PROTOCOL

What is the London Convention and its Protocol?

The "Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter 1972", the "London Convention" for short, is one of the first global conventions to protect the marine environment from human activities and has been in force since 1975. Its objective is to promote the effective control of all sources of marine pollution and to take all practicable steps to prevent pollution of the sea by dumping of wastes and other matter.

- In 1996, the "London Protocol" was agreed to further modernize the Convention and, eventually, replace it. Under the Protocol, all dumping is prohibited, except for possibly acceptable wastes on the so-called "reverse list". This list includes the following:
 - 1 dredged material;
 - 2 sewage sludge;
 - 3 fish wastes;
 - 4 vessels and platforms;
 - 5 inert, inorganic geological material (e.g., mining wastes);
 - 6 organic material of natural origin;
 - 7 bulky items primarily comprising iron, steel and concrete; and
 - 8 carbon dioxide streams from carbon dioxide capture processes for sequestration.
- The London Protocol entered into force on 24 March 2006. For a current list of Parties to the Convention and Protocol, please visit our website.

What has been achieved under the London Convention and its Protocol?

- The unregulated dumping and incineration activities that developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s have been halted. Parties to the Convention agreed to control dumping by implementing regulatory programmes to assess the need for, and the potential impact of, dumping. They eliminated dumping of certain types of waste and, gradually, made this regime more restrictive by promoting sound waste management and pollution prevention. Prohibitions are in force for dumping of



industrial and radioactive wastes, as well as for incineration at sea of industrial waste and sewage sludge. As mentioned earlier, under the Protocol all dumping is now prohibited, except for the so-called "reverse list".

- "Generic Guidelines" and comprehensive "Specific Guidelines" have been developed for **all** wastes on the reverse list. These Guidelines contain step-by-step procedures to evaluate wastes being considered for sea disposal, including waste prevention audits, assessment of alternatives, waste characterization, assessment of potential adverse environmental effects of dumping, disposal site selection and monitoring and licensing procedures. Training materials are available to promote and assist with the application of these guidelines.
- Guidance on the national implementation of the London Protocol has been developed providing an outline of the types of action, which States should consider taking at the national level.
- Guidelines have also been developed for the sampling and analysis of dredged material intended for disposal at sea. These provide considerations and good practices for developing sampling plans in an effort to help users decide how to organize and prioritize their sampling activities to suit their particular goals, experience, budget and technical capabilities. To assist those Parties with limited capacity or resources, advice on the application of low-technology techniques for assessing dredged material has been developed.



- Guidelines for the application of the ‘de minimis’ concept have been developed and assist in making judgements on whether materials for dumping could be exempted from radiological controls or whether a specific radiological assessment is needed.
- Guidance have been developed for the Development of Action Lists and Action Levels for Dredged Material assists regulators and policy makers on the selection of Action Lists and the development of Action Levels for dredged material proposed for disposal at sea. An Action List is a set of chemicals of concern, biological responses of concern, or other characteristics that can be used for screening dredged material for their potential effects on human health and the marine environment. Action Levels establish thresholds that provide decision points to determine whether sediments can be disposed of at sea.
- Advice is available concerning the management of spoilt cargoes on board of vessels; best management practices for removal of anti-fouling coatings from ships; and placement of artificial reefs.
- A technical co-operation and assistance programme has been established to assist with capacity building for waste assessment and management, and in developing national regulations to comply with and implement the London Protocol.
- Contracting Parties to the Protocol have recently taken ground-breaking steps to mitigate the impacts of increasing concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by amending the Protocol to regulate carbon capture and sequestration in sub-sea geological formations.
- A Risk Assessment and Management Framework was developed to ensure compatibility with Annex 2 to the Protocol, identify relevant gaps in knowledge, and reach a view on the implications of this storage activity for the marine environment.
- London Convention and Protocol Contracting Parties have also adopted an “Assessment Framework for Scientific Research Involving Ocean Fertilization” to guide Parties on how to assess proposals for ocean fertilization research which provides detailed steps for completion of an environmental assessment, including risk management and monitoring.

- Parties have developed a wealth of experience regarding marine pollution prevention issues, interpretation of the Convention and Protocol, licensing, compliance and field monitoring activities.

What are the potential benefits of membership of the London Protocol?

Prevention of marine pollution caused by dumping of wastes and other matter into the sea is a challenge that covers many aspects of pollution control, including policy, legal, compliance, economic, scientific, and technical issues. The benefits of membership to the London Protocol cannot be overemphasized for each Contracting Party, which include the synergistic effects of being part of the worldwide community committed to the prevention of marine pollution. Membership opens up access to a variety of possible assistance activities from other Contracting Parties and the Secretariat. In brief, the benefits include:

- Joining with the international community to implement an agreement for control of sources of marine pollution, which promotes finding the best overall environmental solution to specific problems and sustainable use of the oceans;
- Access to the annual meetings of the Parties (policy, compliance, and regulatory aspects of dumping and protection of the marine environment), and access to the annual meetings of the Scientific Groups (scientific and technical aspects of dumping);
- Access to technical co-operation and assistance related to the experience of other Parties to enhance capacity building for marine environmental protection from dumping activities; and





- Improvements in the health of ocean waters are expected as a direct result of establishing management controls on dumping of wastes and other matter into the ocean.

What are the potential costs of membership of the London Protocol?

The potential costs of joining the London Protocol vary and depend on the extent of dumping activities. There are no membership fees, except the costs that each Contracting Party contributes to the IMO for the London Convention and Protocol Secretariat's budget. Work efforts and/or funding would be required for:

- National legal and policy experts to prepare national implementing legislation;
- Administering a national permitting or licensing system with procedures that comply with the articles and annexes of the London Protocol, including compliance assistance, enforcement, and implementation of the waste assessment procedures in London Protocol Annex 2;
- Developing technical expertise for assessment, permitting, and monitoring;
- Conducting field monitoring and compliance monitoring activities;
- Preparing annual reports for submittal to the Secretariat; and
- Attending annual meetings of the Contracting Parties and the Scientific Groups.

What are current activities under the Convention and Protocol?

- Improvement of compliance with the Convention and Protocol, with emphasis on collaboration and promotion of compliance, as opposed to sanctions for noncompliance. In particular, following the entry into force of the London Protocol, the Contracting Parties adopted Compliance Procedures and Mechanisms that included the establishment of the Compliance Group which meets in parallel to the Meeting of the Contracting Parties and provides advice to the London Protocol Contracting Parties on compliance issues.
- Improvement to obligatory reporting requirements, such as on-line reporting of dumping activities through IMO's GISIS platform (see <http://gisis.imo.org>) and access to national legislation to provide examples.
- Further improvement of the scientific evaluation of environmental acceptability of wastes proposed for dumping, including monitoring and assessment of disposal options.
- Technical co-operation and assistance activities are an agenda priority and are undertaken in collaboration with similar programmes under other agreements wherever possible.
- A regular review of the long-term work programme and strategies for technical co-operation and assistance.
- While capture and permanent storage of carbon dioxide in sub-seabed geological formations is being promoted to help avert the threat of acidification of the oceans, caution is expressed with regard to large-scale iron fertilization of the oceans, as the knowledge on the effectiveness and potential environmental impact of such geoengineering activities is currently insufficient. London Convention and Protocol Contracting Parties are currently working towards providing a global, transparent and effective control and regulatory mechanism for ocean fertilization activities and other activities that fall within the scope of the London Convention and Protocol and have the potential to cause harm to the marine environment. The Convention and Protocol have, so far, been the most advanced international instruments addressing marine geoengineering activities such as ocean fertilization.



How do the Convention and Protocol work together with other international agreements?

Since the London Convention came into force in 1975, many additional global and regional agreements and programmes to protect the environment have also come into force. Both the London Convention and Protocol provide the global rules and standards on dumping as called for in Article 210.6 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (1982). To ensure that implementation of the Convention co-ordinates and integrates with these agreements, several cross-sectoral activities are undertaken, such as:

- Policies assisting Parties in ensuring that their national waste-management strategies cover all sources of pollution of the marine environment, including waste disposal at sea
- Promotion of, for example, waste prevention at source and beneficial use of dredged marine sediments;
- Development of advice under the Protocol which is complementary to that developed under other agreements, e.g. the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and

their Disposal (1989), the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the UNEP Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (1995) and the UNEP Regional Seas Programme; and

- Setting up of co-operative arrangements with the above agreements and programmes and implementing joint activities.

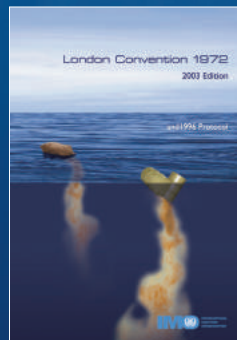
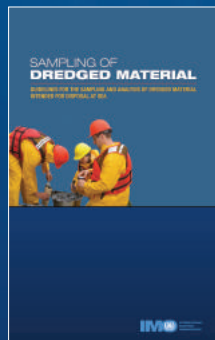
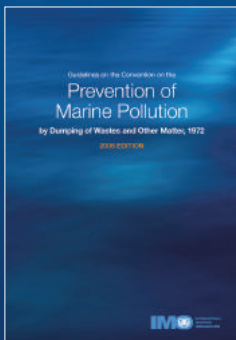
How can a State prepare for membership of the London Protocol?

- Study the guidance on national implementation of the London Protocol to see what is required.
- Use the London Protocol: “What is It and How to Implement It Manual”.
- Access further information on the London Protocol at: www.londonprotocol.imo.org
- Contact a Party in your region and learn from their experience. For a list of Parties, see the website.
- Attend a meeting as an observer; meetings are always open to all UN Member States.
- Contact the Office for the London Convention and Protocol at the address overleaf.





Publications relating to the London Convention and its Protocol



These IMO titles may be purchased from authorized distributors (see listing for your local distributor at www.imo.org, Publications Bookshop) and via IMO's OnLine Bookshop at the same website address.

For more information, please contact:

International Maritime Organization
Office for the London Convention and Protocol
4 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7SR
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 7735 7611

Fax: +44 (0)20 7587 3210

Email: olcp@imo.org

Web: www.londonprotocol.imo.org