**Readiness Evaluation Tool for Oil Spills (RETOSTM)**

(Note by the interim Secretariat)

**Introduction**

During the Sixth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Tehran Convention (COP6), held in Baku, Azerbaijan, on 19-21 October 2022, it was noted that in order to assist with the alignment of the National Contingency Plans (NCP) with the Caspian Sea Plan Concerning Regional Co-operation in Combating Oil Pollution in Cases of Emergency (the Aktau Protocol Plan), the Oil Spill Preparedness Regional Initiative (OSPRI) representative proposed the use of the Readiness Evaluation Tool for Oil Spills (RETOS**TM**) for enhanced assessment of National Response Systems (including NCPs). RETOS**TM** is freely available and has been widely utilized in other regions. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA) have been supporting an upgrade to the tool, incorporating updates references and a new web-based, user-friendly interface for its use. The update made it easier to translate the tool into other languages (e.g. Russian)[[1]](#footnote-1). Translation into Russian has commenced with support from OSPRI, and this is expected to be completed by early October 2024.

**History of RETOSTM**

The RETOS**TM** tool was developed by the Regional Association of Oil, Gas, and Biofuels Sector Companies in Latin America and the Caribbean (ARPEL) to enhance the region's preparedness and response to oil spills. ARPEL, founded in 1965, is an organization dedicated to promoting best practices and sustainable development within the energy sector. The development of RETOS emerged from the 2008 International Oil Spill Conference, in recognition of the need for a comprehensive, systematic approach to assessing and improving oil spill response capabilities.

The elaboration of RETOS**TM** began as part of ARPEL's broader initiative to bolster environmental protection measures in the oil and gas industry. The tool was designed to evaluate readiness, facilitate environmental training, and provide operational support, addressing the critical components necessary for effective spill response[[2]](#footnote-2). Over time, RETOS**TM** has evolved through collaboration with industry experts, environmental organizations, and government agencies. Its iterative development process incorporated feedback and lessons learned from real-world incidents, ensuring that it remained relevant and effective. Today, RETOS**TM** is widely regarded as a valuable resource, helping organizations to enhance their response strategies and minimize the environmental impact of oil spills. The latest updated web-based version of the tool[[3]](#footnote-3) was developed by an expert group with financial support from both IMO and IPIECA.

**What is RETOSTM?**

The International Guide[[4]](#footnote-4) and the RETOS™ Oil Spill Response Planning and Readiness Assessment Manual V 3.0[[5]](#footnote-5) were launched on 8-9 July 2024. This tool incorporates international best practices to provide a comprehensive approach to evaluation or assessment of oil spill preparedness and response. The RETOS**TM** tool is organized into several key modules, each designed to address critical aspects of oil spill response. These modules cover areas such as Oil Spill Contingency Planning, Response Coordination, Operational Response, and others. The International Guide provides a foundational framework that ensures the tool aligns with global good practice, while the RETOS Manual V 3.0 offers detailed, step-by-step instructions for implementing the tool's components. Together, they create a cohesive system that helps organizations systematically assess and improve their preparedness levels.

Central to RETOS**TM** is its solid assessment methodology, which is designed to evaluate an organization's readiness across multiple dimensions. The proposed self-assessments are benchmarked against international approaches, providing organizations with a clear picture of their strengths and areas for improvement. The RETOS Manual V 3.0 elaborates on this process, offering detailed guidance on conducting assessments, interpreting results, and developing actionable improvement plans.

The RETOS**TM** tool emphasizes the importance of training and capacity building, recognizing that effective oil spill response relies on well-prepared personnel. Operational support is another critical component of the RETOS**TM** tool. Additionally, RETOS**TM** fosters a culture of continuous improvement by encouraging organizations to regularly review and update their contingency plans and response capability based on lessons learned from exercises and real-world incidents. This iterative approach ensures that response strategies remain dynamic and responsive to changing conditions.

One of the strengths of the RETOS**TM** tool is its flexibility and adaptability. Both the International Guide and the RETOS Manual V 3.0 highlight the importance of customizing the tool to meet the specific needs and regulatory requirements of different organizations and regions. By allowing for regional adaptations and incorporating user feedback, RETOS**TM** maintains its applicability and utility in diverse contexts. At its heart RETOS**TM** is a robust questionnaire-based methodology that enables responsible organizations and stakeholders to assess preparedness and identify areas where improvements might be considered.

1. Document TC/COP6/17rev. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more detail see: <https://doi.org/10.7901/2169-3358-2017.1.1> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Available at: <https://retos.app> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Available at: <https://arpel.org/hubfs/DocsRetos/international_guide_2023_vfinal_2.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Available at: <https://arpel.org/hubfs/DocsRetos/RETOS_manual_ENGLISH_2024_final.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)