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Sustainable development

Cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution [71/220](#), the present report conveys the views of Member States and relevant regional and international organizations on cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of the environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea, with a view to exploring the possibility of establishing a database and options for the most appropriate institutional framework for such a database, as well as identifying the appropriate intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations system for further consideration and implementation, as appropriate, of the cooperative measures envisaged in that resolution. The information was drawn from responses of Member States and relevant regional and international organizations to the questionnaire circulated by the Secretariat on those topics.

* [A/74/150](#).



I. Introduction

1. In its resolution [71/220](#), the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to continue to seek the views of Member States and relevant regional and international organizations on cooperative measures to assess and increase awareness of the environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea, also with a view to exploring the possibility of establishing a database and options for the most appropriate institutional framework for such a database, as well as identifying the appropriate intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations system for further consideration and implementation, as appropriate, of the cooperative measures envisaged in that resolution, building on and without duplicating existing activities, and with a view to achieving efficiency and synergies, taking into account the mandates and capacities of relevant international and regional organizations.
2. The General Assembly, in the same resolution, also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-fourth session a report on the implementation of the resolution, prepared using responses of Member States and relevant regional and international organizations, as well as other available information.
3. On 17 May 2019, the Secretariat circulated a questionnaire in that regard to all Member States, the United Nations system and other organizations, seeking their views on the topics mentioned above. Responses were received from nine Member States, including Cambodia, Denmark, France, Lithuania, Qatar, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A response was also received from the European Union.
4. Responses were also received from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Contributions were also received from the OSPAR Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic and the International Dialogue on Underwater Munitions.
5. In accordance with General Assembly resolution [71/220](#), the present report draws on responses to the questionnaire as well as other available information.

II. Cooperative measures at the national, regional and global levels

A. Assessment and monitoring

6. Certain recent activities to strengthen assessment and monitoring at the national, regional and global levels of the environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea have been highlighted in the received responses. Those activities would contribute to the collective understanding of the issues related to such waste and to the cooperative measures envisaged in General Assembly resolution [71/220](#).

1. Activities undertaken by Member States

7. In its response, Denmark mentioned that subject experts from the Danish Centre for Environment and Energy, through the Danish Environmental Protection Agency, participated in research projects, conducted risk assessments related to underwater pipeline constructions close to areas affected by waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea and contributed to the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (the Helsinki Commission) and the 2013 report of its expert group on

chemical munitions dumped in the Baltic Sea,¹ which was submitted as background information to the 2013 Ministerial Meeting of the Helsinki Commission, held in Copenhagen.

8. France stated that a notification system for known dumping sites and contacts with submerged conventional and chemical munitions (ammunition discoveries) had been put in place in 2003 (recommendation 2003/2 of the OSPAR Commission, on an OSPAR Framework for Reporting Encounters with Marine Dumped Conventional and Chemical Munitions). As part of the Convention for the protection of the marine environment of the North-East Atlantic (the OSPAR Convention), a monitoring and evaluation report on the impact of chemical and conventional munitions dumped at sea had been made annually since 2011, and also sent to the secretariat of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (the Barcelona Convention). Those data were also transmitted to the secretariat of the Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972 (the London Protocol).

9. France also stated that the Coastal Chemical Contamination Observation Network measured the presence of some contaminants in sentinel organisms, such as oysters and mussels (including polychlorinated biphenyls, dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane and heavy metals, such as silver, nickel, zinc, cadmium, chromium, vanadium, lead, copper and mercury), that can be found in munitions dumped at sea. However, that network did not specifically target submerged munitions sites. In the area under the OSPAR Commission, the few data available indicated little or no contamination of fish, molluscs, crustaceans or sediments in the vicinity of the disposal sites.

10. France further mentioned that the chemical compounds associated with those munitions were poorly identified, which posed two problems: first, it was difficult to look for compounds that had little or no identification in a monitoring network; second, it was essential to take into account the chemistry of those compounds in water to assess the risk associated with the munitions. Indeed, they can react in very different ways: a deadly product released in the environment does not necessarily affect marine life – for example, hyperit (mustard gas) is very stable in water whereas the chlorine compounds of gases used in warfare degrade very quickly in water.

11. Lithuania, in its response, stated that between 2002 and 2004 it had investigated for the first time part of the chemical munitions dumping site in the Gotland Basin within the western part of the Lithuanian exclusive economic zone. The results had shown no changes to the environment at the chemical munitions dumping site, and arsenic concentrations were low relative to other investigations in the Baltic Sea and North Sea. Lithuania was a participant in the Chemical Munitions Search and Assessment, a flagship project of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which assessed the potential hazard of chemical munitions at the dumping site of the Lithuanian exclusive economic zone. The project had shown arsenic concentrations to be in line with concentrations found in 2003. It had also found the number of macrozoobenthos species to have decreased notably, and that chemical warfare agents were in sediments.

12. Lithuania also mentioned the project to establish models for optimizing dynamic urban mobility, which aimed to establish networks for monitoring chemical weapons dumping sites in the Baltic Sea. Lithuania was also a partner in the 2016–2019 Decision Aid for Marine Munitions project, which evaluated the risks associated with individual munitions, categorized threats and offered possible remediation methods,

¹ At its 2010 Ministerial Meeting in Moscow, the Helsinki Commission decided to establish an ad hoc expert group to update and review the existing information on dumped chemical munitions in the Baltic Sea.

in addition to mentioning economic and legal issues. The project had resulted in an easy-to-use software to support decision-making that had been presented to stakeholders in countries around the Baltic Sea.

13. Lithuania had passed legislation on regulating environmental aspects, basic rights and obligations, responsibilities, and economic sanctions for non-compliance with environmental protection rules and the non-legal use of natural resources. In addition, in its action plan for the implementation of water sector development for the period 2017–2023, the effects of chemical weapons dumped in the Baltic Sea will be monitored, experiences and information will be shared as part of activities in international organizations, monitored data on the effects of chemical weapons will be evaluated and activities in the Baltic Sea region will be coordinated to solve the problem. Lithuania had also concluded that environmental parameters at the chemical munitions dumping site of the Lithuanian exclusive economic zone did not show a high risk. However, it mentioned that chemical warfare agents had been detected in sediment samples. It stated that monitoring of and scientific research in the dumping site will be necessary to evaluate the impact of chemical munitions on the environment and future changes of the situation.

14. Qatar stated that it had generated no waste from chemical munitions, and therefore no chemical munitions had been dumped in its territorial sea area. However, the designated environmental departments in the Ministry of Municipality and Environment continuously monitored seawater quality and properties in order to protect its marine flora and fauna. Qatar also noted that the results of such assessment and monitoring would help policymakers take the actions necessary to protect the country from any pollution threat that might affect either the desalination plants that supply potable water to residents or fish wealth.

15. Sweden mentioned that the Swedish Maritime Administration was part of the Chemical Munitions Search and Assessment project between 2007 and 2013, which investigated the Gotland deep dumping site in the Baltic Sea using side-scan and multi-beam sonar and detected multiple dumped chemical munitions. Sweden is also part of the Decision Aid for Marine Munitions project, which developed project risk analysis and decision support tools. In addition, Sweden performed sediment sampling in the Måseskär area, where 28 wrecks containing unknown amounts of chemical warfare agents lay. The Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management had conducted exploratory fishing in that area between 2016 and 2017, and a new project was to be carried out in 2019 in the Gotland and Måseskär dumping sites to evaluate the extent of leakage from chemical warfare agents and to assess if, and in what concentrations, chemical warfare agents ended up in marine organisms. Sweden found that chemical warfare agents were leaking from dumped munitions and had ended up in low concentrations in marine organisms that were also “commercially attractive species”. It mentioned that intense fishing activities in the Måseskär area was also probably contributing to the chemical warfare agents spreading over large areas.

16. In its response, Turkey stated that the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization had implemented the Integrated Marine Pollution Monitoring Programme to monitor the quality and pollution of the marine environments and coasts of Turkey, including the Aegean Sea, the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Marmara Sea. The programme provided the basis for national marine and coastal management policy and strategies. It had been designed as a three-year programme that had started in 2014 to obtain regular and continuous data, monitored seasonally. The programme had progressed towards an integrated and ecosystem-based approach by adopting the European Union Water Framework (2000/60/EC) and Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC) strategies. The 2017–2019 National Monitoring Programme covered the monitoring in marine water, sediment, biota and on the sea floor of some

specific indicators of biodiversity, commercial fisheries, the food web, eutrophication, sea floor integrity, hydrographical conditions, contaminants and marine litter descriptors.

17. Ukraine stated that, by decree No. 1415 dated 25 November 1996 of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, it had established a programme for the search and disposal of chemical weapon remains dumped in the exclusive (maritime) economic zone, territorial sea and inland waters of Ukraine for the period 1997–2010. The purpose of the programme was: (a) to clean the Ukrainian part of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov from the remains of chemical weapons dumped during the Second World War; (b) to prevent the pollution of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov by toxic substances; (c) to eliminate the possibility of unauthorized use of chemical weapons components; and (d), as a consequence, to raise the level of environmental safety in the waters of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The State Emergency Service of Ukraine (formerly the Ministry of Emergency Situations) had been designated as the central authority responsible for the implementation of the programme's activities.

18. The United Kingdom mentioned it had conducted assessment activities that included literature reviews, practical assessments/surveys and marine pollution monitoring. Desktop studies by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory of the Ministry of Defence had provided valuable insight through a desk-based environmental risk assessment of chemical weapons scuttled in ships during Operation Sandcastle (1955–1956), establishing the environmental legacy of the United Kingdom operation to dump 71,000 German aircraft bombs from the Second World War into the North Atlantic. The Laboratory had also carried out a literature review to establish the location and content of hulks used to dispose of the Second World War chemical munitions stockpile of the United Kingdom. It mentioned that studies and reviews were useful first steps to determine appropriate environmental strategies and priorities for future works, but are based on assumptions that needed testing. The United Kingdom raised concern over energetic compounds (explosives) that might have leaked or could be leaking from conventional munitions, in addition to chemical munitions, in the North Sea and Baltic Sea. As a result, the United Kingdom believed studies should consider chemical and conventional munitions. The United Kingdom also mentioned that international scientific opinion had indicated that munitions on the seabed represented no significant risk to safety, human health or the marine environment, and that efforts to recover such sunken munitions could harm workers and the environment. Therefore, the Ministry of Defence had no plans to remove munitions from sea dump sites.

2. European Union

19. In its response, the European Union stated that it had adopted the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in 2008, aimed at achieving Good Environmental Status² by 2020 for the marine waters of the European Union. Its member States worked on reaching the goal of Good Environmental Status, in accordance with the following plan of action:

(a) Initial assessment of the current environmental status of national marine waters and the environmental impact and socioeconomic analysis of human activities in these waters, by 15 July 2012;

(b) Determination of what Good Environmental Status means for national marine waters, by 15 July 2012;

² In its article 3, the Directive defines Good Environment Status as “the environmental status of marine waters where these provide ecologically diverse and dynamic oceans and seas which are clean, healthy and productive”.

(c) Establishment of environmental targets and associated indicators to achieve Good Environmental Status by 2020, by 15 July 2015;

(d) Establishment of a monitoring programme for the ongoing assessment and regular update of targets, by 15 July 2014;

(e) Development of a programme of measures designed to achieve or maintain Good Environmental Status by 2020, by 2015.

20. In relation to the environmental effects related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea, it is for the European Union member States to ensure that they comply with relevant international instruments dealing with the disposal of sea-dumped chemical weapons. The monitoring, preservation and where necessary remediation of ecosystems affected by substances is regulated by the applicable European Union and national health and environmental law. In the context of the European marine policy, the main messages from assessments of monitoring programmes under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive can be found at <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2017:3:FIN>.

3. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

21. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs mentioned that it was not specifically involved in monitoring waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. If, however, such waste caused an emergency and corresponding humanitarian needs that overwhelmed the response capacity of a concerned State, the Office could be called upon to mobilize and coordinate international emergency assistance. If requested by an affected State, the Office could deploy specialized humanitarian personnel for support. The Joint Environment Unit of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs can facilitate the provision of technical support through rapid environmental assessments and/or onsite sampling and analysis and/or technical expert deployments to Member States affected by an emergency caused by waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. The Office mentions that, when there is an emergency involving such waste, a needs assessment is required to determine a holistic understanding of the situation and needs of the people affected by the emergency. The Office could offer such support through the services of a United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team.

4. Commission for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North-East Atlantic (the OSPAR Commission)

22. The OSPAR Commission mentioned that it collected data annually on encounters with chemical and conventional munitions and published them in an online data portal. The 2010 Quality Status Report of the Commission contained a short assessment on munitions, but also mentioned that the Commission had not conducted a major assessment since.

B. Awareness-raising, information-sharing and capacity-building

23. With regard to the type of capacity that needs to be developed the most in order to address waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea, Cambodia highlighted the following:

- (a) Environmental risk management related to such waste;
- (b) Environmental effects related to such waste;
- (c) Incident response related to such waste.

24. Denmark stated that it published an annual “fishery yearbook” to increase awareness of the fishing industry in the country. The yearbook contains coordinates for all risk areas containing chemical munitions as well as advice on how to respond when and if fishing vessels catch chemical munitions and how to provide first aid in case of exposure to chemical agents. It has designated a specific site where fishing is prohibited and recognizes that chemical munitions can spread to a larger area. If a vessel catches such munitions, the Royal Danish Navy or Danish Emergency Management Agency will destroy the catch and clean the vessel. Denmark had established a response team through the Royal Danish Navy, while the Danish Emergency Management Agency advised on and disposed of the chemical munition. Denmark believed that a better chronic ecosystem risk evaluation would be relevant, regarding its capacity.

25. Lithuania had raised the problems of chemical munitions at several conferences and seminars. It mentioned that the capacity of its Environmental Protection Agency was limited to participating in further ongoing international research. It recognized that monitoring and further research of the dumping site were needed and, as a result, national strategies and priorities should be developed. It also mentioned that cooperation between national institutions should be strengthened.

26. Qatar stated that they had never experienced any illegal incidents related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. No pertinent experience, therefore, was available for combating and responding to such incidents. Qatar also noted that an action plan could be developed to enhance local capacities and capabilities, such as human resources, procedures and equipment to deal with and respond to incidents related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea.

27. In 2011, Sweden had assembled and distributed material regarding risk areas as well as precautions and measures for anyone who discovered waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. At two events in 2019, the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management had presented the Decision Aid for Marine Munitions project, concerning dumped chemical munitions and the effects on the environment. In addition, national agencies had participated in several media platforms to raise awareness and knowledge among the general population. Sweden had developed a risk analysis tool and a set of information for dumped chemical munitions, which it shared with participating countries in the Decision Aid for Marine Munitions project. It mentioned that options for managing dumped chemical munitions were a priority area for development.

28. The United Kingdom had hosted the 22nd International Chemical Weapons Demilitarization Conference, the world’s largest gathering of professionals involved in the demilitarization of chemical weapons. It had raised awareness in other events, including one at which it had formed a partnership with the University of Kiel to measure the concentrations of dissolved trinitrotoluene around wrecks. Additional partnerships include projects concerned with munitions dumped in the North Sea and developing sensors used to determine the extent of arsenic contamination from dumping sites. In 1998, the United Kingdom had made available to the OSPAR Commission a list of the sites used for disposal of conventional munitions and historic dumping of chemical weapons in the Atlantic. Details of sea dumping of chemical weapons in the Skagerrak had been made available to the Helsinki Commission in 1993.

29. The European Union, in cooperation with the European External Action Service, had organized a colloquium on the challenges of unexploded munitions, held in Brussels on 20 February 2019. The event, organized by the Directorate-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and Directorate-General for Environment of the

European Commission, in cooperation with the European External Action Service, had addressed the challenge of unexploded munitions and other military ordnance dumped on the seabed. In total, 64 participants had attended the event, which included civil and military stakeholders, the research community, representatives from member States, Members of the European Parliament, and regional, European and international organizations.

30. The European Union noted that, in Europe, the problem of unexploded munitions and other military ordnance dumped on the seabed was particularly felt in the Mediterranean, including in the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. Safety, security and environmental risks were aggravated by the fact that many such munitions were of a chemical nature, containing chemical agents like sulphur mustard, nerve gas and lewisite. Eventual threats to marine ecosystems and, possibly, human health, were also a source of concern. The European Union mentioned that unexploded munitions could be a barrier to economic opportunities, deterring or blocking the development of blue activities in dumping sites. Participants in the colloquium had identified that, depending on the properties of chemical substances released and their condition (solubility, toxicological properties, coverage by sediment, currents, etc.), it would be possible to see if they posed a risk and at which (spatial) assessment scale they did. Such assessments should be done in a comparative way in order to allow prioritization of actions.

31. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is not specifically involved in outreach and awareness activities related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea. However, it does, through the Joint Environment Unit, raise awareness on the adverse impacts of environmental emergencies. The Environmental Emergencies Centre strengthens the preparedness capacities of national responders and humanitarians to environmental emergencies, providing users with a one-stop-shop of relevant information. The Centre is an online platform where users can gain access to guidelines, advocacy tools, documents, training courses, an interactive discussion forum as well as updates on current environmental emergencies and events. The Centre hosts five e-learning courses, including courses on environmental emergency preparedness and response, on industrial accident prevention, preparedness and response, and on the Flash Environmental Assessment Tool methodology, all of which could be indirectly relevant to such waste.

32. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs works with a broad range of actors to strengthen national resilience in situations where high vulnerabilities, fragility of national systems and chronic disaster risks lead to recurrent humanitarian consequences. This is done through increasing national environmental emergency preparedness and response capacity. The Office notes that the Joint Environment Unit has been able successfully to advance environmental emergency preparedness by supporting national capacity development initiatives, raising awareness, conducting regional and national training and developing and disseminating internationally recognized response and preparedness tools. UNEP and the Environmental Emergencies Guidelines of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs provide recommendations based on an accumulation of institutional memory and experience related to international environmental emergency response and act as a reference guide for countries, organizations and other stakeholders. Regarding capacity, the Office notes that coordinating the international response to chemical hazard emergencies could be strengthened.

33. Chemical and conventional munitions are a standing item on the agenda of the OSPAR Environmental Impacts of Human Activities Committee. The focus is normally on confirming the annual reporting data. As with other areas of activity of the OSPAR Commission, the capacity and resources primarily rest with contracting

parties, including the European Union. The function of the secretariat is to support coordination of activities that fall within the remit of the Commission.

34. In 2017, UNESCO published a report titled “Safeguarding Underwater Cultural Heritage in the Pacific: Report on Good Practice in the Protection and Management of World War II-related Underwater Cultural Heritage”,³ with assistance from the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund and Tokai University. The report compiles good practices in the protection and management of wrecks from the Second World War in five countries of the Pacific region. It has been used as guidelines for the effective and sustainable management of Second World War-related underwater cultural heritage in the Pacific. Japan also gave a grant for a project to prevent oil leakage from wrecks from the Second World War in the Chuuk Lagoon in the Federated States of Micronesia, which is to be implemented by a Japanese non-governmental organization. UNESCO helped provide the Government of the Federated States of Micronesia with financial and technical assistance to organize the national consultation on safeguarding underwater cultural heritage, which enabled the Federated States of Micronesia to become the first State party in the Pacific region and build its capacity for the implementation of the Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage. UNESCO also helped organize a field school that offered training in the management of underwater cultural heritage for sustainable development.

C. Partnership and cooperation

35. Lithuania stated it had discussed the problem widely at different international meetings. Representatives of the Environmental Protection Agency under the Ministry of Environment had presented the issue in 2016, 2017 and 2018 at side events of the annual conferences of the Organization for the Protection of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in the Hague. It had also presented the issue at the colloquium on the challenges of unexploded munitions and during the Eighteenth Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Eastern Europe, held in Riga in 2019.

36. Qatar stated that one of the four interrelated pillars of the Qatar National Vision 2030 was environment development, which calls for managing the environment in a manner that ensures harmony between economic and social development and environmental protection. The Government of Qatar is partnering with industry and civil society in the areas of infrastructure development and environmental issues. Once the action plan is in place, the partnership on waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea can be developed. Also, Qatar is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council and participates in the partnership programme for all regional efforts and issues related to pollution prevention and environment protection and pollution. The country engages with international organizations to obtain their human resources expertise, equipment and techniques, conducts training and attends conferences and workshops. This can also be applied to the field related to such waste.

37. Turkey stated there was wide cooperation under way between its National Marine Monitoring Programme with institutions such as the TUBITAK Marmara Research Centre, the Environment and Cleaner Production Institute, the Turkish Atomic Energy Authority and universities.

38. The European Union noted that, in line with the European Union Maritime Security Strategy and its revised action plan, the European Commission has agreed to work with member States to improve emergency procedures in the case of accidental recovery of sea-dumped chemical munitions and unexploded ordnance,

³ Available from <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0026/002604/260457E.pdf>.

and to promote a manual of procedures, a common contingency plan and unified response models for related incidents. It also noted the important ongoing regional collaboration at the sea-basin level. Regional seas conventions, depending on the particularities of a respective region and the legal instruments available, could be important contributors to address the issue in question.

39. The Helsinki Commission, established by the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area, had launched an ad hoc working group on dumped chemical munitions, which had presented its final report at the 16th meeting of the Commission, in 1995. In 2010, an ad hoc expert group had been mandated to update and review the existing information on dumped chemical munitions in the Baltic Sea. In 2013, the group had produced its report.⁴

40. The contracting parties to the Barcelona Convention had requested that an assessment be undertaken of the unexploded ammunitions and obsolete ordnance dumped in the Mediterranean Sea in 2005. The assessment had been carried out by gathering information on available data and on existing mechanisms for recording encounters with dumped ammunitions. The next step consisted of making an overview of the nautical charts and pilot log books where the main dumping sites and fire practising areas were typically indicated. Important contributions to regional cooperation related to dumping and contingency planning in the Mediterranean was done by implementation of the Protocol for the Prevention and Elimination of Pollution in the Mediterranean Sea by Dumping from Ships and Aircraft or Incineration at Sea, as well as the Protocol Concerning Cooperation in Preventing Pollution from Ships and, in Cases of Emergency, Combating Pollution of the Mediterranean Sea of the Barcelona Convention.

41. The secretariat of the OSPAR Commission stated that it did not hold information on all multi-stakeholder partnerships, but confirmed that the questionnaire had been forwarded to the contracting parties. The secretariat, however, is on the advisory board of a European Union-funded project on North Sea wrecks that will provide the tools necessary for planners, response organizations, economic actors and other stakeholders to assess and propose solutions for risk mitigation regarding wrecks and munitions in the North Sea.

42. In the context of the United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, held at United Nations Headquarters from 5 to 9 June 2017, a voluntary commitment had been registered by International Dialogue on Underwater Munitions, entitled “Establishment of the International Marine Training Centre for Innovative Science and Technology for Sea Dumped Weapons, and Shipborne Disposal Solutions to Support the Eradication of all Underwater Munitions” (#OceanAction21356). The plan is for the proposed centre to serve as the global focal point for the exchange of information to further increase knowledge and awareness of underwater munitions policy, science, technology and responses by a number of activities.⁵

⁴ Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission, Chemical Munitions Dumped in the Baltic Sea (Helsinki, 2013). Available at www.helcom.fi/lists/publications/bsep142.pdf.

⁵ See <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=21356>.

III. Way forward

A. Views on the possibility of establishing a database and its institutional framework

43. In its resolution [71/220](#), the General Assembly invited the Secretary-General to seek the views of Member States and relevant regional and international organizations with a view to exploring the possibility of establishing a database and options for the most appropriate institutional framework for such a database.

44. Some respondents to the questionnaire expressed support for establishing such a database and their willingness to contribute to its best possible outcome. Denmark indicated that the Helsinki Commission and/or OSPAR Commission would be good locations to host this. They had also noted that the Royal Danish Navy reported all incidents involving chemical munitions to the OSPAR Commission, to be included in its database.

45. France indicated that the London Convention and/or the regional seas conventions would be the most appropriate institutional framework for such a database.

46. Lithuania supported such a database for waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea within the framework of OPCW. The United Kingdom noted that a central database (i.e. a web-based geographic information systems database) and an attendant organization to run it and promote best practices – along the lines of the Helsinki Commission or the OSPAR Commission – would be a significant step forward.

47. Sweden stated that such a database for the Baltic Sea and part of the North Sea was now being established through the work in the Decision Aid for Marine Munitions project. Nevertheless, they expressed the view that an international database managed and updated by the United Nations would be a valuable asset.

48. Cambodia emphasized the importance of establishing a database for waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea to serve as a platform for sharing information and experiences, and the most appropriate institutional framework for such a database should be the ministry of defence. It also expressed its preference for the International Maritime Organization (IMO) as the most appropriate intergovernmental body within the United Nations system for further cooperation on such waste.

49. Qatar expressed the view that establishing a database for waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea would be a wise decision that would benefit all parties and organizations, and the lessons learned could help to formulate and develop practical plans.

50. The European Union mentioned that the colloquium it had organized in Brussels had provided participants with an opportunity to exchange best practices and envisage common responses to the problem, such as a European Union database of incidents and reporting systems.

51. The OSPAR Commission stated that it already had a database for recording information on dump sites and encounters. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs mentioned that a database containing relevant and voluntarily shared information on, inter alia, the location of dumping sites, the type, quantity and, to the extent possible, the current condition of chemical munitions as well as recorded environmental impact and available technologies for destruction, would support risk reduction measures and preparedness for response.

B. Views on the appropriate intergovernmental bodies for further consideration and implementation of measures related to waste originating from chemical munitions dumped at sea

52. France stated that, in its view, the London Protocol would be the most appropriate intergovernmental bodies for further consideration and implementation of the issue.

53. Sweden mentioned that the most appropriate body would probably be IMO, as it already had an international convention in place that included the dumping of munitions.

54. Lithuania mentioned that OPCW should become a forum for the discussions on ongoing efforts aimed at awareness-raising, risk prevention and response to incidents resulting from sea dumped chemical weapons, in accordance with the provisions of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction. Denmark mentioned both OPCW and IMO as options. The United Kingdom cited two options: the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO and the International Seabed Authority – established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

55. Qatar mentioned that UNEP was a choice to consider, potentially in partnership with Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.

56. The European Union noted that the participants in the above-mentioned colloquium had had an opportunity to exchange ideas on best practices and envisage common responses to the problem, such as a European Union database of incidents and reporting systems.

57. The OSPAR Commission stated that there was no coordinated view available from the contracting parties of the Commission on this question.
