

# **THE LONDON CONVENTION AND PROTOCOL:**

**THEIR ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION TO PROTECTION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT**



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# 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. Currently, 82 States are Parties to this Convention.

- 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 and has currently 32 State Parties.



## 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, 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 which gives 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.
- 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.
- Advice is available concerning the management of spoilt cargoes on board of vessels.
- A technical co-operation and assistance programme has been set up to assist with capacity building for waste assessment and management.

- 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 from dumping activities.
- Access to annual meetings of Parties, where policy and regulatory aspects of dumping and protection of the marine environment are discussed.
- Access to annual meetings of the Scientific Groups under the Convention and Protocol, where scientific and technical aspects of dumping and protection of the marine environment are discussed.
- Membership of an agreement for control of all sources of marine pollution which promotes finding the best overall environmental solution to specific problems and sustainable use of the oceans.
- Enhanced protection of a State's coastal zone and marine environment.
- Access to technical assistance and experience of other Parties to aid marine environmental protection and capacity building.

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

There are no membership fees. The potential costs, some of which may be offset when applying the 'polluter pays principle', vary among Parties and



depend on the amount of dumping activities, but funding would be required for:

- Preparing enabling national legislation.
- Administering a licensing system and procedures.
- Conducting field and compliance monitoring activities and preparing reports thereon.
- Attending annual meetings of the Parties and the Scientific Groups.

### **What are current activities under the Convention and Protocol?**

- Improvement of compliance with the Convention, with emphasis on collaboration and promotion of compliance, as opposed to sanctions for non-compliance.
- Further improvement of the scientific evaluation of environmental acceptability of wastes proposed for dumping, including monitoring and assessment of disposal options.
- Development of guidance on placement of artificial reefs and in using best available technologies to implement the Protocol.
- 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, also to store carbon dioxide, as the knowledge on the effectiveness and potential environmental impact of such fertilization is currently insufficient.

### **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 – for instance, 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.
- Setting up of co-operative arrangements with the above agreements and programmes and implementing joint activities.

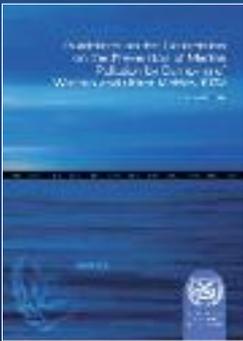
## How can a State prepare for membership of the London Protocol?

- Study the guidance on national implementation of the London Protocol to see what is required.
- Access further information on the London Protocol at: [www.londonconvention.org](http://www.londonconvention.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



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