

## **The role of the IAEA in the London Convention 1972 on Dumping of Wastes at Sea**

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The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter was adopted after an Inter-Governmental Conference, held in London in 1972, following the principles for environmental protection enunciated in the Report of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, held the same year in Stockholm.

The IAEA has been involved since the early days of the London Convention when the Contracting Parties designated the IAEA as the competent international authority in matters related to sea disposal of radioactive waste, providing technical advice and services.

The IAEA developed, for the Convention, the definition of 'radioactive wastes or radioactive matters unsuitable for dumping at sea' (e.g., high level radioactive waste) and recommended the technical basis applicable by the national authorities to issue special permits for those radioactive materials which could be dumped (mainly low and intermediate level radioactive waste, properly conditioned and 'de minimis' quantities).

However, in 1985, based more on political reasons than on the existing radiation protection principles and policies, the Contracting Parties to the London Convention introduced a "voluntary moratorium" on the disposal of low level radioactive wastes at sea, and later in 1993, a total ban of radioactive waste disposal at sea.

The IAEA continues to support the objectives of the London Convention by providing scientific advice. Since 1989, at the request of the Contracting Parties, the IAEA has developed and maintained global databases on radioactive waste disposed of at sea in the past and on accidents and losses at sea involving radioactive material.

The purpose of these databases is to serve as the basis for radiological impact assessment on the marine environment. The last revised reports on the above mentioned inventories were published in 1999 and in 2001 respectively. The databases are currently in the process of being updated.

The paper presents the work carried out by in the Waste and Environmental Safety Section of the IAEA serving the London Convention and accompanying its evolution.

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