

## Press Release

### **UPDATE ON WAKASHIO VESSEL AS AT NOON** **ON SUNDAY AUGUST 23, 2020**

1. The Chief Salvage Master reported that the planned sinking of the stem (forward) section of the casualty is continuing at a relatively low pace due to rough sea conditions and that, salvers are cutting holes into the bulkheads of the different cargo hatches to speed up the process.
2. Pumping operations regarding the remaining diesel oil in the engine room of the aft (back) section has been completed. The Intermediate Bulk Containers (IBC) containing oil has been air lifted to the Platform Supply Vessel (PSV) Stanford Hawk. Removal of all pollutants such as wood, panels and any floating debris is ongoing.
3. Twelve local journalists accompanied by two United Nations experts attended the guided visit into the lagoon on Saturday August 22, 2020 to take stock of the situation in the aftermath of the oil spill. It was followed by a session of

questions and answers with the experts. A similar exercise will be carried out shortly for the shoreline and mangroves.

**4.** Foreign experts have recommended removal of all artisanal booms which have served their purpose and redeployment of absorbent booms. Once all risks of contamination are eliminated, an organized and phased withdrawal of other types of booms will be planned. A team comprising of local and foreign experts has been constituted to recommend the way forward.

**5.** Clean up activities has been shared between two foreign service providers namely Le Floch Dépollution and Polyeco. The services of additional local fishermen are being enlisted.

**6.** A first survey of coral reefs and mangrove forests conducted by Japanese experts in collaboration with the Albion Fisheries Resource Centre, the Mauritius Oceanography Institute, the University of Mauritius and the National Coast Guard has been conducted and revealed that:

- a. no disturbance of corals was observed around ile aux Aigrettes and mangrove areas were impacted by oil in varying levels
- b. observed turbidity around ile aux Aigrettes could be caused by ship grounding
- c. ropes attached to the booms are impacting corals

7. Results of the surveys will be used as a reference for the cleanup and cleaning of mangrove forests will be prioritized. A guideline will be developed for monitoring of the area so as not to further harm these sensitive areas.

8. A sensitization campaign will be organized with the communities with regards to access to the mangrove forests areas so as not cause any further damage.

**National Crisis Committee**

**Sunday August 23, 2020**