

London Convention

Aims to Control and Prevent Marine Pollution

Environmental Law Facts Sheet

What is the aim of the Convention?

The London Convention 1972 aims to control and prevent marine pollution. The Convention prohibits disposal of materials as identified in Annex I which are harmful to marine organisms. Less harmful materials listed in Annex II require a special permit for sea disposal. A general permit is required for all other wastes. Licensing authorities should use criteria in Annex III of the Convention, which include:

- ✘ the nature of the waste material;
- ✘ the characteristics of the dumping site;
- ✘ the method of disposal; and
- ✘ consideration of land-based alternatives.

What does the Convention control?

The Convention area covers all marine waters on the globe, including territorial waters. Internal waters as defined by states are excluded. Parties to the Convention are to control wastes loaded in their harbours for disposal at sea. A Party should also control vessels involved in dumping operations flying its flag, wherever they are.

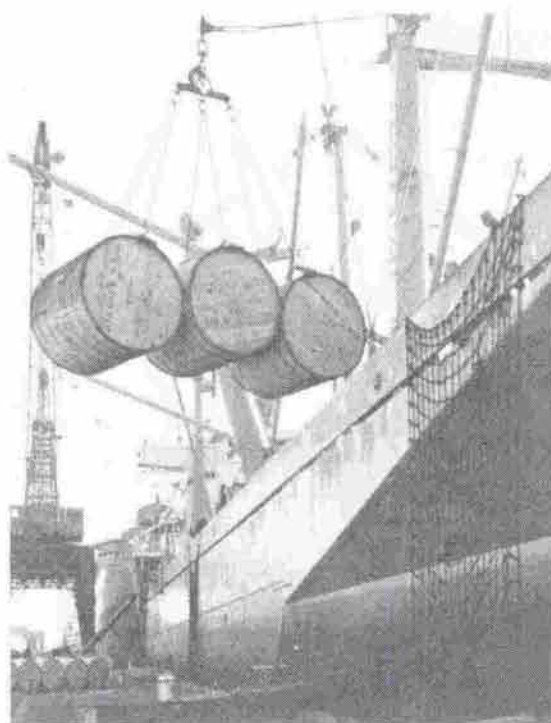
What is dumping?

Dumping is defined as the deliberate disposal of wastes or other matter from vessels, aircrafts, platforms or other man-made structures at sea. This includes the deliberate sinking of vessels and platforms. Dumping excludes: operational discharges by vessels, which are covered by the MARPOL Convention, from platforms involved in oil and gas exploration and exploitation; and in an accident, where a vessel is allowed to set cargo overboard to save the crew or the vessel.

What action is taken?

Implementation of the London Convention by its Parties is in transition: Parties are now moving towards integrated land-based solutions for most wastes, and toward improved controls of the few remaining wastes allowed for sea disposal. Worldwide, the main material disposed at sea are dredgings from ports and sea channels, sewage sludge, obsolete vessels, and some industrial wastes. As of 1991, incineration at sea was phased out. Inspired by Agenda 21, Parties will focus more on:

- ✘ guiding and assisting waste disposal at sea where there are no land-based options, including dredged material and sewage sludge;



Wastes must be off-loaded from vessels and handled promptly at ports.

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The sea provides many resources for the majority of Pacific island people. Most of these resources are for their basic subsistence requirements. With the London Convention in force, it will ensure the sea would be safe from waste dumping which would threaten the sustainability of these resources in the near future.

✘ improving the effectiveness of the Convention to encourage good waste management; and

✘ technical co-operation to assist Parties to cope with transition problems once they have phased out the option of sea disposal as well as assisting countries in initiating waste management policies without resorting to sea disposal.

To meet these challenges and to transform recent decisions into legally binding provisions, Parties are reviewing and amending the London Convention 1972, with the results to be adopted at a conference in November 1996.

In the first step of this review, in 1993, the Parties adopted crucial amendments to the Annexes to the Convention. As a result, the existing list of materials prohibited for sea disposal now includes:

- ✘ defined industrial wastes, as of 1 January 1996;
- ✘ incineration at sea of industrial waste and sewage sludge; and
- ✘ radioactive waste or other radioactive matter.

These amendments entered into force on 20 February 1994 except for Australia for jarosite waste (until 31 December 1997), and the Russian Federation. Note that sea dis-

posal of high-level radioactive wastes or other high-level radioactive matter has always been prohibited under the Convention.

Which countries are members to the Convention?

The Convention entered into force in August 1975. At present, 74 States are Parties to the Convention. Other Pacific Island Countries are encouraged to become Parties to this Convention. SPREP Members currently party to the London Convention are:

Australia, France, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Pitcairn Islands, Solomon Islands, United States of America.

For more information on the London Convention 1972, and how to become a Party to the Convention, contact IMO or SPREP.

International Maritime Organization (IMO)
Office for the London Convention 1972
4 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7SR
United Kingdom
Tel: 44-171-7357611
Fax: 44-171-5873210

**South Pacific Regional
Environment Programme (SPREP)**
PO Box 240
Apia
Western Samoa
Tel: 685-21929
Fax: 685-20231
Email: sprep@pactok.peg.apc.org