

MV Wakashio oil spill: Solidarity spreads across Mauritius

If you have browsed the news recently, you have surely come across the Wakashio oil spill disaster, occurring in the pristine waters of Mauritius, close to the Point d'Esny Wetlands on the South East region of the island. This environmental crisis is a threat to the Mauritian fauna and flora.

The freighter 'MV Wakashio', carrying some 4,000 tons of fuel aboard, ran aground on Mauritius' barrier reefs on Sunday 25 July 2020 and started breaking apart 12 days after the grounding, releasing about 1000 of its estimated 4000 tons of heavy bunker fuel.

Since the wreckage, the Mauritian Government has been in consultation with international experts to devise a remedial plan. At the same time, locals and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were not indifferent to the turns of event and they joined forces, together with the local authorities, to clean up the shores.



They have restlessly carried out salvage operations using makeshift equipment including handcrafted oil containment booms made from clothing, plastic bottles, hair and dried sugar cane leaves to absorb the oil leaks. NGOs also witnessed large funds donations for the purchase of equipment and necessary materials to mitigate this ecological tragedy.

To recall, the South East of Mauritius is home to a large population of rare animal and plant species and a rich ecosystem. Ile aux Aigrettes Nature Reserve, the Blue Bay Marine Area, the Mahebourg Fishing Reserves and the South East shoreline have been highly affected by the oil spill. It is also important to highlight that Blue Bay Marine Park and Pointe D'Esny are protected areas under an intergovernmental treaty known as the Convention on Wetlands (or the Ramsar Convention), ratified on 30 September 2001.



A state of environmental emergency was declared on Friday 7 August 2020.



Following an appeal for international help, countries from different regions of the world, including France, Japan, Australia, India, USA and the United Kingdom have expressed readiness to help in assisting the local efforts and have deployed technical support on environmental, pollution control and clean-up.

Regretfully, the condition of the MV Wakashio worsened early on Saturday 15 August 2020 due to bad weather and waves and the bulk carrier split by the afternoon, notwithstanding salvage attempts.

A relocation plan for the debris is currently being worked on, in consultation with international experts, while the operations are still ongoing to contain the spillage.

In the upsurge of solidarity and relief efforts, ITL has been part of the volunteering team in the making of oil containment booms and organized a hair collection campaign at its premises, in an attempt to protect Mauritius' southeast beaches and stop the tide of oil reaching the shores.

Many thanks to all those who are helping to preserve our lagoon, biodiversity and endemic wildlife, endangered by the Wakashio wreckage.



We are in this together! Ensam nou pli for!



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