

Sustainable development and marine environment protection in Albanian coastal areas

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Abstract

Oil spills through operational or accidental discharges are common in the activity of ships, especially in protected areas and in the Albanian coastal area. Due to the activity of fishing vessels and the presence of marine pollution, ecosystem development in the area is among the lowest in the region. The ecosystem along the coast is being threatened by constant erosion due to over fishing and the crude oil tanker traffic. Besides oil spills, ships activity emit other types of hazardous materials such as marine waste, hazardous and harmful substances that are sources of marine pollution. With increased shipping traffic, the current regime for environmental protection may not be sufficient to protect the marine environment of the area. With more ships traversing the area, safety and environmental concerns will become more acute for Albanian state. Fishing vessels usually do not comply with the rules of navigation and do not meet the standards required for the conservation of the marine environment. This paper examines this situation and proposes possible legal measures for coastal states to increase their regulatory power and enforcement that is limited by the application of the LOSC Convention. The proposed legal measures provide a platform to strengthen their power and to ensure that the marine environment can be protected from pollution and damage. An available option to assist in the protection of the coastal zone is to propose additional safeguards within the IMO competency such as the designation of separate areas under MARPOL 73/78. In addition it is recommended that efforts be made to further promote the development of cooperation mechanisms between state and private institutions in the efficient management of the coastal zone. The coastal area is a navigational area, especially for cargo and fishing vessels, the proposed measures will not be fully applicable if their crews are unaware of them. Therefore, it is important for users of these tools to continue supporting existing plans for the protection and development of this area. This will ultimately promote a situation which maintains a better balance between the rights of navigation and the protection and preservation of the marine environment of the coastal area.

Keywords: maritime transportation, fishing vessels, marine environmental, coastal areas, oil spills.

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