



Press release  
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## **Pollution in Sri Lanka: Commissioned by the United Nations, Cedre sends two experts on site**

*Following the sinking of the fire-stricken MV X-Press Pearl, a large oil spill is threatening the coastline of Sri Lanka, who authorities have sought international assistance.*

*At the request of the French Secretariat-General for the Sea (SGMer), two expert scientists from Cedre will leave Brest on Tuesday for an on-site mission set to last several weeks.*

### **Background**

The *MV X-Press Pearl* is a container ship that entered into service in February 2021 and is operated by the Singapore-based company X-Press Feeders. The vessel was carrying a cargo including nitric acid, several containers of plastic pellets and chemical substances. According to the shipowner, the vessel had 350 tonnes of fuel oil on board. On 20th May, as the vessel approached the Port of Colombo (Sri Lanka), a fire broke out on board. On the 25th, the crew was evacuated. Many containers fell overboard; plastic pellets and various other debris began to wash up on the beaches in the south-west of Sri Lanka. The blaze raged from 20th May to 1st June and burned itself out after destroying the entire ship. Despite an attempt to tow the vessel, the ship sank on 2nd June. On the 6th, the Sri Lankan authorities requested European assistance, calling for equipment and expertise (both on site and remote) from the United Nations.

### **Two experts from Cedre commissioned by SGMer**

At the request of the French Secretariat-General for the Sea, Cedre immediately offered assistance and proposed two experts: Camille Lacroix, Aquatic Litter Monitoring and Studies Department Manager, and Stéphane Le Floch, Research Department Manager. Following a discussion with the Sri Lankan authorities, this proposal was accepted and they will leave on Tuesday for Colombo, where they will join a mission coordinated by the United Nations (UNEP\*/OCHA\*\* Joint Environment Unit).

### **An assessment and consultancy mission for the authorities**

The two scientists, both very experienced in the fields of oil, chemical and plastic pollution, will be tasked with conducting an initial review of capacities and needs for responding to the risks and immediate impacts, rapidly assessing the environmental impact and providing technical advice to the authorities on spill response, clean-up, restoration and environmental monitoring actions to be conducted in the short and longer term. Under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator, they will liaise with the Delegation of the European Union in Colombo, the national authorities and other stakeholders.

### **Recognised expertise**

Cedre is familiar with this type of mission and has demonstrated its expertise during major incidents for over forty years. Cedre received a Green Star Award attributed by the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Green Cross International in 2015. Stéphane Doll, Director of Cedre, affirms: **“This new call-out once again confirms the confidence placed in Cedre and our team by the French, European and international authorities”**.

\* UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

\*\* OCHA: Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

The United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) respond as one UN to the environmental dimensions of emergencies. For 25 years, the UN Environment/OCHA Joint Unit (JEU) has successfully coupled UN Environment's environmental know-how with OCHA's humanitarian coordination mandate. The partnership assists countries affected by disasters and crises and works to enhance the sustainability of humanitarian action.

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## Cedre snapshot

**Field of work:** advice and expertise in the management of accidental water pollution.

**Activities:** response support, contingency planning, training, testing, research, documentation.

**Geographical coverage:** France and worldwide

**Workforce:** 50 including nearly 30 engineers, researchers and technicians

**Annual budget:** €5 million

**Date of creation:** 25 January 1979

**Location:** 715 rue Alain Colas, Port du Moulin Blanc, Brest, France



For more information see: [www.cedre.fr](http://www.cedre.fr)