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Session 1
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Title: The Significance of the *Torrey Canyon* – 50 years on

ABSTRACT

The grounding of the tanker *Torrey Canyon* on March 1967 between Land's End and the Isles of Scilly resulted in the escape of large quantities of crude oil which caused massive oil pollution in the south west of England as well as in Brittany in France. The incident showed that there were many legal issues in relation to oil spills that needed to be resolved.

Fifty years have passed since the *Torrey Canyon* incident, and it has been considered timely to discuss the legal developments relating to liability and compensation for marine pollution that have their origin in this incident.

An outline is given of the actions taken by the IMO and CMI in the wake of the *Torrey Canyon* which resulted in the adoption of the 1969 Civil Liability Convention and the 1971 Fund Convention (the CLC/Fund regime). These Conventions introduced several important innovations in maritime law. The voluntary industry agreements TOVALOP and CRISTAL established by the industries involved are also discussed.

The developments of the CLC/Fund regime over the years are considered, in particular the revision that resulted in the adoption of the 1992 Civil Liability and Fund Conventions and the review of the adequacy of the regime carried out during the period 2002-2005. This review did not lead to any revision of the 1992 Conventions, but resulted in the adoption of the 2003 Supplementary Fund Protocol. The experience gained from the operation of the regime is also discussed.

Some concluding remarks are made concerning the functioning of the CLC/Fund regime. It is submitted that the international liability and compensation regime has worked reasonably well in most tanker oil spill incidents falling within its scope.
