



Technical Notice

TD 10545 / 2024

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SUBJECT:

MEPC 81 Highlights

The IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) held its 81st session from March 18 to 22, 2024. This Brief provides an overview of the more significant issues progressed at this session.

MEPC 81 Highlights

1. **Tackling climate change** - cutting **GHG emissions** from ships and implementing the 2023 IMO GHG Strategy - "**IMO net-zero framework**", life cycle GHG intensity (LCA) guidelines
2. **Energy efficiency of ships** – adoption of 2024 Guidelines on **SEEMP**, 2022 fuel consumption data and 2019-2022 carbon intensity data
3. **Tackling marine litter** – adoption of amendments on reporting procedures for lost containers / approval of recommendations on carriage of plastic pellets by sea in freight containers
4. **Ballast Water Management Convention implementation** - experience-building phase, approval of operational guidelines and adoption of amendments to the BWM Convention
5. **Proposals for Emission Control Areas** in Canadian Arctic Waters and Norwegian Sea approved
6. Implementation of the **Hong Kong Convention** on ship recycling
7. **Marine diesel engine replacing a steam system** – MARPOL Annex VI amendments adopted
8. **Underwater noise reduction** - action plan endorsed

1. Tackling climate change - cutting GHG emissions from ships

IMO has developed global regulations on energy efficiency for ships ([read more here](#)) and continues to take concrete action to ensure that international shipping bears its fair share of responsibility in addressing climate change. MEPC 80 in July 2023 adopted the 2023 IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships, with the goal of achieving net-zero GHG emissions by or around, i.e. close to, 2050.

IMO Net-Zero Framework

In this regard, the Committee approved the possible outline of the “IMO Net-Zero Framework” with the following possible amendments to MARPOL Annex VI, which can be used as a starting point for consolidating the different proposals into a possible common structure:

Chapter 1 - General

1. Definitions

Chapter 2 – Survey, certification and means of control

2. Surveys (regulation 5)
3. Certificates and Statements of Compliance (regulation 6)
4. Form of certificates and Statements of Compliance (regulation 8)
5. Duration and validity of Certificates and Statements of Compliance (regulation 9)
6. Port State Control (regulation 10)

Chapter 4 – Regulations on the carbon intensity of international shipping

7. SEEMP (regulation 26)
8. Data Collection System (regulation 27)

New Chapter 5 – Regulations on the IMO net-zero framework

9. New Chapter 5.1: Goal-based marine fuel standard regulating the phased reduction of the marine fuel’s GHG intensity

1. Application (regulation X)
2. Goal (regulation X)
3. Functional requirements (regulation X)
4. Attained GHG fuel intensity (GFI) (regulation X)
5. Target/Required GFI (regulation X)
6. GFI data collection and reporting (regulation X)
7. Alternative compliance approaches (regulation X)
8. Central GFI Registry (regulation X)

10. New Chapter 5.2: Economic mechanism(s) to incentivize the transition to net-zero

1. Application (regulation X)
2. Calculation of economic distribution by ships (regulation X)
3. Collection of economic contribution by ships (regulation X)
4. Flexible compliance mechanism(s) (regulation X)
5. Central management/oversight of collected revenue (regulation X)
6. Distribution of revenue (regulation X)

11. Review of the chapter

Appendixes

1. Appendix V (BDN)
2. Appendix IX (DCS)
3. Appendix X (Statement of compliance)

2. Energy Efficiency

MEPC approved the report on the fuel oil consumption data submitted to the IMO Ship Fuel Oil Consumption Database (reporting year: 2022). Data was reported by almost 29,000 ships, an increase of over 800 ships compared to 2021. These ships reported the use of 213 million tonnes of fuel, which is just slightly higher than in 2021 (212 million tonnes in 2021).

- Adopted updated 2024 *Guidelines for the development of a Ship Energy Efficiency Management Plan (SEEMP)*.
- Adopted updated 2024 *Guidelines for Administration verification of ship fuel oil consumption data and operational carbon intensity*.
- Adopted updated 2024 *Guidelines on the shaft/engine power limitation system to comply with the EEXI requirements and use of a power reserve*.
- Approved the *Procedure for reporting to the Organization of uses of a power reserve*.
- Approved unified interpretations to regulations 2.2.15 and 2.2.18 of MARPOL Annex VI for dissemination in the amended consolidated Unified interpretations to MARPOL Annex VI as MEPC.1/Circ.795/Rev.9

3. Tackling marine litter –reporting procedures for lost containers / carriage of plastic pellets by sea

Mandatory reporting of lost containers

MEPC adopted amendments to MARPOL Protocol I, referencing a procedure for reporting lost freight containers. Containers lost overboard can be a serious hazard to navigation and safety at sea as well as to the marine environment.

Recommendations for the carriage of plastic pellets by sea in freight containers

4. Ballast water management – implementation and Convention review

Review of BWM Convention

When BWM Convention entered into force in 2017, it was agreed to monitor the application and to review the effectiveness of the Convention through the experience building phase (EBP), and MEPC at its previous session approved the Convention Review Plan (CRP) which comprises the list of issues that need to be finalized.

The requirements in the current Convention were reviewed by the relevant Correspondence Group, and this session endorsed the list identifying items that need to be amended within the BWM Convention, BWMS Code and relevant guidelines and guidance. The aforementioned list comprises survey aspects such as sampling and analysis of ballast water to confirm the treatment capacity and discharge concentration of active substances during intermediate and renewal surveys, in addition to commissioning tests, to ensure appropriate installation and effective operation etc. In addition, it was further agreed to reestablish the Correspondence Group for pursuing the topics that require further discussions.

Ballast water management in ships operating in challenging water quality

In response to the issues with difficulties in continuous operation of ballast water treatment systems (BWMS) at ports with challenging water quality (CWQ), discussions have been made with a view to developing a guidance for operations at such areas.

At this session, an interim guidance was adopted, which provides operational guidance such as determination of CWQ, bypass procedures for ballasting operations at ports with CWQ and decontaminating procedures of ballast tanks after the bypassed ballasting operation.

Temporary storage of treated sewage and/or grey water

Discharge of treated sewage and grey water has been prohibited in certain ports, which led to discussions for developing guidance for temporary storage of treated sewage and/or grey water to ballast tanks in such ports.

At this session, the guidance for temporary storage of treated sewage and grey water was approved.

The guidance sets out the standards such as for flushing tanks after temporary storage and for implementing the relevant procedures in Ballast Water Management Plans (BWMP).

5. Proposals for Emission Control Areas approved

MEPC approved two proposals for the designation of Emission Control Areas (ECAs):

- Proposed **ECA in Canadian Arctic Waters**, for Nitrogen Oxides, Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter; and
- Proposed **ECA in the Norwegian Sea** for Nitrogen Oxide and Sulphur Oxides which includes a "three dates criterion" consisting of building contract, keel laid and delivery date as part of the keel-laying date requirement in the proposed amendment to MARPOL Annex VI.

6. Implementation of the Hong Kong Convention

MEPC approved reporting formats and the future development of a GISIS module, to provide electronic reporting facilities, to assist with implementation of the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships ([Hong Kong Convention](#)), which is set to enter into **force on 26 June 2025**.

Mandatory reporting under article 12 of the Hong Kong Convention

The Committee approved circular MEPC.1/Circ.910 on Formats for mandatory reports under Article 12 of the Hong Kong Convention. Under Article 12 of the Hong Kong Convention, each Party is required to report to the Organization inter alia, a list of ship recycling facilities authorized in accordance with the Hong Kong Convention, a list of recognized organizations and nominated surveyors which are authorized to act on behalf of that Party and an annual list of ships recycled within the jurisdiction of that Party.

7. Marine diesel engine replacing a steam system – MARPOL Annex VI amendments

MEPC adopted amendments to regulation 13.2.2 of MARPOL Annex VI on a marine diesel engine replacing a steam system. The amendments are expected to enter into force on 1 August 2025.

2024 Guidelines in respect of non-identical replacement engines

MEPC adopted *2024 Guidelines as required by regulation 13.2.2 of MARPOL Annex VI in respect of non-identical replacement engines not required to meet the Tier III limit.*

These Guidelines shall be taken into account when considering whether the installation of a Tier III marine diesel engine is not feasible in the case of a non-identical marine diesel engine. In addition, these Guidelines contain a template that should be used to inform the Organization of decisions when the installation of a Tier III engine was not feasible and accordingly a Tier II engine was installed.

8. Underwater noise reduction

MEPC endorsed a draft Action plan for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping, developed by the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction ([SDC 10](#)) and included a new item on “Reduction of underwater radiated noise from commercial shipping” on its agenda for MEPC 82.

Amendments to mandatory instruments

Review of Data Collection System for fuel oil consumption of ships

The amendments to Appendix IX of MARPOL Annex VI were adopted, including the amendments and additions to the following items required to be reported in the DCS.

1. Total fuel oil consumption per combustion systems (main engines, auxiliary engines/generators and oil-fired boilers);
2. Total fuel oil consumption while the ship is not under way;
3. Laden distance travelled (on a voluntary basis);
4. Transport work;
5. Total amount of on-shore power supplied; and
6. Category of Innovative energy efficiency technologies.

Entry into force: 1 August 2025

Revision of the requirements of bunker delivery note for low-flashpoint fuels and gas fuels

The amendments to MARPOL Annex VI were adopted, which clarify the requirements for onboard storage and minimum information of BDN for low-flashpoint fuels and gas fuels.

Entry into force: 1 August 2025

Ballast Water Record Books in electronic record book format

The amendments to the Regulations A-1 and B-2 of the BWM Convention were adopted, which include the reference to "the Guidelines for the use of electronic record books under the BWM Convention" adopted at MEPC 80.

Entry into force: 1 October 2025

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