



MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
COMMITTEE
57th session
Agenda item 4

MEPC 57/4/7
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PREVENTION OF AIR POLLUTION FROM SHIPS

Possible expediting of IMO's work on reduction of GHG emissions from ships

Note by the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This document contains proposals to expedite the Organization's work on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships engaged in international trade
<i>Strategic direction:</i>	7.3
<i>High-level action:</i>	7.3.1
<i>Planned output:</i>	7.3.1.2 and 7.3.1.3
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 15
<i>Related document:</i>	MEPC 57/4/6

General

1 Climate change is perhaps the most significant environmental threat the world community faces today. Although international shipping is but a small contributor to the total volume of emissions to the atmosphere, the maritime sector must nevertheless continue to do its part towards reducing emissions emanating from its activities wherever possible. In this context, IMO, as the regulator of shipping engaged in international trade, must play its leadership role by acting expeditiously to achieve further reductions. This, because compelling evidence mounts and the world becomes increasingly aware and concerned about the potentially deleterious effects on the environment if decisive action is not taken collectively to counter these threats at the earliest possible time.

2 The increasing evidence of climate change and its related economic, social and environmental consequences, many of them potentially irreversible, confronts the international community with one of the most complex and serious challenges of the modern era. Climate change will impact all, but most severely the less developed and vulnerable countries. The response to climate change has, therefore, to be rooted in sustainable development and equity, recognizing the vulnerability of the least privileged countries and their need for economic growth and poverty alleviation.

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3 Over the past year, the international community has been reasserting the great importance and urgency that needs to be attached to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, with the aim of expediting the necessary processes which would lead to a better understanding of, and agreement on, the action that needs to be taken to tackle this global threat to climate before it is too late – the wish to act and act without delay is virtually unanimous. The Secretary-General believes that IMO should be at the forefront of such a universal campaign, thus demonstrating the Organization's determination to contribute to the solution of the problem substantively and expeditiously.

UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol

4 The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was adopted in 1992 and entered into force in 1994. At the last count, the Convention had 189 Parties. The Convention sets out basic principles to address the issue and a general framework for action.

5 The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997 to supplement the UNFCCC and entered into force in 2005. At the time of writing, the Protocol had 166 Parties. Under UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, Parties to its Annex I (i.e., developed countries and countries that, at the time, were undergoing the process of transition to a market economy) have been required to reduce their overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by an average of 5.2% below their 1990 level between 2008 and 2012, a period often referred to as “the first commitment period”.

Coordinated UN System Action on Climate Change

6 Under the leadership of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) has initiated a process aimed at aligning the actions, and strengths, of all specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system into a coordinated approach to climate change. The objective is to support the process of pursuing an international agreement within the UNFCCC, as well as the efforts of Member States at the national, regional and global levels, towards tackling the multifaceted challenge presented by climate change.

Post-Kyoto instrument

7 Document MEPC 57/4/6 reports on the United Nations Climate Change Conference, which was held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007 to pave the way for an international agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol's first commitment period, which, as mentioned above, is due to end in 2012. In order to avoid a gap between the end of the Kyoto Protocol and the entry into force of a new framework instrument, there is a need to conclude a new deal by 2009 to allow enough time for ratification of any such new instrument before the end of the first commitment period. The success of the Bali Conference (the so-called “Bali roadmap”) lies in the establishment of a process leading to some key building blocks of a future climate change regime, including adaptation, mitigation, technology exchange and financing of the response action.

The Secretary-General's suggestion at A 25

8 At the twenty-fourth extraordinary session of the Council and, in his opening address at the twenty-fifth regular session of the Assembly, the Secretary-General informed delegates that, following consultations with the MEPC Chairman and in consonance with the great importance and urgency that the international community was attaching to the control of greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, he intended to recommend to the present session of the MEPC, a possible way forward to expedite IMO's work on GHG emissions from ships. Both the Council and the Assembly expressed support for the intended action.

The Committee's current work plan on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

9 The Committee, at MEPC 55 (October 2006), approved a “Work plan to identify and develop the mechanisms needed to achieve the limitation or reduction of CO₂ emissions from international shipping”, with a timetable to complete all work items requested by resolution A.963(23) – IMO policies and practices related to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships – by July 2009. The agreed work plan and associated timetable are reproduced in the annex, for ease of reference.

Possible expediting of IMO's work on GHG emissions

10 The Secretary-General appreciates the work plan and the associated timetable agreed by MEPC 55. However, in view of the importance and urgency attached universally to the control of greenhouse gas emissions from all sources (including from ships), he is of the view that the Committee and the Organization as a whole should act in concert with the wider international efforts (such as those referred to above seeking the development and adoption of a global agreement by December 2009 and the coming into force of the new regime by 2012).

11 Although the 2000 IMO study on GHG emissions has concluded that shipping is accountable for a small percentage of the total greenhouse gas emissions from all sources, he sees no reason why shipping's good record should not become even better. He, therefore, believes that the maritime community as a whole should build on the care of duty it has long been exercising and demonstrate to civil society at large that it is prepared and willing to join in the UN's wider call for more expeditious and substantive action to combat climate change. Such prompt action will, he expects, act as a disincentive for unilateral or regional action, which, while producing limited results, will, at the same time, have a detrimental impact on shipping.

12 The Secretary-General believes that the Committee, building on the work the Organization has already accomplished in addressing the issue of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from ships, could be in a position to finalize, ahead of schedule at MEPC 58 in October 2008, items 1 and 2 of the agreed work plan at annex, namely:

- .1 the CO₂ Emission Indexing Scheme; and
- .2 the CO₂ emission baseline(s).

At the same time, the Committee should continue working on the technical, operational and market-based measures to control greenhouse gas emissions (item 3 of the work plan), a task that would be completed by MEPC 59 in July 2009, as scheduled, unless the Committee itself considers that this remaining item, or parts thereof, should also be brought forward in time. In this regard, it should be clarified that the proposals are not intended as an amendment to the approved timetable; rather, as an identification of the components in the work plan, which can realistically be concluded before the originally set date.

13 In order to assist in the above accelerated procedure, should the Committee accept it, the Terms of Reference for the update of the IMO GHG Study (being undertaken by an international consortium of research institutions) have been re-arranged, without modifying their content, into two distinct phases, with the first phase being scheduled for completion in time for MEPC 58 to consider the relevant findings and utilize them, as appropriate, to make well informed and sound decisions (in particular, as concerns the CO₂ emission baseline(s)); and the second phase to be completed early in 2009, so that the finalized update may be submitted to MEPC 59 in July of that year.

Possible intersessional meeting

14 Should the Committee agree with the proposals contained in this document, there might be a need for an *ad hoc* working group meeting after MEPC 57, to progress the development of the CO₂ Emission Indexing Scheme and the CO₂ emission baseline(s), the outcome of which would be submitted to MEPC 58, in October of this year, for consideration and appropriate action. Should the Committee so decide, it may also consider accepting the offer of Norway, expressed at A 25, to host such an intersessional meeting.

Action requested of the Committee

15 The Committee is invited to consider the course of action proposed in paragraph 12 and, if accepted, also to consider the need to convene the intersessional meeting referred to in paragraph 14.

ANNEX

WORK PLAN TO IDENTIFY AND DEVELOP MECHANISMS TO ACHIEVE THE LIMITATION OR REDUCTION OF CO₂ EMISSIONS FROM INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING

1 The Marine Environment Protection Committee, at its fifty-fifth session, held from 9 to 13 October 2006, considered the required follow-up actions, in technical and methodological perspective, to resolution A.963(23) on IMO Policies and Practices Related to Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from ships.

2 The Committee, having recognized that CO₂ is the main greenhouse gas emitted by ships, agreed the following work plan and associated timetable in accordance with paragraph 2(b) of resolution A.963(23).

WORK PLAN

- 1 CO₂ Emission Indexing Scheme (action 1(b) of resolution A.963(23)):
 - .1 Member States and the industry to continue to carry out trials in accordance with MEPC/Circ.471 and submit the results to MEPC; and
 - .2 Improve indexing method set out in MEPC/Circ.471.
- 2 CO₂ emission baseline(s) (action 1(a) and (b) of resolution A.963(23)):
 - .1 Consider methodology for CO₂ emission baseline(s) in terms of efficiency;
 - .2 Evaluate the methodology referred to in paragraph 2.1 by accumulated data on CO₂ emission;
 - .3 Draft proposal(s) on CO₂ emission efficiency baseline(s); and
 - .4 Explore other types of baseline(s), if necessary.
- 3 Consider technical, operational and market-based methods for dealing with GHG emissions (action 1(d) of resolution A.963(23)).

TIMETABLE

The work items specified above should be considered and concluded in accordance with the following timetable:

Item	MEPC 55 Oct. 06	MEPC 56 July 07	A 25 Nov. 07	MEPC 57 Mar. 08	MEPC 58 Oct. 08	MEPC 59 July 09
1.1	O	O		O	O	
1.2					O	O
2.1		O		O	O	O
2.2				O	O	O
2.3					O	O
2.4					O	O
3		O		O	O	O
