

Summary of MEPC 73 October 2018



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Introduction

From the 22nd to the 26th October 2018, the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 73) met for its 73rd session at the headquarters of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London. Topics discussed included: amendments to MARPOL (concerning carriage of fuel); the Ballast Water Management Convention (including amendments to guidelines); amendments to the NOx Technical Code; marine plastic litter; protecting the Arctic; and the next steps in the IMO's strategy for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction.

An overview of decisions is given here, however, definitive information should be sought from the final report of the committee.

Amendments adopted

The Committee considered and adopted draft amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the prohibition on the carriage of non-compliant fuel oil for combustion purposes for propulsion or operation on board a ship, to enter into force on 1st March 2020. This amendment is complementary to the 0.50% sulphur limit MARPOL amendment in force from 1st January 2020, and will prohibit the carriage of non-compliant fuel oil for combustion purposes for propulsion or operation on board a ship, unless the ship has an approved exhaust gas cleaning system (scrubber) fitted.

A proposal for an 'experience building phase' (EBP) on the fuel oil sulphur limit, similar to that of the BWM Convention, was discussed but not accepted at this MEPC. Instead, member States are invited to submit proposals at MEPC 74 on how to enhance the implementation of Regulation 18 MARPOL Annex VI, which covers fuel oil quality and availability.

The Committee approved MEPC.1/Circ.875/Add.1 on 'Guidance on best practice for fuel oil suppliers for assuring the quality of fuel oil delivered to ships'.

Air Pollution, Energy Efficiency, GHG Emission Reductions

To assist ships in complying with the 0.50% sulphur limit, the MEPC approved guidance on ship implementation planning, issued as a circular entitled 'Guidance on the development of a ship implementation plan for the consistent implementation of the 0.50% sulphur limit under MARPOL Annex VI'.



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Draft amendments to the NOx Technical Code 2008 concerning certification requirements for SCR systems were approved. The draft MEPC resolution on 'Amendments to the 2017 Guidelines addressing additional aspects to the NOx Technical Code 2008 with regard to particular requirements related to marine diesel engines fitted with Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) Systems' was also approved in principle, with a view to adoption at MEPC 74. The Committee also adopted resolution MEPC.307(73) on the '2018 Guidelines for the discharge of exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) bleed-off water'.

The Committee discussed further measures to protect the Arctic, including a review of the findings of the informal correspondence group established post MEPC 72. A review of the proposed methodologies for a HFO ban in the Arctic, including impact assessment and timeline for implementation, will go to the PPR sub-committee in February 2019 for further discussion.

The Energy Efficiency Design Index (EEDI) was also discussed, including the review beyond Phase 2. This involved agreement of Phase 3 requirements for different ship types, including changes to the target efficiency percentages and years for the new targets. However, while initial draft amendments are approved, further discussion will occur at MEPC 74 with a view to adoption.

The Committee approved the report of the fourth meeting of the Intersessional Working Group on Reduction of GHG emissions from ships, and approved the 'Programme of follow-up actions of the Initial IMO Strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships up to 2023'. Member States are invited to give proposals on measures to reduce emissions to MEPC 74, as well as for finalisation of the procedure for assessing the impacts on States. It was noted that there is a potential for early action focusing on existing instruments, via the EEDI and SEEMP requirements. MEPC 73 also agreed the draft terms of reference for the 'Fourth IMO GHG Study'.

Marine Plastic Litter

The Committee discussed efforts to address the significant issue posed by plastics in the marine environment. MEPC 73 subsequently adopted a marine plastic litter action plan. This aims to enhance existing regulations and introduce new mechanisms to reduce plastic litter. Identified measures in the plan, include:

- Studying the extent of marine plastic litter from ships
- reviewing port reception facilities
- measures that focus on fishing gear, loss or discharged
- further training.

Member States were invited to submit further information on marine plastics to future meetings of MEPC. MEPC 73 also agreed to request that MSC consider establishing reporting mechanisms for container losses.

Implementation of the Ballast Water Convention

The effective implementation of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004 (BWM Convention) was discussed. The Convention entered into force in September 2017 and has now been ratified by 79 countries (some 80.94% of world merchant shipping tonnage).

At this session, MEPC agreed to grant Basic Approval to the 'BIOBALLAST 1000' ballast water management system and Final Approval to the 'Envirocleanse inTank™' BWTS (Electrochlorination Variation).

MEPC considered amendments to the BWM G4 Guidelines, in particular whether elements of guidance on contingency measures (BWM.2/Circ.62) should be incorporated into the Guidelines. The Committee subsequently adopted resolution MEPC.306(73) on 'Amendments to the Guidelines for ballast water management and development of ballast water management plans (G4)'.

The Committee also approved the following BWM-related circulars:

- BWM.2/Circ.69 on 'Guidance on System Design Limitations of ballast water management systems and their monitoring'
- BWM.2/Circ.70 on 'Guidance for the commissioning testing of ballast water management systems'.



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Other Approvals

MEPC 73 discussed the use of electronic record books, in place of paper record books. The Committee approved, in principle, the draft MEPC resolution on 'Guidelines for the use of electronic record books under MARPOL,' as well as draft amendments to MARPOL Annexes I, II, V and VI, and the NOx Technical Code concerning electronic record books, with a view to adoption at MEPC 74.

The Committee also approved:

- The draft MEPC circular on 'Guidelines for the carriage of energy-rich fuels and their blends'
- the draft amendments to 'MARPOL Annex II, relating to cargo residues and tank washings of persistent floating products with a high viscosity and/or a high melting point', with a view to subsequent adoption at MEPC 74
- the draft amendments to the 'Revised guidelines for the development, review and validation of model courses'
- the draft MEPC resolution on the '2018 Guidelines for the application of MARPOL Annex I requirements to floating production, storage and offloading facilities (FPSOs) and floating storage units (FSUs)'
- the draft amendments to the IBC Code and the draft amendments to the BCH Code (subject to concurrent decision by MSC 100), with a view to subsequent adoption at MEPC 74.

Future Outputs

The future work programme outputs of MEPC were discussed in the following areas:

- A 'new work output on efficient identification and enhancement of safety, technical, operational and documentation review and amendment for improvement and consistent implementation of the Ballast Water Management Convention', but agreed to review various proposals, and refine the title and scope of the output for MEPC 74
- a 'new output regarding the development of the seafarer model course under the Ballast Water Management Convention', but agreed to refine the title and scope of the output for MEPC 74
- a 'new output on development of necessary amendments to the BWM Convention so as to overcome technical and operational challenges in complying with the BWM Convention', but agreed to refine the title and scope of the output for MEPC 74
- further measures to deal with perfluorooctanesulphonic acid (PFOS) and other surfactants in firefighting foam, depending on the measures presented to MSC in December
- further additions to the existing agreed new output on the review of the '2011 Guidelines for the control and management of ships' biofouling to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species'.

MEPC is expected to meet for its 74th session from the 13th to 17th May 2019.

Harry Harris
Technical Advisor
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