

**IMO UPDATE:  
MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION COMMITTEE – MEPC 80**



**The 80th session of the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 80) was held from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 07<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

# MEPC 80 Highlights

- Tackling climate change - 2023 IMO GHG Strategy adopted
- Energy efficiency of ships – draft amendments to IMO ship fuel oil consumption Data Collection System (DCS) approved
- Ballast water management – including approval of the Convention Review Plan and adoption of amendments to the BWM Convention
- Biofouling management - revised Guidelines adopted
- Designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area in the North-Western Mediterranean to protect cetaceans
- Underwater noise - revised guidelines adopted
- Tackling marine litter – work on plastic pellets carriage / lost containers
- Ship-to-ship transfer - proposed Assembly resolution
- Special areas –effective date for the the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden special areas under MARPOL Annexes I and V
- Miscellaneous

## Tackling climate change - cutting GHG emissions from ships

IMO has developed global regulations on energy efficiency for ships and continues to take concrete actions to ensure that international shipping bears its fair share of responsibility in addressing climate change.

After several months of negotiations, the MEPC 80 session adopted the 2023 IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships, with enhanced targets to tackle harmful emissions.

### Life cycle GHG assessment guidelines adopted

The MEPC adopted Guidelines on life cycle GHG intensity of marine fuels (LCA guidelines). The LCA guidelines allow for a Well-to-Wake calculation, including Well-to-Tank and Tank-to-Wake emission factors, of total GHG emissions related to the production and use of marine fuels.

### Interim guidance on the use of biofuels

The MEPC approved an MEPC circular on Interim guidance on the use of biofuels under regulations 26, 27 and 28 of MARPOL Annex VI (DCS and CII).

### Next steps - intersessional working group

The MEPC agreed terms of reference for a future ISWG-GHG meeting as well as the next steps for a comprehensive impact assessment of candidate GHG reduction measures.

The sixteenth session of the Intersessional Working Group on the Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships (ISWG-GHG 16) is set to meet in April 2024, ahead of the MEPC 81 session.

### Next steps - intersessional working group

The MEPC considered a number of submissions related to onboard CO2 capture and agreed to instruct ISWG-GHG 16, if time permits, to consider the proposals related to onboard CO2 capture ahead of MEPC 81 and advise the Committee on a way forward.

The submissions include those relating to onboard carbon capture (OCC) technology and a proposal on the way forward to review the current regulatory framework and consider how to move forward to potentially accommodate onboard CO2 capture within IMO's regulatory framework.

# Energy Efficiency

## Draft amendments to the [Data Collection System \(DCS\)](#)

The Committee approved draft amendments to MARPOL Annex VI regarding the revision of the IMO ship fuel oil consumption [Data Collection System \(DCS\)](#).

The [ISWG-GHG](#) 14 session in March 2023 had discussed relevant proposals, noting broad support within the Group for the inclusion of data on transport work and on enhanced level of granularity of reported data in the DCS.

The draft amendments relate to MARPOL Annex VI Appendix IX on "Information to be submitted to the IMO Ship Fuel Oil Consumption Database" (relating to regulation 27), relating to reporting of data on cargo carried. They will be put forward to MEPC 81 for adoption.

## Review of the short-term measure (CII and EEXI)

The short-term GHG reduction measures, CII rating, EEXI and enhanced SEEMP, entered into force on 1 November 2022.

The MEPC approved the review plan of the CII regulations and guidelines, which must be completed at the latest by 1 January 2026. The plan foresees the timeline for the review of the short-term measure is described as follows: 1 Data gathering stage: from MEPC 80 to MEPC 82 (autumn 2024); Data analysis stage: working group at MEPC 82 to be continued by a correspondence group; and 3 Convention and Guidelines review stage: an intercessional working group between MEPC 82 and MEPC 83 (spring 2025) as well as a working group at MEPC 83.

# Ballast water management – including approval of the Convention Review Plan and adoption of amendments to the BWM Convention

## Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention Review Plan

The MEPC approved the Convention Review Plan (CRP) under the experience-building phase associated with the BWM Convention, including the list of priority issues to be considered in the convention review stage. This will guide the comprehensive review of the BWM Convention over the next three years and the corresponding development of a package of amendments to the Convention.

The CRP, which will be disseminated as a BWM.2 circular, envisages that the amendments developed during this comprehensive process could be adopted at MEPC 85 in Autumn 2026. The Committee re-established the Correspondence Group on Review of the BWM Convention.

## BWM Convention amendments

The MEPC adopted amendments to appendix II of the Annex to the BWM Convention (Form of Ballast Water Record Book). They are expected to enter into force on 1 February 2025

## Implementing the BWM Convention

The MEPC discussed a number of matters relating to the implementation of the BWM Convention, with the main outcomes including:

- Approved a BWM.2 circular on Guidance on matters relating to ballast water record-keeping and reporting. This Guidance will assist in bringing clarity to the record-keeping and reporting process under the BWM Convention, including guidance on completing the Ballast Water Record Book, an updated example ballast water reporting form and an example form for voluntary tank-by-tank logging of ballast water operations.

- Adopted an MEPC resolution on Amendments to the Guidelines for ballast water management and development of Ballast Water Management Plans (G4).
- Adopted an MEPC resolution on Amendments to the Guidelines for ballast water exchange (G6).
- Adopted an MEPC resolution on Guidance for the use of electronic record books under the BWM Convention. This guidance aims to provide standardized information on approving an electronic record book to ensure the obligations of the BWM Convention are met and that there is a consistent approach to approving such systems.
- Approved draft amendments to regulations A-1 and B-2 of the BWM Convention concerning the use of electronic record books under the Convention and instructed the Secretariat to circulate the amendments with a view to adoption by MEPC 81.
- Approved a Protocol for verification of ballast water compliance monitoring devices. This Protocol is an important tool to support effective implementation of the BWM Convention by enabling the use of devices for a variety of purposes that satisfy a common level of quality. These include commissioning testing of ballast water management systems, port State control inspections, and ships' self-monitoring.
- Approved a unified interpretation to the form of the International Ballast Water Management Certificate (IBWMC) and regulations B-3.5 and B-3.10 of the BWM Convention, regarding the "date of construction" for a ship which has undergone a major conversion in order to implement the BWM Convention.
- Granted Final Approval to two ballast water management systems which make use of Active Substances, granted Basic Approval to one, and extended the Final Approval of another for use in fresh water; based on the outcome of the 43rd meeting of the GESAMP Ballast Water Working Group.

## Biofouling management - draft revised Biofouling Guidelines set for adoption

The MEPC adopted the revised Guidelines for the control and management of ships' biofouling to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species (Biofouling Guidelines), following a comprehensive review of the Guidelines.

The 2023 Guidelines expand on and update the previous version, with a view to strengthening it and increasing its uptake.

Biofouling is the accumulation of aquatic organisms on wetted or immersed surfaces such as ships and other offshore structures.

Good biofouling management can help protect marine biodiversity by preventing the [transfer of invasive aquatic species](#). Keeping a ship's hull clean can also reduce the ship's greenhouse gas emissions by [improving fuel efficiency](#).

The Biofouling Guidelines were first adopted in [2011](#) and are intended to provide a globally consistent approach to the management of biofouling. The MEPC 72 session (2018) decided to initiate a review, to take into account best practices and experience as well as the latest research.

## Designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area

The MEPC agreed to designate a particular sensitive sea area in the North-Western Mediterranean Sea (NW Med PSSA) to protect cetaceans from international shipping.

The designation includes associated protective measures (APMs), which are recommendatory in nature and intended to be by any commercial ships and pleasure yachts from 300 gross tonnage and upwards:

- Mariners should navigate with particular caution within the NW Med PSSA, in areas where large and medium cetaceans are detected or reported, and reduce their speed to between 10 and 13 knots as voluntary speed reduction (VSR). However, a safe speed should be kept, so that proper and effective action could be taken to avoid collision and any possible negative impacts on ship's maneuverability.

Mariners should keep an appropriate safety distance or speed reduction measure from any large and medium cetaceans observed or detected in close quarter situation. The safety distance or speed reduction measure should be adapted to the actual navigation circumstances and conditions of the ship. Mariners should broadcast on VHF or other available means on scene, the position of medium and large cetaceans observed or detected within the designated PSSA and transmit the information and the position to a designated coastal Authority(ies).

- Mariners should report any collision with cetaceans to a designated coastal Authority(ies), which should forward this information to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) global cetacean ship strikes database.

## Addressing underwater noise – revised guidelines

The MEPC approved revised Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life.

The guidelines, issued as a circular, recognize that commercial shipping is one of the main contributors to underwater radiated noise (URN) which has adverse effects on critical life functions for a wide range of marine life, including marine mammals, fish and invertebrate species, upon which many coastal Indigenous communities depend for their food, livelihoods and cultures.

They include updated technical knowledge, including reference to international measurement standards, recommendations and classification society rules. They also provide sample templates to assist shipowners with the development of an underwater radiated noise management plan.

They provide an overview of approaches applicable to designers, shipbuilders and ship operators to reduce the underwater radiated noise of any given ship. They are intended to assist relevant stakeholders in establishing mechanisms and programmes through which noise reduction efforts can be realized. The previous guidelines were issued in [2014](#).

The MEPC approved the dissemination of an MEPC circular on Guidelines for underwater radiated noise reduction in Inuit Nunaat and the Arctic, developed by the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). The guidelines recognize that Inuit Nunaat is a unique environment and adverse impacts to marine wildlife in this area from shipping noise may be significantly increased as a result. Sound levels throughout Inuit Nunaat are lower than elsewhere, making it more vulnerable to increases from industrial activity.

## Tackling marine litter

### Development of recommendations for the carriage of plastic pellets by sea in freight containers

The MEPC noted and concurred with the ongoing work in the Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR) to address the risks to the marine environment from plastic pellets. This risk has been highlighted by incidents, including the **X-Press Pearl** in 2021, during which 11,000 tonnes of plastic pellets were spilled off the shore of Sri Lanka.

The Committee noted the two-stage approach agreed by the Sub-Committee in relation to reducing the environmental risk associated with the maritime transport of plastic pellets in freight containers, namely: firstly, the development of a draft circular containing recommendations for the carriage of plastic pellets by sea in freight containers, addressing in particular packaging, notification, and stowage, to be finalized at PPR 11 following input by the Sub-Committee on Carriage of Cargoes and Containers (CCC 9, which meets 20-29 September), with a view to approval by MEPC 81 in 2024; and subsequently, the development of amendments to appropriate mandatory instruments, which could be informed by the experience gained from the implementation of the voluntary measures.

The MEPC noted that the PPR Sub-Committee has agreed that plastic pellets should not be carried in bulk.

### Mandatory reporting of lost containers – draft MARPOL amendments set for approval

The MEPC approved, for subsequent adoption, draft amendments to MARPOL protocol I referring to 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.

The draft amendments to article V of protocol I of the MARPOL Convention– Provisions concerning reports on incidents involving harmful substances, would add a new paragraph to say that "In case of the loss of freight container(s), the report required by article II (1) (b) shall be made in accordance with the provisions of SOLAS regulations V/31 and V/32."

Related draft SOLAS chapter V amendments were approved by the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 107), to require the master of every ship involved in the loss of freight container(s) to communicate the particulars of such an incident to ships in the vicinity, to the nearest coastal State, and also to the flag State.

### Capacity building to address marine plastic litter from ships

GloLitter Partnerships, a project between the Government of Norway, IMO and FAO is supporting developing countries, including Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs), in identifying opportunities for the prevention and reduction of marine litter

## Ship-to-ship transfers – proposed Assembly resolution

The Committee discussed a document aiming to raise awareness submission on the potential environmental risks and the consequences and concerns for the global marine pollution prevention and liability and compensation regimes relating to the increase in ship-to-ship transfers at sea. The document proposes a draft Assembly resolution to encourage and urge action, including enhanced monitoring of such operations.

The Committee agreed to forward the draft Assembly resolution to the thirty-third session of the Assembly, together with the comments and views expressed at this session, for further consideration with a view to finalization and adoption by A 33. In this regard, the Committee noted that, should Member States or international organizations have further comments or proposals in connection to this matter, they could submit documents to A 33 accordingly.

# Special areas – effective date for the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden special areas under MARPOL Annexes I and V

The MEPC agreed the effective date of 1 January 2025, for the the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden special areas under MARPOL Annexes I and V, based on information provided related

to the status of available necessary reception facilities for MARPOL Annexes I and V wastes and residues, covering all the ports and terminals within the areas.

## Miscellaneous

### Inventory of Hazardous Materials – revision of guidelines

The MEPC adopted the 2023 Guidelines for the development of the Inventory of Hazardous Materials, following amendments to the Anti-fouling Systems (AFS) Convention to include controls on cybutryne.

### Operational Guide on the Response to Spills of Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS)

The MEPC approved the Operational Guide on the Response to Spills of Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS). The guidance is for first responders and decision-makers in preparation for and during a maritime incident at sea or in port, when such an incident involves HNS.

### Guidelines for thermal waste treatment devices

The MEPC adopted the 2023 Guidelines for thermal waste treatment devices.

### Marine diesel engine replacing a steam system – draft MARPOL Annex VI amendments

The MEPC approved draft amendments to regulation 13.2.2 of MARPOL Annex VI on a

marine diesel engine replacing a steam system, with a view to adoption at MEPC 81.

### Electronic bunker delivery note - Unified interpretation to regulations 18.5 and 18.6 of MARPOL Annex VI

The MEPC approved a new unified interpretation to regulations 18.5 and 18.6 of MARPOL Annex VI, for inclusion in a revision of MEPC.1/Circ.795/rev.7 on unified interpretations to MARPOL Annex VI. The unified interpretation states that the Bunker Delivery Note (BDN) is acceptable in either hard copy or electronic format.

### Reduction of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions - proposed output

The MEPC agreed a scope of work on the Reduction of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions, prepared by the PPR Sub-Committee. This work would aim to investigate how the reduction of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions could contribute to the implementation of the IMO GHG Strategy and would consider how to involve terminals in the reduction of Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions as well as current and potential new regulation and guidance.

# LIST OF RESOLUTIONS/CIRCULARS (PROVISIONAL)

Resolutions /Circulars	Topic
MEPC.369(80)	AMENDMENTS TO APPENDIX II OF THE BWM CONVENTION CONCERNING THE FORM OF THE BALLAST WATER RECORD BOOK
MEPC.370(80)	AMENDMENTS TO THE GUIDELINES FOR BALLAST WATER MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF BALLAST WATER MANAGEMENT PLANS (G4)
MEPC.371(80)	AMENDMENTS TO THE GUIDELINES FOR BALLAST WATER EXCHANGE (G6)
MEPC.372(80)	GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF ELECTRONIC RECORD BOOKS UNDER THE BALLAST WATER MANAGEMENT CONVENTION
MEPC.373(80)	2023 GUIDELINES FOR THERMAL WASTE TREATMENT DEVICES (TWTD)
MEPC.374(80)	AMENDMENTS TO THE 2022 GUIDELINES ON SURVEY AND CERTIFICATION OF THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY DESIGN INDEX (EEDI) (RESOLUTION MEPC.365(79))
MEPC.375(80)	AMENDMENTS TO THE 2021 GUIDELINES ON THE SHAFT/ENGINE POWER LIMITATION SYSTEM TO COMPLY WITH THE EEXI REQUIREMENTS AND USE OF A POWER RESERVE
MEPC.376(80)	GUIDELINES ON LIFE CYCLE GHG INTENSITY OF MARINE FUELS
MEPC.377(80)	2023 IMO STRATEGY FOR REDUCTION OF GHG EMISSIONS FROM SHIPS
MEPC.378(80)	2023 GUIDELINES FOR THE CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF SHIPS' BIOFOULING TO MINIMIZE THE TRANSFER OF INVASIVE AQUATIC SPECIES
MEPC.379(80)	2023 GUIDELINES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INVENTORY OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS
MEPC.380(80)	DESIGNATION OF THE NORTHWESTERN MEDITERRANEAN SEA AS A PSSA
MEPC.381(80)	ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DATE ON WHICH THE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS OF REGULATIONS 15.3, 15.5 AND 34.3 TO 34.5 OF MARPOL ANNEX I IN RESPECT TO THE RED SEA AND THE GULF OF ADEN SPECIAL AREAS, SHALL TAKE EFFECT
MEPC.382(80)	ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DATE ON WHICH THE DISCHARGE REQUIREMENTS OF REGULATION 6 OF MARPOL ANNEX V, IN RESPECT TO THE RED SEA SPECIAL AREA, SHALL TAKE EFFECT
BWM.2/Circ.66/Rev.5	UNIFIED INTERPRETATIONS TO THE BWM CONVENTION AND THE BWMS CODE
BWM.2/Circ.78	PROTOCOL FOR VERIFICATION OF BALLAST WATER COMPLIANCE MONITORING DEVICES
BWM.2/Circ.79	CONVENTION REVIEW PLAN UNDER THE EXPERIENCE-BUILDING PHASE ASSOCIATED WITH THE BWM CONVENTION
BWM.2/Circ.80	GUIDANCE ON BALLAST WATER RECORD-KEEPING AND REPORTING
MEPC.1/Circ.795/Rev.8	UNIFIED INTERPRETATIONS TO REGULATIONS 18.5 AND 18.6 OF MARPOL ANNEX VI
MEPC.1/Circ.905	INTERIM GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF BIOFUELS UNDER REGULATIONS 26, 27, AND 28 OF MARPOL ANNEX VI (DCS AND CII)
MEPC.1/Circ.906	REVISED GUIDELINES FOR THE REDUCTION OF UNDERWATER RADIATED NOISE FROM SHIPPING TO ADDRESS ADVERSE IMPACTS ON MARINE LIFE
MEPC.1/Circ.907	GUIDELINES FOR UNDERWATER RADIATED NOISE REDUCTION IN INUIT NUNAAT AND THE ARCTIC
MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.5	ORGANIZATION AND METHOD OF WORK OF THE MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE AND THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION COMMITTEE AND THEIR SUBSIDIARY BODIES
PPR.1/Circ.7/Rev.1	DECISIONS WITH REGARD TO THE CATEGORIZATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF PRODUCTS

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