INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 80), 3-7 July 2023

Action Required: IR Commission members are invited to note the relevant outcomes of MEPC 80.

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

The revised IMO GHG Strategy includes an enhanced common ambition to reach net-zero GHG emissions from international shipping close to 2050, a commitment to ensure an uptake of alternative zero and near-zero GHG fuels by 2030, as well as indicative check-points for 2030 and 2040.

MEPC 80 highlights:

1. Tackling climate change - 2023 IMO GHG Strategy adopted

2. Energy efficiency of ships – draft amendments to IMO ship fuel oil consumption Data Collection System (DCS) approved

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

4. Biofouling management - revised Guidelines adopted

5. Designation of a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area in the in the North-Western Mediterranean to protect cetaceans

6. Underwater noise - revised guidelines adopted

7. Tackling marine litter – work on plastic pellets carriage / lost containers

8. Ship-to-ship transfer - proposed Assembly resolution

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

10. Other matters from the PPR Sub-Committee

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 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. Read full details here.

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).

Onboard CO2 capture

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) approved

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.

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.

The GEF-UNDP-IMO GloFouling Partnerships Project and the related TEST (Transfer of Environmentally Sound Technologies) Biofouling Project, funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), support developing countries to implement the Biofouling Guidelines and trial relevant technologies.

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 manoeuvrability. 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.

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.

Special areas –effective date for the 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.

There were no other issues raised of relevance to World Sailing.