

MEPC 60 Session Summary

Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) – 60th session: 22-26 March, 2010

MORE WORK NEEDED DESPITE GHG PROGRESS, IMO COMMITTEE CONCLUDES, IMO COMMITTEE CONCLUDES

The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the IMO has concluded that more work needs to be done before it completes its consideration of the proposed mandatory application of technical and operational measures designed to regulate and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from international shipping.

Meeting at the Organization's London headquarters, the Committee's 60th session agreed to establish an intersessional Working Group to build on the significant progress that had been made during the meeting on technical and operational measures to increase the energy efficiency of ships. The Working Group will report back to the Committee's next session (MEPC 61), in September 2010.

Although the meeting was able to prepare draft text on mandatory requirements for the Energy Efficiency Design Index (EEDI) for new vessels and on the Ship Energy Efficiency Management Plan (SEEMP) for all ships in operation, the Committee noted in particular, that, among other things, issues concerning ship size, target dates and reduction rate in relation to the EEDI requirements all required finalization.

The Committee agreed on the basic concept that a vessel's attained EEDI shall be equal or less (e.g. more efficient) than the required EEDI, and that the required EEDI shall be drawn up based on EEDI baselines and reduction rates yet to be agreed. The Committee noted guidelines for calculating the EEDI baselines using data from existing ships in the Lloyd's Register Fairplay database.

With regard to market-based measures, the Committee agreed to establish an Expert Group on the subject to undertake a feasibility study and impact assessment of the various proposals submitted for a market-based instrument for international maritime transport – again, reporting back to MEPC 61.

AMENDMENTS TO THE MARPOL CONVENTION

Among other items on a full agenda, the Committee adopted amendments to the MARPOL Convention to formally establish a North American Emission Control Area, in which emissions of sulphur oxides (SOx), nitrogen oxides (NOx) and particulate matter from ships will be subject to more stringent controls than the limits that apply globally.

Another new MARPOL regulation, to protect the Antarctic from pollution by heavy grade oils, was also adopted.

These amendments are expected to enter into force on 1 August 2011.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BALLAST WATER MANAGEMENT CONVENTION

The MEPC addressed issues relating to the implementation of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004 and adopted a resolution that requests Administrations to encourage the installation of ballast water management systems on new ships, in accordance with the application dates contained in the Convention.

The resolution also urges countries that have not already done so to ratify the Convention, which will enter into force twelve months after the date on which not fewer than 30 States, the combined merchant fleets of which constitute not less than 35 percent of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant shipping, have become Parties to it. To date, it has been ratified by 22 countries representing 22.65 per cent of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant shipping.

The Committee decided to grant "basic approval" to eight ballast water management systems that make use of active substances and "final approval" to five such systems, after consideration of the reports of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth meetings of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environment Protection (GESAMP) Ballast Water Working Group, which met in September, October and December 2009, respectively.

RECYCLING OF SHIPS

The Committee continued its work on developing Guidelines for safe and environmentally sound ship recycling, and commenced the development of Guidelines for the development of the Ship Recycling Plan. Guidelines for the authorization of ship recycling facilities, for ship inspection and for survey and certification will also be developed in due course. Once adopted, the guidelines will assist ship-recycling facilities and ship operators to begin introducing voluntary improvements to meet the requirements of the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, which was adopted in May 2009.

The MEPC also agreed that there would be a need, in future, to develop guidance concerning the recycling of flag-less and non-Party ships by Parties to the Convention. The Committee agreed a timetable for the development of the guidelines and the intersessional correspondence group was re-established to progress the work and report to MEPC 61.

GARBAGE SPECIAL AREAS

The MEPC agreed to establish 1 May 2011 as the date on which the discharge requirements for the Wider Caribbean Region Special Area under MARPOL Annex V Regulations for the prevention of pollution by garbage from ships will take effect.

This Special Area, which includes the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, was designated as a Special Area under MARPOL Annex V in July 1991. Most countries in the region have now given notice that adequate reception facilities are provided in most relevant ports, so that the Special Area status can now be made effective.

In Annex V, Special Areas, disposal of all garbage into the sea, including plastics, is prohibited. Other special areas under Annex V are: the Baltic Sea (effective since October 1989); the North Sea (February 1991); the Antarctic area (south of latitude 60 degrees south) (March 1992); the "Gulfs" area (August 2008); the Mediterranean Sea (May 2009); the Black Sea (not yet effective); and the Red Sea (not yet effective).

The MEPC is carrying out a review of MARPOL Annex V and received the interim report of an intersessional correspondence group on the subject. The final report, including proposed draft amendments to the Annex and its Guidelines, is expected to be submitted to MEPC 61.

MARPOL ANNEX III REVISION

The MEPC approved proposed amendments to replace the text of MARPOL Annex III Regulations for the prevention of pollution by harmful substances carried by sea in packaged form, with a view to subsequent adoption by MEPC 61.

The amended text is aimed at bringing the Annex up to date with the mandatory International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code, specifying that goods should be shipped in accordance with relevant provisions.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OPRC CONVENTION AND OPRC-HNS PROTOCOL

The MEPC considered the report of the tenth meeting of the OPRC HNS Technical Group, which met in the week prior to the Committee's session, and approved for publication the following texts developed by the Technical Group: Manual on Oil Pollution, Section I – Prevention; Publication checklist for new IMO manuals, guidance documents and training materials; Guidance document on the implementation of an Incident Management System; and Guidelines for oil spill response in fast currents.

SECRETARY-GENERAL'S CLOSING REMARKS

In his closing remarks to the meeting, IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos focused on the progress made in dealing with GHG emissions from ships and the challenges that still remain. Placing the Committee's work in its wider context, he said, "Global issues demand

global solutions. Let the world learn from the lessons of Copenhagen so that the same mistakes are not repeated in Cancun. At the same time, let us build on the undeniable successes Copenhagen has scored, by providing a forum for Heads of State and Government to listen to and understand each other's problems, concerns, worries and sensitivities and, thus, pave the way for a more successful next round of consultations." The shipping world, he added, should proceed, "not in a fragmented manner, but as responsible members of a community that has a role to play in this effort."