

**UNITED NATIONS FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
(UNFCCC)**

SIXTEENTH CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES – COP 16

Cancún, Mexico, 29 November to 10 December 2010

**CONTROL OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM SHIPS ENGAGED IN
INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

POSITION NOTE

by

The International Maritime Organization

Introduction

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) was established 62 years ago as the UN specialized agency in the field of shipping and the effect of shipping on the marine environment. It was mandated to provide machinery for co-operation among Governments in the field of governmental regulation and practices relating to technical matters of all kinds affecting shipping engaged in international trade, including in the area of prevention and control of pollution from ships; and to promote the availability of shipping services to the commerce of the world without discrimination.

Ever since its inception, IMO has developed and enacted a comprehensive corpus of international legislation, currently consisting of 52 treaty instruments, which regulates international shipping from the perspectives of safety, security, efficiency of navigation and environmental protection. Most of these instruments are in force and are being implemented worldwide by the majority of the Organization's 169 Member Governments (all of which are also Parties to the UNFCCC) and three Associate Members.

In pursuing its mission – **safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans** – IMO works vigorously and consistently towards developing a comprehensive regulatory regime aiming at effectively protecting and preserving both the marine and atmospheric environment from pollution by ships. It is against this background and in response to its mandate that the Organization will participate at the UN Climate Change Conference in Cancún, seeking to ensure that the UNFCCC Parties continue to entrust it with developing and enacting global regulations to control GHG emissions from ships engaged in international trade.

Why should IMO continue to be entrusted with the regulation of GHG emissions from shipping?

International shipping – unlike land-based industries, which are regulated mainly through national legislation – requires global regulations if it is to function, as it has done for centuries, as the principal vehicle for the movement of more than 90% of global trade. Indeed, shipping is perhaps the most international of all the world's major industries, a fact that is demonstrated by the diversity of stakeholders of all nationalities involved in the design, construction, ownership, operation and crewing of a typical ocean-going merchant vessel, not to mention the classification, finance, insurance and cargo ownership aspects. Ships spend their working lives travelling between different countries, continents and legal jurisdictions, very often far away from the country of their registry, as they carry the raw materials, foodstuffs, fuel, goods and products that underpin the global economy.

The overarching logic of the international shipping industry requires an international regulatory regime to enable the hugely diverse international mixture highlighted above to function efficiently and effectively. It is this peculiarity of shipping, as a global industry requiring global standards, that makes it imperative that its regulation should, without exception, be the responsibility of an international body exclusively dealing with maritime matters; one that fully understands how the industry operates; and has the specialized knowledge, skills, track record, experience and expertise to work out the best solutions required to safeguard fundamental issues affecting international maritime transport, such as safety, security and environmental protection.

IMO is, therefore, uniquely placed to continue to service the world community from all its perspectives, including those within the objectives of the Cancún Conference. Indeed, the Organization's environmental credentials speak for themselves: 21 out of the 52 IMO treaty instruments directly address the prevention and control of pollution, a fact that bears testimony to the Organization's commitment, through its Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), to the protection and preservation of our common environment – both marine and atmospheric – from any adverse impacts caused by shipping operations.

With particular regard to IMO's efforts to reduce or limit GHG emissions from ships (as mandated under the Kyoto Protocol), the MEPC has been working for several years on the development of a comprehensive mandatory regime consisting of technical and operational measures that are currently being implemented voluntarily by the international shipping industry, as well as market-based measures that are presently being examined in detail. Once in force, this comprehensive regulatory framework is expected to bring about a substantial reduction in the amount of CO₂ emitted by international shipping and to contribute to building relevant capacity in developing countries¹.

¹ For further information on IMO's GHG work, the technical and operational reduction measures under consideration for mandatory application, and on the various market-based measures, please see the IMO website (www.imo.org) and IMO's submissions to SBSTA 33 (FCCC/SBSTA/2010/MISC.14).

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it emerges that:

- IMO has an enviable track record of successfully addressing, resolving and promoting all issues within its competence and on its agenda;
- on environmental issues, in particular, the Organization has been equally successful, as it can demonstrate a globally recognized contribution towards reducing pollution of the marine environment from all sources of shipping operations (oil spills, in particular) and tackling, head on, threats to the atmospheric environment, first through drastically reducing air pollutants and, now, through an effective array of measures aiming at reducing GHG emissions from ships;
- with the firm support of its Member Governments and all its constituents in the maritime industry, the Organization is determined to continue playing, responsibly and effectively, its role as the global body entrusted with the regulation of international shipping and, in particular, to contribute towards the global efforts to stem climate change and global warming by putting in place a mandatory regime that will see shipping emissions reduced to an internationally accepted level within an agreed timeframe.

It is for the reasons outlined above that IMO – the right global regulator for a unique, global industry - is participating in the United Nations Climate Change Conference 2010 expecting that, as the Kyoto Conference did thirteen years ago, the global community will continue to place its trust on the Organization, confident that its regulatory work will pave the way for international shipping to make its fair and proportionate contribution towards realizing the objectives this Conference and the global community pursue.
