

WWF-UK, Transport and Environment (T&E), Seas At Risk, Friends of the Earth US, Oceana, Clean Air Task Force, Bellona & Stichting de Noordzee

PRESS RELEASE

Climate change policy on shipping continues to drift. Work plan lacks ambition or a sense of urgency

London, 17th July 2009. For immediate release.

Despite growing pressure from the UNFCCC and a strong push by the International Maritime Organisation's Secretary General, the IMO has made little progress this week on developing measures to reduce GHG emissions from shipping.

A two-year work plan to develop 'Market-Based Instruments' - either a fuel levy or an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) - was watered down, after pressure from China, Saudi Arabia and South Africa, and European supporters of the scheme showed little appetite to fight for a more ambitious plan.

Twelve years after the Kyoto Protocol handed responsibility to IMO to address emissions from international shipping, the Organisation still has not adopted one single binding measure to do so. Global measures to reduce emissions, in the form of a levy or an ETS, have now been identified, but any decision to adopt either process will not be taken before 2012 at the earliest and could take a further 5-10 years to enter into force, so in practice it could be 2020 before the measure takes effect. By that time, shipping's share of CO₂, if left unchecked, will have potentially doubled and could represent up to 6% of global CO₂ emissions.

The meeting saw the conclusion of several years' work on developing energy efficiency indices for the design of new vessels and the operation of existing ones, which could be used as very effective tools to make shipping more energy efficient. However, so far the IMO only intends to use these indices in voluntary trials. Any discussion this week of whether to make the measures mandatory was ruled out even before the meeting started.

This raises serious questions as to whether the Copenhagen process should reconfirm the IMO's responsibility for shipping-related climate issues, and the organisation's continued anchor-dragging also highlights the need for the EU to progress its own work on a regional European shipping scheme, similar to its policy on aviation.

“The IMO has failed to deliver the results required for Copenhagen. The majority has succumbed to the blocking tactics of a small minority. They clearly have not seized the urgency of the issue; UNFCCC now needs to act”, said Bill Hemmings of T&E

“The IMO has reached the point it should have attained 5 to 10 years ago, and continuing dissent suggests pitfalls remain that could delay the process even further” says John Maggs of Seas At Risk

“The energy efficiency measures are a welcome development, but on their own they will not achieve the Greenhouse gas emission reductions needed. And they won’t achieve anything at all, unless they are mandatory, with an increased reduction of permitted emissions over time, so that the industry is forced to build and sail ever-cleaner ships,” said Pete Lockley, Head of Transport Policy at WWF-UK.

“The IMO GHG Study 2009 makes it clear that the industry could do its part to reduce emissions by at least 20% by 2020, without expense, so there is no reason for IMO decisions to be delayed another three years or more” added Jackie Savitz of Oceana.

“The IMO’s reluctance to engage critical issues continues a disturbing trend over the 12 year period in which the organisation has dealt with this charge” said John Kaltenstein, Clean Vessels programme manager of Friends of the Earth US.

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Notes to Editors:

[1] Global GHGs should not exceed 7.2 MtCO₂ in 2050 in order to achieve a ‘high likelihood’ of keeping warming below 2 degrees C. See [NGO treaty] p. 5 and 16-18. The Second IMO GHG Study 2009, available at http://www.seas-at-risk.org/news_n2.php?page=206, estimates business-as-usual emissions from global shipping as between 2.7 and 3.6 GtCO₂, or 38-50% of the allowable budget.

[2] MEPC 59 is the 59th session of the Marine Environmental Protection Committee, a sub-committee of IMO charged with environmental matters. It met in London from 13-17 July 2009.