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IMO ADOPTS GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS PHASE OUT STRATEGY TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE

The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Phase-out Strategy at its 72nd Session at the IMO Headquarters, London, on 13 April 2018.



Climate change deliberation session at the IMO

More than 100 Member States were present to adopt the strategy on the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from ships. It is envisioned that this first step would spur further plans and actions toward the ultimate goal of phasing out GHG emissions as soon as possible. The strategy is a testament of IMO's recognition of Climate Change as a pressing issue and its solid commitment to combat the same by way of well-planned steps that will be executed in different phases, with cooperative efforts of Member States.

According to the IMO, "The initial strategy represents a framework for Member States, setting out the future vision for international shipping, the levels of ambition to reduce GHG emissions and guiding principles..." The strategy also identifies barriers and supportive measures including capacity building, technical cooperation and research and development. Further, it includes a specific reference to "a pathway of CO2 emissions reduction consistent with the Paris Agreement temperature goals".

Addressing the delegates, Mr. Kitack Lim (Secretary-General, IMO) said: "I encourage you to continue your work through the newly adopted Initial GHG Strategy which is designed as a platform for future actions. I am confident in relying on your ability to relentlessly continue your efforts and develop further actions that will soon contribute to reducing GHG emissions from ships." Mr. Kitack Lim reiterated the IMO spirit of cooperation as key to allowing future IMO work on climate change to be rooted in a solid basis.

MEPC agreed to hold the fourth Inter-sessional meeting of the Working Group on Reduction of GHG emissions from ships this year. This working group will be tasked with developing a programme of follow-up actions to the Initial Strategy on how to progress the reduction of GHG emissions from ships in order to advise the committee. The next session of the MEPC (MEPC 73) is slated for 22-26 October 2018.

The Director of IMLI, Professor Attard, who had advised the Malta Government in 1988 to put the issue of Climate Change on the Agenda of the United Nations General Assembly, when asked to comment stated that: "This decision to adopt a strategy for the ultimate elimination of ship emitted GHG gases is of monumental importance. It will be an important element in the current process to protect the oceans from the negative effects of anthropogenic climate change."

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