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MEPC 84

A report on the 84th Session
of IMO Marine Environment
Protection Committee



Dola Oluteye, Annette Wangari, Fitzroy Meyer-Petgrave,
John Gerald Odhiambo, Russell Komi LOKO

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IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC)

27 April to 1 May 2026

By

Dola Oluteye, Annette Wangari, Fitzroy Meyer-Petgrave,
John Gerald Odhiambo, Russell Komi LOKO

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Authors

Dola Oluteye¹,
Annette Wangari¹,
Fitzroy Meyer-Petgrave¹,
John Gerald Odhiambo¹,
Russell LOKO Komi¹

¹ The PATNA Initiative

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Contact Details

If you require any further information on this report, please contact: The PATNA Initiative research team – research@thepatna.org

About The Professional African Technical Network Advisory (PATNA) Initiative

The PATNA Initiative is a non-profit network of 100+ African experts, policymakers, researchers, and advocates formed to amplify Africa's voice in global energy transition and climate action. PATNA leverages evidence-based research to inform policies that balance economic growth with environmental protection. The initiative brings together academics, technical experts, government professionals, and private-sector cohorts to ensure that African perspectives shape global policy and climate matters. For more information, please visit www.thepatna.org.

About the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the United Nations specialised agency responsible for regulating international shipping. Established in 1948, the IMO sets global standards for the safety, security, and environmental performance of shipping, with 176 Member States and three Associate Members. In July 2023, the IMO adopted its Revised Strategy on the Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships, committing the sector to peak greenhouse gas emissions as soon as possible and to reach net-zero by or around 2050. This Strategy introduced the IMO Net-Zero Framework (NZF), a comprehensive regulatory architecture comprising:

- The Global Fuel Standard (GFS), which sets progressively tightening carbon intensity benchmarks for marine fuels on a well-to-wake basis.
- The Greenhouse Gas Fuel Intensity (GFI) metric is the measurement standard for fuel carbon intensity.
- The Lifecycle Assessment (LCA) framework is the technical system that underpins GFI calculations.
- The Net-Zero Fund, a financial mechanism generated by levies on non-compliant ships, rewards early adoption of zero- and near-zero-emission technologies and supports developing states through the transition.

About the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC)

The Marine Environment Protection Committee is IMO's technical body for environmental issues, primarily overseeing the MARPOL treaty to prevent shipboard pollution. The Committee meets in London to develop regulations on emissions, sewage, garbage, and ballast water management. Core responsibilities and work areas include:

- Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction: Implementing the 2023 IMO GHG Strategy to achieve net-zero emissions, including a global fuel standard and GHG pricing.
- MARPOL Amendments: Managing amendments to prevent pollution, including oily water, chemicals, and air emissions from ships.
- Ballast Water & Anti-fouling: Managing the transfer of aquatic species and preventing harmful effects of anti-fouling systems.
- Ship Recycling: Implementing safe and environmentally sound ship recycling regulations.
- Special Areas: Designating particularly sensitive sea areas to minimise ecological impacts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 84) held its Eighty-Fourth Session at IMO Headquarters in London from 27 April to 1 May 2026. It was one of the most consequential sessions in recent MEPC history, combining high-stakes geopolitical developments, landmark environmental decisions, and an intensive technical workload across five days of deliberations.

The session was dominated by the IMO Net-Zero Framework (NZF) negotiations, which was originally approved at MEPC 83 but deferred for adoption following a procedural vote at the Extraordinary Session in October 2025. Over two full days, more than fifty delegations presented positions representing three distinct camps: i) a majority supporting adoption of the NZF as negotiated; ii) a significant minority, led by Saudi Arabia, China, India, and Russia, proposing an alternative measures that removes the IMO Net Zero Fund; and iii) a constructive middle ground, including Japan, Singapore, and Canada, seeking modifications rather than wholesale replacement. No agreement was reached on the framework itself, but the Committee agreed on a strengthened intersessional work programme and two additional ISWG-GHG sessions in September and November 2026, with terms of reference carefully worded to keep all proposals, including the NZF and its alternatives, in scope. It is unlikely that any formal adoption will occur before 2027 at the earliest.

The MEPC 84 adopted a resolution on the Strait of Hormuz, by a roll-call vote, condemning unlawful interference with commercial shipping. The vote was 59 in favour, 3 against, and 32 abstentions. Despite a formal objection from Iran, the Secretary General committed to reactivating emergency response mechanisms and engaging all parties to secure the safe evacuation of approximately 20,000 stranded seafarers aboard some 2,000 ships.

Following years of discussion on Plastic Pellets, MEPC 84 agreed on a concrete, time-bound pathway to mandatory international regulation of plastic pellet carriage in freight containers. PPR 14 was instructed to develop a draft mandatory code, using the existing voluntary circular (MEPC.1/Circ.909) as its technical basis, and to develop draft consequential amendments to MARPOL Annex III, SOLAS, or both, with the final choice of instrument to be decided once the code's content is known.

A package of amendments to MARPOL Annex VI was formally adopted, with an entry-into-force date of 1 September 2027. Key elements include the designation of the North East Atlantic as a new Emission Control Area for SO_x, NO_x, and particulate matter; a review clause for the short-term CII/EEXI measures; clarification of DCS data reporting obligations; a compromise provision on DCS data access that allows flag states to require consent before their ships' anonymised data is shared; and amendments to the NO_x Technical Code to cover the certification of hydrogen- and ammonia-fuelled engines.

The Air Pollution and Energy Efficiency (APEE) Working Group finalized and adopted three sets of guidelines for measuring methane and nitrous oxide emissions, enabling the voluntary quantification of actual non-CO₂ GHG emissions from ships. Progress was made

on Phase 2 of the CII review, though the adverse weather correction factor remained unresolved. The Underwater Radiation Noise (URN) Co-Optimisation Circular has been approved.

Furthermore, the Ballast Water Review Group completed an exceptionally heavy workload of 47 discrete work items. Final approval was granted to the Blue Ocean Shield ballast water management system. The Committee approved draft amendments to the Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention, including a revised Ballast Water Record Book, for circulation ahead of formal adoption at MEPC 85.

On 'Other Key Decisions', the Committee extended the Underwater Radiated Noise Experience Building Phase by two years through 2028 and agreed in principle to commission a global URN study. New outputs were approved for ozone-depleting substances on ships and for a regulatory scoping exercise on Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships. Australia's proposal for a new output supporting implementation of the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement was accepted in principle for MEPC 85 consideration, with objections from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Russia noted. The 2026 Strategy and Action Plan on marine plastic litter was adopted.

Looking ahead, the MEPC 85 will be the next critical milestone. Key items on its agenda will include further progress on the NZF following ISWG-GHG 22 and 23; formal adoption of the BWM Convention amendments and MARPOL Annex I amendments on integrated bilge treatment; development of the mandatory plastic pellet code at PPR 14; and a decision on commissioning the global URN study. The intersessional period will be unusually active, with expert workshops, two ISWG-GHG sessions, and PPR 14 all scheduled before MEPC 85 in November 2026.

1. OVERVIEW OF MEPC 84

The Eighty-Fourth Session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 84) was held at the International Maritime Organization headquarters in London from 27 April to 1 May 2026. Sessions ran daily from 09:30 into late evening, reflecting the intensity of the agenda. The meeting was chaired by Harry Conway of Liberia, with Hanqiang Tan as the Vice-Chair of Singapore.

MEPC 84 was a highly consequential session, addressing a broad and technically complex agenda including GHG decarbonization, marine pollution, air emissions, ship safety, geopolitical disruptions, and marine biodiversity. Deliberations were organized around five key thematic pillars, highlighting the growing integration of environmental regulation, operational safety, and system resilience in global shipping:

- The most politically charged item of the session, the future of the IMO Net Zero Framework, took up the better part of two full days.
- The adoption of a historic MEPC resolution on the Strait of Hormuz crisis was decided by only the second or third roll-call vote in MEPC's history.
- A breakthrough on plastic pellet regulation has opened a clear pathway to mandatory international rules.
- The formal adoption of MARPOL Annex VI amendments, including a new North East Atlantic Emission Control Area.
- A draft of technical decisions on ballast water, underwater noise, pollution prevention, and energy efficiency.

The Secretary-General opened the session with a wide-ranging address, expressing serious concern about the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, welcoming progress on GHG negotiations, and outlining the key priorities for the week. He noted that, according to the IMO's own data, the carbon intensity of international shipping has decreased by more than 38% since 2008, demonstrating that meaningful emissions reductions are achievable.

Four subsidiary bodies were established to carry out detailed work during the session: the Working Group on Air Pollution and Energy Efficiency (APEE Working Group), chaired by Mr. Iwaki of Japan; the Working Group on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships, chaired by Mr. Sveinung Oftedal of Norway; the Drafting Group on Amendments to Mandatory Instruments, chaired by Mr. Hanqiang Tan; and the Ballast Water Review Group, chaired by Ms. Bailey of Canada.

2. REDUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

2.1 Background and Context

Greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction is the single most consequential and politically contested area of the work at the Maritime Organization (IMO). The debates at the MEPC 84 session are best understood in the context of the decision that was taken during the MEPC 83 session.

At MEPC 83 (April 2025), member states adopted legally binding amendments to MARPOL Annex VI, which formed the IMO NET-Zero Framework (NZF). The framework combines two core elements: a technical measure, the progressively tightening Greenhouse Gas fuel intensity (GFI) standard requiring lower lifecycle emissions from marine fuels, and an economic measure, the IMO Net-Zero Fund, which collects payments from higher-emitting ships and redistributes them to support clean fuel adoption and assist developing countries. Together, these create an integrated regulatory system that couples emissions limits with market-based incentives to drive maritime decarbonization.

However, in October 2025, during a special Extraordinary Session (ES2), a procedural motion to adjourn without formally adopting the framework was carried. As a result, the IMO Net-Zero Framework (NZF) was deferred and returned for further consideration. Consequently, MEPC 84 became the first full session of the IMO since that outcome, significantly elevating both the political and regulatory stakes.

2.2 Intersessional Work - ISWG-GHG 20 and 21

MEPC 84 received reports from two preceding intersessional working group meetings. Later discussions superseded ISWG-GHG 20 (October 2025), and the group noted it without debate. ISWG-GHG 21, held the week before MEPC 84, had been chaired by Mr. Sveinung Oftedal of Norway and had made substantive progress on two fronts.

First, the group had developed or advanced a series of technical guidelines essential for implementing the NZF: GFI Calculation Guidelines, Verification Guidelines for national administrations, Wind Propulsion Monitoring Guidance, Fuel Certification Scheme Guidelines, and Governance Provisions covering revenue distribution and energy security concerns. Second, it had made progress on the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) framework, the system for calculating the full lifecycle GHG emissions of different marine fuels, addressing methodological questions, including which emission factors to use for different production pathways. Third, the group had worked on but not completed the Terms of Reference for the Fifth IMO GHG Study, leaving this task to the GHG Working Group at MEPC 84.

Saudi Arabia used the reporting session to raise a substantive concern about default Well-to-Tank emission factors, arguing that using generic default values for fossil fuels rather than verified actual values creates a methodological inconsistency that favours

conventional fuels. The Committee approved the ISWG-GHG 21 report and agreed to all recommended action points.

2.3 GESAMP-LCA Scientific Reviews and Trust Fund

The Committee received reports from the GESAMP-LCA Working Group, independent scientific experts who review proposed default emission factors for marine fuels. Since MEPC 83, proposals have been submitted for ethanol, LNG, methanol, ammonia, and renewable diesel (HVO). Several reviews were completed, and one new default value (for a specific hydrogen fuel pathway) was agreed upon for incorporation into the 2024 LCA Guidelines; others required additional data. The Committee also received an update on the GHG Trust Funds. A funding shortfall of approximately USD 250,000 was flagged, with around USD 200,000 remaining against a projected need of USD 450,000. The United Kingdom announced a generous donation of £130,000, split between the GHG Technical Cooperation Trust Fund (£80,000) and the Voluntary Multi-Donor Trust Fund (£50,000). The Committee called urgently on other member states to contribute.

2.4 Further Development of Mid-Term GHG Measures (The Main Debate)

The centrepiece of MEPC 84 was an extraordinary two-day debate on the further development of mid-term GHG reduction measures. The Chair posed two direct questions to all delegations at the outset: 1) How should remaining concerns about the NZF be addressed, and 2) what is the preferred way forward to ensure concrete progress towards adoption without further delay?

More than fifty delegations spoke across four sessions spanning two days, representing the broadest and most intensive debate in MEPC's recent history. Eleven substantive documents were before the Committee, representing broadly three positions.

In favour of proceeding with the NZF

The largest grouping, including EU member states, Pacific Island states, Brazil, the United Kingdom, Norway, South Africa, Namibia, Ghana, Colombia, and others, argued that the NZF is a carefully negotiated compromise approved by an overwhelming majority just one year earlier. They contended that outstanding concerns could be addressed through the development of guidelines rather than by reopening the framework itself and that the economic element (the IMO Net Zero Fund) is indispensable for a just transition. They supported adoption via the standard tacit acceptance procedure at the reconvened ES2.

Germany delivered a memorable intervention during the session, defending the NZF as a fair compromise built through genuine cooperation and warning against proposals that would preserve the status quo, closing with the metaphor: 'Nobody would have ever crossed the ocean if they could have gotten off the ship in the storm.' 'We are in the middle of the ocean; the storm is uncomfortable, but we have no reason to turn back. And please don't sink the ship.' The African Union Commission (AUC) participated for the first time in nine years, speaking on behalf of Africa's 55 member states, and strongly reaffirmed its

commitment to both the 2023 GHG strategy and the NZF as its implementation instrument with the inclusion of the Net Zero Fund.

In favour of an alternative approach

A significant minority, including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Russia, China, India, Argentina, Liberia, Panama, Venezuela, Iran, and a range of developing countries, argued that the NZF does not yet have the consensus or legitimacy needed to regulate shipping's GHG emissions. These countries argued that the framework is built around fuels and technologies not yet available at scale and that the IMO Net Zero Fund amounts to a carbon tax that will raise shipping costs, harming food and energy security in developing countries. Document MEPC 84/7/38, submitted by Argentina, Liberia and Panama, proposed an alternative 'pragmatic' framework that links regulatory targets to the real-world availability, affordability, and scalability of alternative fuels while also removing the Fund. These delegations supported convening an intersessional working group to discuss all proposals on an equal basis.

Middle ground

Japan's submission (document MEPC 84/7/49) used the NZF as a starting point but proposed modifications to make it more flexible and acceptable. Singapore, Tanzania, Greece, Indonesia, Jamaica, and others occupied a constructive middle ground, supporting further intersessional work to narrow differences while remaining open to the NZF as a basis. Canada made a notable contribution, observing that the NZF spans 23 regulations and over 160 paragraphs and that the concerns raised relate to only two regulations and approximately nine paragraphs, primarily around 'remedial units' and the Fund's governance.

One point of near-universal consensus cut across all positions: all delegations expressed the desire for a single global framework under the IMO, rather than a fragmented patchwork of regional measures.

2.5 Chair's Summation and Way Forward

Following the conclusion of the debate on Day 4, the Chair provided a four-point summation: a) the Committee noted all views expressed; b) noted its continued collective commitment to working towards convergence on a global GHG measure; c) agreed to strengthen intersessional arrangements by establishing two additional ISWG sessions; and d) invited all delegations to continue working intersessionally towards broader convergence.

The Secretary General addressed the Committee at this point, committing to neutral drafting of the intersessional Terms of Reference, urging flexibility and genuine listening, and reminding delegations that the shipping industry, shipowners, ports, and technology providers were watching and waiting for governments to make decisions so that investment could begin. He expressed cautious optimism: 'It is a little bit more work to do, but we're right back on track'.

2.6 GHG Intersessional Work Programme (ISWG-GHG 22 and 23)

On the final day of the session, the Chair presented document MEPC 84/J7, which established the terms for two additional intersessional working group sessions and a preparatory expert workshop:

- Expert Workshop on Chain of Custody Models (GHG-EW 7): to be held ahead of ISWG-GHG 22, to facilitate the understanding of such models, allowing for fuel supply chain traceability requirements under the IMO LCA framework.
- ISWG-GHG 22, September 2026 (four working days). Document submission deadline: 18 July 2026.
- ISWG-GHG 23: back-to-back with MEPC 85 in November 2026, allowing a seamless transition from intersessional to plenary consideration.

The Terms of Reference for the two ISWG sessions were the subject of intense debate on the final day. Three camps emerged: those supporting the J7 text as drafted; those requesting modifications to ensure alternative proposals (including MEPC 84/7/38) were explicitly in scope alongside the NZF; and a bridging group led by South Africa, proposing careful language changes that would make clear that all submitted proposals remain under consideration without prejudging the outcome.

After extensive consultation, the Chair adopted a compromise: the word ‘remaining’ was removed from Task 1 (concerns are ‘concerns’, not ‘remaining concerns’), and the phrase ‘alongside other proposed amendments to MARPOL Annex VI as appropriate, in line with the 2023 GHG strategy’ was added. The Committee confirmed that all documents submitted to MEPC 84 remain in scope, new submissions may be made to both ISWG sessions, and no individual proposal is excluded from consideration. The Terms of Reference were agreed on this basis.

On the reconvening of ES2, the Committee noted that scheduling must take into account the new intersessional calendar. The Secretariat was asked to finalize the meeting dates accordingly. Several delegations flagged that any new agreed text would require a six-month circulation under MARPOL Article 16 before it could be formally adopted, meaning practical adoption could not occur until 2027 at the earliest if the intersessional process results in substantive changes.

2.7 Fifth IMO GHG Study

The GHG Working Group, chaired by Mr. Oftedal, successfully finalized the Terms of Reference for the Fifth IMO GHG Study, a major forthcoming scientific study that will provide updated data on shipping’s global greenhouse gas emissions. The Committee approved these Terms of Reference, requested the Secretariat to invite nominations of experts for the steering Committee, and asked it to initiate the procurement process. The Committee also invited countries interested in regional disaggregation to submit their

methodological proposals. The study team appreciated contributions from Denmark and the UAE towards the study's costs and invited additional donations.

3. MARPOL ANNEX VI AMENDMENTS (ADOPTED)

A package of amendments to MARPOL Annex VI, approved at earlier sessions and now put forward for formal adoption, was agreed on Day 1 and formally adopted on Day 5. The entry into force date for all amendments was confirmed as due by 1 September 2027. The Drafting Group on Amendments to Mandatory Instruments, chaired by Mr. Hanqiang Tan, prepared the final legal text over two days of detailed drafting work.

Clarification of Data Reporting (Regulations 27 and 28)

These amendments clarify the rules governing how ships report data on fuel consumption and carbon intensity through the IMO's Data Collection System (DCS), removing ambiguity in how certain data entries should be labelled. A supplementary proposal from Russia regarding Regulation 27 was noted as a square-bracketed text in the Drafting Group and will require a formal written submission at a future session.

DCS Data Access (Compromise Text)

The most contested element of the MARPOL Annex VI package concerned Regulation 27.12: a provision that would allow all IMO member states to access anonymised ship fuel consumption data from the DCS, not only the vessel's flag state. The intent is to support policy research and analysis.

Russia and China raised concerns that even anonymised data, when combined with other publicly available information, could potentially be traced back to individual ships, creating commercial and legal risks. Russia proposed that flag states must consent to data sharing. A significant debate ensued, with a clear majority favouring proceeding with the text as agreed at MEPC 83 and a substantial minority supporting a consent mechanism.

A compromise was developed (document MEPC 84/J6): the original amendment was preserved, but a new paragraph was added allowing any flag state party to notify the Secretary General that its express approval is required before its ships' anonymised data is included in the database accessible to other member states. Cyprus accepted this compromise in a spirit of goodwill, noting that it would have preferred full transparency and flagging the principle of reciprocity, that a party declining transparency should not benefit from access to other parties' data. This reciprocity principle was proposed for inclusion in the associated guidelines. Germany noted concern about the pattern of reiterating already-agreed provisions at the adoption stage. The compromise text was adopted.

North East Atlantic Emission Control Area

A significant new amendment designates the North East Atlantic Ocean as a new Emission Control Area (ECA) for nitrogen oxides, sulphur oxides, and particulate matter. Ships

operating in this area will be required to meet stricter emission limits, protecting air quality along European coasts and the broader North East Atlantic marine environment. Norway's proposal to make minor adjustments to the ECA's geographical coordinates to align it with the adjacent Canadian Arctic ECA and Norwegian Sea ECA, thereby avoiding gaps and overlaps, was supported by Cyprus, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, the United Kingdom, and other countries. The Drafting Group incorporated this proposal. Iceland subsequently noted that it may need to refine the coordinates further and that it had been invited to submit a proposal for a future session.

Review Clause for the Short-Term GHG Reduction Measure

An amendment adding a review clause to the short-term GHG reduction measure was adopted. The short-term measures refer to the Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) and the Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index (EEXI) regulations. The review clause ensures these measures are revisited and updated as shipping's decarbonization progresses.

NOx Technical Code Amendments

The Committee also adopted amendments to the NOx Technical Code 2008, which the APEE Working Group finalized. These amendments address the certification of marine diesel engines that operate on non-carbon-containing fuels, such as hydrogen and ammonia, or on mixtures of carbon-containing and non-carbon-containing fuels. This extends the existing certification framework to cover next-generation zero-emission propulsion systems, providing regulatory clarity for the industry as it begins to deploy these technologies.

4. PLASTIC PELLETS: A MANDATORY CODE ON THE HORIZON

Plastic pellets, tiny plastic granules (also called 'nurdles'), serve as the raw material for most plastic products and are transported in enormous quantities by sea. When containers are lost overboard, pellets can spill into the ocean in vast quantities, where they persist for centuries, are ingested by marine wildlife, and fragment into microplastics. Incidents such as the MV X-Press Pearl disaster near Sri Lanka and the MSC Lorena incident caused catastrophic environmental damage. Following years of technical work, MEPC 84 was asked to make a policy decision on whether to develop mandatory international rules.

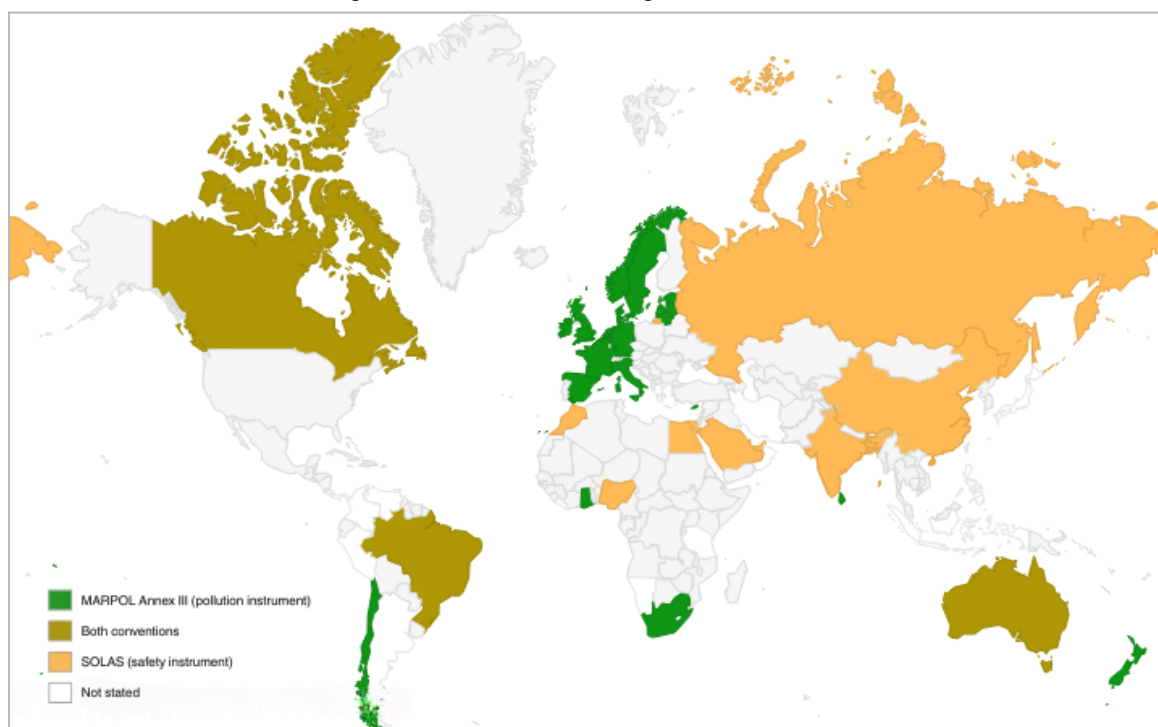
4.1 Choice of Legal Instrument (The Debate)

The PPR Sub-Committee had recommended that MEPC 84 choose between three options: a mandatory code under MARPOL Annex III (covering harmful substances in packaged form), under SOLAS (the Safety of Life at Sea convention), or under both instruments. The debate consumed most of Day 1 and was finalized at the start of Day 2. More than 40 delegations and several NGOs spoke.

As shown in Figure 1, the majority (in green), including Cyprus, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Samoa, South

Africa, Ghana, Italy, Spain, Chile, Sweden, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, New Zealand, and others argued that the primary risk from plastic pellets is marine pollution, making MARPOL Annex III the appropriate instrument. While acknowledging that pellets do not currently meet the technical definition of ‘harmful substances’, they argued that the environmental impact is undeniable and that MARPOL Annex III could be adapted. Sri Lanka made a particularly powerful intervention that detailed the catastrophic environmental and human consequences of two major pellet spill incidents along its coastline.

Figure 1: Plastic Pellets – Legal Instrument Debate



A minority (in orange), including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Russia, China, India, Morocco, Qatar, Egypt, Bahrain, Nigeria, and Bangladesh, argued that the pollution incidents were fundamentally caused by container loss and ship safety failures, making SOLAS the more legally appropriate and practically workable instrument. Saudi Arabia and the UAE also requested a comprehensive impact assessment before any binding decision to protect developing countries and small operators. Brazil, Canada, Australia, and several others (in olive on the map) expressed willingness to accept a code under both conventions.

With regard to document MEPC 84/8/3 (Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates), which requests that the Committee conduct an impact assessment before proceeding with the development of the proposed mandatory code, many delegations argued that conducting such an assessment was unnecessary and would delay progress. They pointed to the experience gained with the implementation of MEPC.1/Circ.909 and the relevant documents submitted to the PPR Sub-Committee as sufficient to inform the work. However, other delegations emphasized the need for a thorough impact assessment to ensure decisions are evidence-based and to avoid unintended disruptions to supply chains and transport systems.

4.2 Outcome and Way Forward

After the conclusion of the debate on Day 2, the Chair's summation was agreed upon. The Committee instructed the PPR Sub-Committee at its 14th session (PPR 14) – and, if necessary, at subsequent sessions – to develop and finalize the draft text of a new mandatory code for the carriage of plastic pellets in freight containers, using the existing voluntary recommendations (MEPC.1/Circ.909) as the technical basis. PPR 14 was also instructed to develop draft consequential amendments to MARPOL Annex III, SOLAS, or both instruments, enabling MEPC to make a final decision on the instrument once the code's content is known.

All documents submitted under this agenda item were forwarded to PPR 14. Delegations were invited to submit proposals for draft code text and consequential amendments. The Maritime Safety Committee was invited to note the outcome and engage where appropriate, given the SOLAS implications. The Committee's report noted Saudi Arabia's divergence on the choice of instrument. The industry bodies BIMCO and the World Shipping Council both called for urgent, enforceable rules.

The Committee recalled that section 4 of annex 2 of the Organization and Method of Work of the Committees (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.6) sets out procedures for assessing the implications of capacity-building requirements when developing mandatory instruments at three stages: when proposing new outputs, during finalization stage of new or amended instruments, and at the adoption stage of new or amended instruments. It also noted that MEPC 82 had already tasked PPR 12 to develop text on a specific action to develop mandatory measures to reduce the environmental risks of plastic pellets transported by sea, and that no initial assessment of capacity-building implications had been undertaken.

As a result, the Committee instructed the PPR Sub-Committee to:

1. undertake an initial assessment of capacity-building implications using the checklist prescribed in Appendix 1 of Annex 2 to MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.6, which should be supplemented by the form in Appendix 2 if necessary; and
2. review and finalize the initial assessment of capacity-building implications at the finalization stage, taking into account relevant contributions provided by the industry and non-governmental organizations, and prepare the check/monitoring sheet set out in annex 2 to MSC.1/Circ.1500, as revised.

This outcome marked an important step forward: after years of discussion, we agreed on a concrete and time-bound pathway to mandatory regulation. The question of which convention the code will ultimately sit under will not delay the substantive drafting work.

5. THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ ROLL-CALL VOTE

Background

Starting in late February 2026, Iran implemented measures that effectively restricted commercial shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, the only maritime gateway between the Persian Gulf and the open sea, following military strikes by the United States and Israel. These measures included reported threats to vessels, ship seizures, a reported toll system for vessels wishing to transit, and restrictions on the Automatic Identification System (AIS) tracking requirement. Approximately 20,000 seafarers are stranded or operating on roughly 2,000 ships that face perilous conditions.

The environmental stakes were significant. The Persian Gulf and Sea of Oman form a particularly ecologically sensitive, semi-enclosed maritime environment. A major pollution incident, such as a large oil spill, could have catastrophic and long-lasting consequences. Coastal populations in the region depend heavily on desalination plants for drinking water. The IMO Council held an extraordinary session (CES-36) on 19 March 2026, passing a declaration condemning the attacks and effective closure of the Strait and urging relevant IMO Committees to consider the implications within their respective mandates.

Three Draft Resolutions

Three draft MEPC resolutions were submitted in response. The UAE submitted document MEPC 84/2/8, proposing a resolution condemning unlawful activities in and around the Strait of Hormuz. Iran submitted MEPC 84/2/9, attributing the situation to unlawful aggression by the United States and Israel, with UAE involvement. Iran also submitted MEPC 84/2/10, a more technically framed alternative focused on pollution preparedness and response, without condemnatory language or attribution.

The Debate

An extensive afternoon session heard more than 30 delegations. A large majority expressed strong condemnation of attacks on civilian vessels and interference with freedom of navigation and deep concern for stranded seafarers, with the Philippines noting over 20,000 Filipino seafarers in the region; and recognition of the environmental threat posed by the situation in the Gulf. Panama reported that the MV Euphora had been attacked by unidentified boats and the MSC Francesca had been intercepted by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on 22 April 2026, just days before the session, with soldiers boarding the vessel and ordering it to anchor near the Iranian coast.

The United States described the Strait as a vital international waterway, where the right of transit passage is 'a fundamental legal entitlement that all states must respect, not a favour granted by coastal states'. China and Russia took more nuanced positions (orange), attributing the root cause to US and Israeli military action against Iran and cautioning against using MEPC as a forum for political condemnation of individual member states. Indonesia called for the Committee to focus on practical maritime measures and for any

resolution to be balanced and non-discriminatory. Iran maintained that its submissions sought to provide factual and legal context.

The Vote Patterns

Following the debate, the Chair proposed adopting the UAE resolution (MEPC 84/2/8) and noting that Iran's two documents had not received sufficient support. Iran immediately appealed the Chair's ruling under Rule 30 of the IMO Rules of Procedure, triggering only the second or third roll-call vote in the MEPC's history.

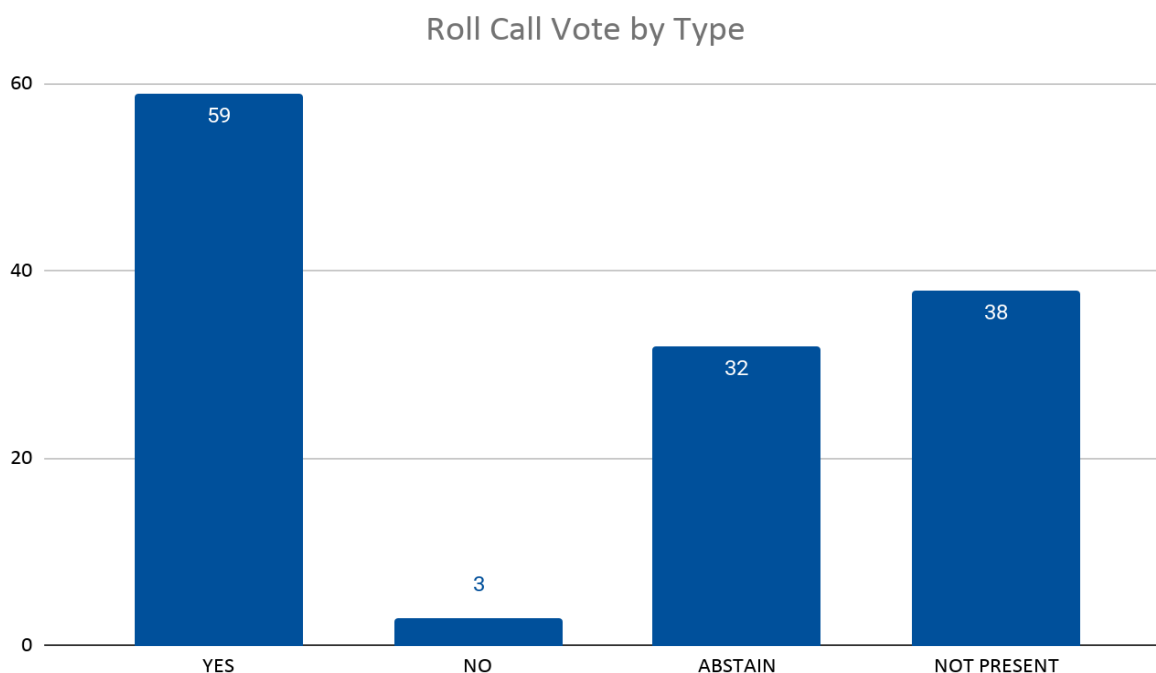


Figure 2: The Strait Of Hormuz Roll-Call Vote

Under Rule 38, a roll-call vote was conducted, with 139 delegations participating and each member state declaring its vote aloud. The result, as shown in the chart above, was 59 votes in favour, 3 against, and 32 abstentions. A simple majority was required; the Chair's ruling was upheld by a clear majority, thereby formally adopting the MEPC resolution. Iran's subsequent request under Rule 39 to divide the resolution and vote on the condemnatory and technical paragraphs separately was ruled out of order by the Chair, as the resolution had already been adopted.

Following the vote, the Secretary General gave a solemn address, committing to reactivating existing emergency response mechanisms, ensuring pollution response equipment is available to relevant countries, and continuing his personal engagement with all parties to facilitate the safe evacuation of the 20,000 stranded seafarers and 2,000 ships. Iran formally objected to the adopted text. The Council Chairperson also addressed the Committee, expressing the Council's support for the Secretary General's leadership.

6. AIR POLLUTION AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY (APEE)

6.1 Key Outputs of APEE Working Group

The Working Group on Air Pollution and Energy Efficiency (APEE Working Group), chaired by Mr Iwaki of Japan, met for three full days (27–29 April 2026), with sessions running from morning to night, and produced a substantial body of technical work.

Methane and Nitrous Oxide Measurement Guidelines

One of the most technically significant achievements of the session was the finalization and adoption of three sets of guidelines for measuring methane and nitrous oxide emissions from marine diesel engines: Guidelines for Test-Bed and On-Board Measurements; Guidelines for Engine Load Monitoring and Calculation of Emission Values; and Guidelines for Continuous Emission Monitoring Systems. These are essential for implementing the LCA framework under the proposed NZF, enabling the voluntary quantification of ships' actual non-CO₂ GHG emissions. The Committee agreed that future mandatory frameworks may incorporate actual Tank-to-Wake values for these gases.

CII Phase 2 Review

The group made progress on Phase 2 of the CII review. Amendments to the calculation guidelines were finalized to clarify how distance travelled and transport work are measured. However, the adverse weather correction factor, which would account for fuel consumption increases caused by severe weather beyond a ship's control, remained contentious, with genuine divergence between those concerned that it could reduce design and routing incentives and those (including shipping operators) who argued this position bears no relationship to operational reality. The item was held in abeyance until a concrete proposal was made at a future session. The CGDRS metric for cruise passenger ships was also deferred at the request of CLIA and CESA.

Onboard Carbon Capture and Storage

The group revised the OCCS work plan and re-established the Correspondence Group on Measurement and Verification of Non-CO₂ GHG Emissions and OCCS, with new Terms of Reference incorporating outcomes from ISWG-GHG 21. Member states were also invited to submit proposals to the London Convention/Protocol on OCCS concepts involving the disposal of CO₂ from ships.

URN Co-Optimisation Circular

The group completed its review of the draft MEPC Circular on Technical Guidance for co-optimising energy efficiency and underwater radiated noise at the design and retrofit stages. The circular was approved, fulfilling the commitment made during the URN debate.

6.2 IMO DCS 2024 Data

The Secretariat presented the annual report on fuel consumption data submitted to the IMO Data Collection System for 2024. Nearly 30,000 ships reported data, over 1,000 more than in 2023, covering 223 million tonnes of fuel, which is 5.7% higher than in 2023 due to increased shipping activity. CII reporting reached 91.1%, and EEXI reporting improved dramatically from 68.8% to 97.9%. Compared to 2019, supply-based carbon intensity fell by as much as 10.8%, while demand-based carbon intensity decreased by 7.9%. Compared to 2008 levels, carbon intensity had improved by 31.5% (supply-based) and 38.6% (demand-based).

6.3 Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (EGCS / Scrubbers)

WWF and Pacific Environment submitted MEPC 84/10/4, a document proposing a new goal-based environmental standard for EGCS under MARPOL Annex VI. The core argument was that scrubbers move pollution from air to water rather than eliminating it, and that the benchmark for EGCS compliance should be equivalent to ships burning low-sulphur fuel, a 'technology-neutral, goal-based' approach. Cyprus, Denmark, France, and Germany welcomed the proposal. China questioned whether the claim that EGCS vessels emit more particulate matter and black carbon had been substantiated. Turkey and CESA cautioned against undermining confidence in existing IMO-approved systems. The document was referred to PPR 14; no decision was taken at this session.

6.4 Black Carbon and the Arctic (Polar Fuels Concept)

The Committee considered the polar fuels concept, the proposal to require ships in or near the Arctic to use distillate fuels rather than heavy fuel oil to reduce black carbon emissions and their accelerating impact on Arctic ice and climate. PPR 13 had noted divergent views rather than endorsing the concept of mandatory development. Saudi Arabia raised detailed concerns about the project's scientific basis. Environmental organizations cited data showing a doubling of black carbon emissions from ships in the wider Arctic since 2008, as well as 29 consecutive years of mass loss from the Greenland ice sheet. Document MEPC 84/10/3 by FOEI was referred to PPR 14 for consideration.

7. BALLAST WATER MANAGEMENT

The Ballast Water Review Group, chaired by Dr Billet, completed an exceptionally heavy workload: 10 terms of reference covering 47 distinct work items that addressed the biological, chemical, and engineering aspects of ballast water management.

New Ballast Water Treatment System Approved

The Committee granted final approval to the Blue Ocean Shield Electrolytic Chlorination Ballast Water Management System, based on a recommendation from the GESAMP Ballast Water Working Group. Denmark, which submitted the proposal, was asked to verify that all review group recommendations had been incorporated into the final design.

BWM Convention Amendments

Draft amendments to the BWM Convention, covering updates to Regulations A3 and E1 and, notably, a revised form of the Ballast Water Record Book, were approved for circulation for formal adoption at MEPC 85. The revision to the Record Book form was identified as an unforeseen need during the group's deliberations. The revised G4 Guidelines (Guidelines for Ballast Water Management and Development of Ballast Water Management Plans) were fully adopted by MEPC resolution at this session.

Disinfection Byproducts

The group undertook a lengthy review of proposals for specific requirements to control disinfection byproducts, harmful chemicals produced during ballast water disinfection. The group concluded that they need to collect further baseline data before they can set specific discharge requirements. Member states and international organizations were invited to submit relevant data to support future consideration.

Nasca Ridge PSSA (Ballast Water Prohibition)

The group considered Peru's proposal to prohibit ballast water exchange and discharge within the boundaries of the Nasca Ridge National Reserve, a PSSA designated at MEPC 83. While supporting the intent, the group concluded the proposal needs further development. Peru was invited to liaise with the Secretariat during the intersession and resubmit a refined proposal at a future session. The Committee also addressed a unified interpretation of Regulation D3, which was forwarded with a minor edit.

8. POLLUTION PREVENTION AND RESPONSE (PPR 13 OUTCOMES)

The Committee addressed the outcomes of PPR 13 (the 13th session of the Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response, held in February 2026), approving, noting, or acting on numerous technical items.

Biofouling: Standalone International Instrument

The Committee confirmed PPR 13's recommendation that the legal framework for controlling and managing ship biofouling, the accumulation of marine organisms on ships' hulls, which transfer invasive species between ocean regions, should take the form of a new standalone international instrument, rather than amending an existing convention. Terms of Reference for this new output were approved.

MARPOL Annex I: Integrated Bilge Treatment Systems

Draft amendments to MARPOL Annex I, adding a new Regulation 12B for ships fitted with Integrated Bilge Treatment Systems, were approved, along with associated guidelines and updated Oil Record Book guidance. These are approved in principle for final adoption at MEPC 85.

Liquid Substances and the IBC Code

Multiple updates relating to the categorisation of liquid substances carried by tankers were approved, including concurrence with the December 2025 update to the MEPC.2/Circular provisional categorisation list, approval of draft PPR.1/Circ.10-1 listing removed products following a major review of Lists 2 and 3, concurrence with conditions for re-establishing tripartite agreements for affected products, and IBC Code amendments incorporating newly evaluated List 1 substances.

NOx Unified Interpretation

The Committee approved the unified interpretation of regulation 13.2.3 of MARPOL Annex VI, as well as the revised unified interpretation of regulation 13.2.2, and requested the Secretariat to amend the Unified interpretations to MARPOL Annex VI (MEPC.1/Circ.795/Rev.9), and disseminate the consolidated version by means of MEPC.1/Circ.795/Rev.10.

Matters related to Incinerators

A revised unified interpretation of Regulation 16.9 of MARPOL Annex VI, relating to incinerators on ships, was approved to ensure consistent application of MARPOL rules across flag states. The Secretariat was asked to disseminate this via MEPC.1/Circ.795/Rev.10.

9. UNDERWATER RADIATED NOISE (UNR)

Underwater Radiated Noise (URN), sound emitted by ships that can harm cetaceans, fish, and other marine life, has received dedicated attention. In 2022, the IMO agreed on a three-year Experience Building Phase (EBP) to gather practical experience from the revised voluntary URN guidelines. With the EBP expiring at the end of 2025, MEPC 84 was asked to decide the next steps.

Extension of the Experience Building Phase

The Committee agreed in principle to a two-year extension of the EBP through 2028. This reflected broad support, including from Cyprus, the Netherlands, Canada, Belgium, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Chile, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Spain. The extension acknowledges the need to address the remaining gaps, needs and barriers. The Secretary General was requested to review the assessment of the technical, administrative, and financial implications of the anticipated work on URN for the Secretariat (MEPC 82/9/1), with a view to advising MEPC 85 of any necessary updates.

Global Study on URN Emissions

The Committee agreed in principle to commission a global study on shipborne URN emissions to provide an evidence base for future policy decisions. Draft Terms of Reference were welcomed. Formal confirmation was deferred to MEPC 85 pending cost and timeline

information. Germany indicated it was exploring financial support; IFAW offered technical and financial contributions.

IMO URN Policy Roadmap

Canada and co-sponsors proposed work on an IMO Policy Roadmap for URN, a strategic document setting out the IMO's intentions, priorities, and milestones for reducing URN from ships. Belgium, Cyprus, Chile, Canada, South Africa, the Netherlands, and Spain expressed strong support. Japan and Liberia urged caution until the EBP was completed. The Committee agreed that further proposals and comments should be submitted to MEPC 85, taking into account the list of technical matters relevant to future policy considerations of the Committee on how to reduce URN from shipping during the two-year extension of the EBP (SDC 12/WP.6, annex 2); documents MEPC 84/9 and MEPC 84/9/1; documents SDC 12/8/3 and SDC 12/8/4; and the information in document SDC 12/INF.8 regarding the outcomes of the 2025 workshop on the relationship between ship energy efficiency and URN.

In this regard, the Committee agreed that output 1.16 on "Experience-building phase for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping" should be included in the provisional agenda of SDC 13.

The Arctic and URN

Several delegations highlighted the particular importance of URN in the Arctic, where shipping traffic has increased significantly. The Arctic marine environment had previously been almost entirely free of human-generated underwater sound and is exceptionally sensitive to it. An intervention highlighted the impact on indigenous communities that depend on marine life for food security and cultural survival.

10. MARINE PLASTIC LITTER AND RELATED MATTERS

2026 Marine Plastic Litter Strategy

The Committee adopted the updated 2026 Strategy and Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships. Friends of the Earth International called for greater attention to monitoring, compliance and enforcement of MARPOL Annex V, which prohibits the disposal of garbage at sea.

Marking of Fishing Gear

The Committee approved the MEPC Circular on Implementation of Fishing Gear Marking Systems, as recommended by PPR 13. This provides guidance on marking fishing gear with identification information to make it traceable if lost or abandoned at sea.

The Committee noted document MEPC 84/8/6 (FAO), which provides an update from the Food and Agriculture Organization on its work to support the implementation of fishing gear marking systems.

Reporting of Lost Fishing Gear

Two documents, MEPC 84/8 (Australia) and MEPC 84/8/5 (FOEI and CSC), on the voluntary reporting of lost fishing gear were referred to PPR 14 for further consideration.

Ship-Generated Waste Survey

The Committee had for its consideration document MEPC 84/8/1 (Antigua and Barbuda et al.), outlining a proposal to establish a global survey to generate baseline data on ship-generated waste. Delegations expressed broad and consistent support for the objective, emphasizing that reliable, comparable data are essential for informing future policy measures under the Action Plan on marine plastic litter.

However, significant concerns were raised regarding the proposed use of port state control (PSC) as the primary data collection mechanism. A wide range of delegations opposed this approach, stressing that PSC is designed as a compliance and enforcement tool and that expanding its function to include data collection could undermine its effectiveness, create legal and operational inconsistencies, and place additional burdens on both administrations and ship operators. Alternative mechanisms were proposed that could ensure consistent and reliable data. In light of the discussion, the co-sponsors were invited to submit a revised proposal to MEPC 85, taking into account the concerns and comments made at this session.

11. PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE SEA AREAS AND SHIP STRIKES

Nasca Ridge National Reserve (MARPOL Special Area)

Peru submitted proposals MEPC 84/12/2 and MEPC 84/12/3 proposing associated protective measures (APMs) for the designation of the Reserva Nacional Dorsal de Nasca (Nasca Ridge National Reserve) (RNDN) as a PSSA, which had been approved in principle at MEPC 83.

Document MEPC 84/12/2 proposed the establishment of a prohibition on ballast water exchange (BWE) and discharge operations within the geographical boundaries of the RNDN under the framework of the Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention. The Committee concurred with the report of the Ballast Water Review Group MEPC 84/WP.9, paragraphs 183 to 185), that the proposed BWM-related associated protective measures for the Nasca Ridge National Reserve PSSA would benefit from further consideration and refinement, and invited Peru to liaise with the Secretariat intersessionally with a view to submitting any refined proposal to a future session.

Document MEPC 84/12/3 proposed to designate the Nasca Ridge National Reserve as a Special Area under MARPOL Annexes I, II, IV, and V, which would impose stricter discharge restrictions on ships operating in this ecologically exceptional area. Procedural concerns were raised, including the absence of draft amendments for MARPOL Annex IV and the fact that no MARPOL Annex II Special Areas have ever previously been established. The

Committee referred the proposal to PPR 14 and requested the Sub-Committee to further consider the proposal to designate the RNDN as a Special Area under MARPOL Annexes I, II, IV and V, taking into account the comments made in plenary and any additional information and comments submitted to the Sub-Committee, with a view to advising the Committee on how to proceed.

PSSA Framework and the BBNJ Agreement

A proposal by FOEI and others to strengthen the PSSA framework to better align it with the BBNJ Agreement was deferred to a future session, to be considered alongside a proposed new output on implementing the BBNJ Agreement.

PSSA on the Arabian Sea Coast of Oman

The Committee noted Oman's intent, through document MEPC 84/INF.27, to designate a PSSA along its Arabian Sea coast to minimize ship strikes to cetaceans and risks to important ecological resources.

Ship Strikes on Marine Mammals

ACOPS and BIMCO called for a review and update of the 2009 IMO Guidelines for Minimising the Risk of Ship Strikes with Cetaceans, noting that the guidelines now need to reflect advances in scientific understanding and changes in shipping patterns. The International Whaling Commission and WWF supported these changes. The Committee noted the information in document MEPC 84/12/1 and invited proposals, including proposals for a new output, as appropriate, on reviewing current IMO policies and measures to better address ship strike risks to a future session.

12. DECISIONS OF OTHER IMO BODIES

FAL 49

The Committee:

1. Recalled that MEPC 83 had considered the outcome of FAL 49 concerning the Rules of Procedure of the Facilitation Committee and had approved MEPC.1/Circ.919 on Rules of Procedure of the Marine Environment Protection Committee.
2. Approved FAL-LEG-MEPC-MSA.1/Circ.1 on Joint Guidelines for the use of electronic certificates as set out in annex 6 to document FAL 49/22.

MSC 110

The Committee:

1. Referred documents MSC 110/6/1 and MSC 110/6/8 related to the use of ammonia as ship fuels were referred to PPR 14 for further consideration, with a view to advising the Committee on the most appropriate way forward.

2. Referred the information set out in annex 2 to document MSC 110/WP.9 on Barrier B-1 regarding fatty acid methyl ester (FAME), on the identified potential inconsistency regarding cargo in MARPOL annexes I and II, which might prohibit the otherwise safe use of FAME as fuel, to PPR 14 for further consideration.
3. Concurred with the decision of MSC 110, and approved the revision of the Guidelines for the development, review and validation of model courses (MSC-MEPC.2/Circ.15/Rev.2), to be disseminated as MSC-MEPC.2/Circ.15/Rev.3.
4. Endorsed the actions taken by MSC 110 in relation to the ISM Code and related matters.
5. Considered the outcome of MSC 110 concerning the draft revision of the Committees' method of work under agenda item 13 (Application of the Committees' method of work)
6. Considered the outcome of MSC 110 concerning other matters related to the work programme of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies, together with the relevant commenting document MEPC 84/2/7 (Russian Federation), under agenda item 14 (Work programme of the Committee and subsidiary bodies).

C 134

The Committee:

1. Considered C 134's invitation to consider incorporating the additional amendments, editorial corrections and clarifications specified in paragraph 6 of the report of the Working Group on the Strategic Plan (document C 134/WP.4) into their respective documents on organization and method of work, under agenda item 13 (Application of the Committees' method of work).
2. Considered C 134's invitation to review resolution A.998(25) on *Need for capacity-building for the development and implementation of new, and amendments to existing, instruments*, along with Procedures for assessing the implications of capacity-building requirements when developing new, or amending existing, mandatory instruments, as set out in annex 5 to document C 134/WP.4, to determine whether updates to the resolution and annex are warranted, under agenda item 13 (Application of the Committees' method of work).

A 34

The Committee:

1. Noted that A 34 had requested MSC and MEPC to consider the CASRs containing lessons learned from 11 mandatory audits completed in 2022, 2023 and 2024 (Circular Letter No.5057) and to advise the Council of the outcome of their consideration in due course.
2. In regard to the above, agreed to follow previous practice and instructed the III Sub-Committee to consider the CASRs of the audits completed in 2022 and 2023 and report to the Committees on the outcome of its consideration, subject to a concurrent decision by MSC 111.

Urgent Matters emanating from C/ES.36

The Committee:

1. Noted the outcome of C/ES.36, including its Declaration as set out in document C/ES.36/D;
2. Adopted the draft resolution as set out in the annex to document MEPC 84/2/8; and
3. Noted that the proposed MEPC resolutions contained in documents MEPC 84/2/9 and MEPC 84/2/10 had not received sufficient support.

Urgent matters emanating from FAL 50

The Committee:

1. Noted that FAL 50 had approved, in principle, the IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization, as set out in annex 5 to document FAL 50/WP.6.
2. Noted that in accordance with the work plan approved by FAL 50, MSC 111 would consider the IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization, for concurrent approval, and for its submission to MEPC 85 and LEG 114 for consideration and concurrent approval.
3. Approved the work plan for the development of the IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization, as set out in annex 6 to document FAL 50/WP.6, in concurrence with FAL 50 and subject to concurrent decision by MSC 111 [and LEG 114].
4. Noted that FAL 50 had re-established the Correspondence Group on the Development of the IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization, and that an Action Plan would be incorporated in the IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization to be adopted by the Assembly if appropriate. In this connection, the Committee encouraged Member States and international organizations to join the Correspondence Group to provide input to the action plan.

5. Noted that the outcome of the consideration of FAL 50 regarding the Committees' method of work would be considered under agenda item 13 (Application of the Committees' method of work)

13. REPORTS OF OTHER SUB-COMMITTEES

III 11

The Committee:

1. Approved, in general, the report of the eleventh session of the Sub-Committee on Implementation of IMO Instruments (III) (III 11/16 and III 11/16/Add.1), and took action as indicated in paragraphs 11.2 to 11.12.
2. Endorsed, subject to a concurrent decision by MSC, the issuance of III.3/Circ.14 on Lessons learned from marine casualties; and III.3/Circ.15 on Casualty Analysis and Statistics – observations on reports of investigation into casualties.
3. Noted that the Sub-Committee had invited interested Member States to submit proposals to the Committees for a new output on a review of the marine casualties and incidents taxonomy in accordance with the provisions of the document on Organization and method of work of the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee and their subsidiary bodies (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.6).
4. Noted the discussion during III 11 with regard to a proposed project for the development of a port State control (PSC) overarching database with Web service as the evolution of the PSC module in the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS) (III 11/16, paragraphs 5.12 to 5.14).
5. In regard to the above, agreed on the need for the proposed evolution of the GISIS PSC module to a PSC overarching database with Web service based on the strategic goals and benefits for all the stakeholders and the maritime sector at large, and requested the Secretariat to develop a project document in that regard, subject to a concurrent decision by MSC, for consideration by the Committees and the Council.
6. Noted that, as authorized by MSC 109 and MEPC 83, III 11 had prepared draft Assembly resolutions, which had been subsequently adopted by A 34, including: Procedures for port State control, 2025 (resolution A.1206(34)); Survey Guidelines under the Harmonized System of Survey and Certification (HSSC), 2025 (resolution A.1207(34)); and 2025 Non-exhaustive list of obligations under instruments relevant to the IMO Instruments Implementation Code (III Code) (resolution A.1208(34)).
7. Noted that the Sub-Committee's work on output (6.2) "Validated model training courses" had been completed following the validation by III 11 of the draft revised Model Course 3.09 on Port State Control.

8. Noted the Sub-Committee's agreement that, in light of the Hong Kong Convention's entry into force, survey guidelines for the Convention needed to be developed, taking into account the 2012 Guidelines for the survey and certification of ships under the Hong Kong Convention (resolution MEPC.222(64)), and incorporated into the Survey Guidelines under the HSSC. Having also noted that III 11 had invited interested Member States and international organizations to submit proposals to the next session of the Sub-Committee for its consideration, the Committee endorsed the proposed way forward.
9. Noted the outcome of the discussion at III 11 regarding the three-date criterion in MEPC.392(82) on amendments to MARPOL Annex VI concerning the designation of the Canadian Arctic and the Norwegian Sea as Emission Control Areas (ECAs) for Nitrogen Oxides, Sulphur Oxides and Particulate Matter, namely that the three-date criterion did not need to be highlighted in the Survey Guidelines under the HSSC (III 11/16, paragraph 8.24).
10. Noted that the Sub-Committee had completed the whole process of a review exercise on gap analysis between the Survey Guidelines under the HSSC and the mandatory requirements, starting from III 8. The Committee recalled that MSC 104 and MEPC 77 had tasked the III Sub-Committee with carrying out the work, which was based on the principle that the Survey Guidelines should be linked to mandatory requirements.
11. Approved, subject to a concurrent decision by MSC, the draft MSC-MEPC.5 circular on Guidance on assessments and applications of remote surveys, ISM Code audits and ISPS Code verifications (III 11/16/Add.1, annex 5) and noted that the Sub-Committee had completed its work under the relevant output.
12. Approved, subject to a concurrent decision by MSC, the draft MSC-MEPC.5/Circ.3/Rev.1 on Unified interpretation of the date of completion of the survey and verification on which the certificates are based (III 11/16/Add.1, annex 6).
13. Noted the deliberations of III 11 (III 11/16, paragraphs 12.6 to 12.8) and its conclusion that the work assigned to the Sub-Committee under output 4.3 (Follow-up work emanating from the Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships) had been completed.

CCC 11

The Committee:

1. Approved the report of the eleventh session of the Sub-Committee on Carriage of Cargoes and Containers (CCC) (CCC 11/16) in general.
2. Endorsed the work plan for the development of a safety regulatory framework to support the reduction of GHG emissions from ships using new technologies and

alternative fuels under the purview of the CCC Sub-Committee (CCC 11/16, annex 5) subject to a concurrent decision by MSC.

SDC 12

The Committee:

1. Recalled that the action requested of it under SDC 12/18, relating to URN from shipping had been considered under agenda item 9 (Experience-building phase for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping).
2. Noted that SDC 12 had finalized the revision of the Interim guidelines for use of fibre-reinforced plastic (FRP) elements within ship structures: Fire safety issues (MSC.1/Circ.1574) (SDC 12/18, annex 6).
3. Noted that the Sub-Committee had agreed not to include recycling-related matters in the draft revised Interim FRP guidelines, and that FRP recycling provisions and any other relevant sustainability matters related to the use of FRP in ship structures should be instead considered by MEPC and the PPR Sub-Committee.
4. Noted the Sub-Committee's discussion on civil liability and nuclear damage in the context of the revision of SOLAS chapter VIII and the Code of Safety for Nuclear Merchant Ships (resolution A.491(XII)) (Nuclear Code) (SDC 12/18, paragraphs 9.18 and 9.19).

14. PROPOSALS FOR NEW OUTPUTS

Ozone-Depleting Substances on Ships (New Output)

China submitted a proposal to amend MARPOL Annex VI to prohibit the release of ozone-depleting substances (ODS) from ships, consistent with the Montreal Protocol's goals. The Committee agreed to include the proposal as a new output for the PPR Sub-Committee, with one session needed to complete the work. Cyprus subsequently broadened the scope to cover refrigerant replacement on ships built on or after 1 January 2020, closing a potential regulatory loophole.

Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS) (New Output)

China also proposed a new work output to address Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships within MEPC's instruments, complementing work already underway at MSC, LEG, and FAL. The Committee agreed to a two-phase approach: Phase 1 involves a regulatory scoping exercise and gap analysis of MEPC instruments; Phase 2 will develop actual measures based on Phase 1's findings. The Committee approved the scope of work for Phase 1.

BBNJ Agreement (New Output Proposed)

Australia and co-sponsors proposed a new work output to support the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement, the landmark High Seas Treaty that entered into force in January 2026, within the IMO's mandate. The debate was substantial and reflected familiar fault lines: strong supporters from EU states, Pacific Island states, and others emphasised the importance of coherence between the IMO and the BBNJ agreement ahead of its first Conference of the Parties in January 2027. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Russia, and Kuwait expressed concerns about subordinating the IMO's regulatory authority to an external treaty, restricting freedom of navigation, and the workload implications. The Chair's balanced way forward, agreeing in principle to include a new output for MEPC 85 consideration, with the Secretariat assessing technical and financial implications, was accepted, with the objections of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Russia noted in the Committee's report.

Climate Updates (COP30)

A representative of the UNFCCC Secretariat briefed the Committee on COP30, held in Belém, Brazil, in November 2025. Key points included the following: 130 countries had submitted updated Nationally Determined Contributions, which collectively would reduce global emissions by 12% by 2035, an improvement over previous projections but well short of the 60% needed for 1.5°C; governments reaffirmed resolve to limit warming to 1.5°C; a commitment was made to a roadmap for sustainable fuels in shipping and aviation by 2035; and 2025 was among the top three warmest years on record, with warming projected to reach 2.3–2.5°C under current trajectories. COP31 will be held in Antalya, Turkey, in November 2026.

Other Business

The Committee also addressed cooperation on ship recycling between the Hong Kong Convention and the Basel Convention Secretariat. The Secretariat will attend the Basel COP Working Group in June 2026 and report to MEPC 85. A document on marine light pollution from ships was noted, with member states invited to explore voluntary mitigation guidelines. An R&D forum on preparedness and response to pollution incidents involving alternative fuels was noted, with the importance of adapting emergency response to the new generation of marine fuels affirmed.