



REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MAJURO, MARSHALL ISLANDS

AIDE-MÉMOIRE
GLOBAL GHG GOAL FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING SECTOR

This is a watershed year in the international fight against climate change. Without urgent action, current global emissions trajectories would see average temperatures increase by 3 to 4°C above pre-industrial levels, producing catastrophic economic, environmental and humanitarian impacts worldwide. As one of the world's most vulnerable countries to climate change impacts, RMI is leading the international fight against climate change.

World leaders and Ministers will gather in Paris in December to conclude a new international agreement to guide the world's response to climate change. According to the IPCC, achieving the agreed goal to limit global warming to below 1.5 or 2°C requires action from all countries, and significant emission reductions across all sectors of the global economy, including international shipping. While the sector currently contributes only 3 per cent of global emissions, this is projected to increase by 50 to 250 per cent by 2050, which would be equivalent to between 6 to 14 per cent of total global emissions, roughly the size of the EU's contribution today.

Given its growing significance as a pollution source, it is critically important that the international shipping sector continues to keep pace with the international momentum for climate action, and is not left behind as the rest of the world economy transitions to low-emissions pathways.

Initial efforts at the IMO have focused on fuel efficiency standards for new ships and compulsory energy efficiency management plans for all ships. Recent studies have shown that these measures, while important, are alone insufficient to achieve reductions consistent with limiting global warming to below 1.5 or 2°C, and that an overall emissions reduction goal for the sector would help to drive the necessary technological improvements to achieve further efficiency gains and deeper emissions reductions.

RMI's submission to the IMO Marine Environmental Protection Committee's 68th Session (MEPC-68) makes the case that the IMO has the responsibility to adopt a more proactive and decisive approach. The IMO is the only body with the regulatory competence and industry expertise to set a realistic and ambitious overall goal for shipping emissions, and to continue to work in parallel on the specific measures and mechanisms to achieve it.

We propose that MEPC-68 work this week on a recommendation to the IMO Assembly that it decide, at its 29th meeting to be held from 23 November to 2 December 2015, on an ambitious timeline and target end date for agreeing and establishing an industry-wide emissions goal for the shipping industry in line with the agreed 'below 1.5 or 2°C' long-term temperature goal. The Assembly should be informed by further submissions by member states in the interim. The Assembly's decision would be communicated immediately to the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris, which itself will meet from 30 November, thereby confirming the shipping industry's resolve and determination to make a strong contribution to the international fight against climate change.



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Questions & Answers

Why is this proposal different from previous efforts to address GHG emissions at the IMO?

Past submissions to the MEPC on reducing GHG emissions have related to proposals on establishing market-based mechanisms (MBMs) to cap or impose a levy on bunker fuels, and proposals relating to current efforts to increase vessel fuel efficiency and to monitor, report and verify vessel emissions. The RMI submission is the first to call for an industry-wide goal connected to the internationally agreed goal to stabilizing GHG emissions at levels that can limit global temperature rise to 1.5 to 2C above pre-industrial levels. The establishment of a goal would not itself deliver the necessary emissions reductions, but would instead set a broad, industry-wide objective to shape the level of ambition, the pace of policy development and the implementation of measures necessary to achieve it.

Aren't there already efforts already underway to reduce shipping emissions (e.g. emissions data collection initiatives, energy efficiency measures)?

The efforts underway are a positive contribution, but are not sufficient to drive a response with the necessary urgency demanded by the most recent climate science. The RMI submission aims to complement and build on those efforts, but in a way that provides direction for the measures IMO will need to adopt over time. Of course, current and ongoing efforts to collect and improve the quality of emissions data from ships would be helpful to the process for setting a long-term emissions goal and monitoring progress towards achieving it.

How would an emissions reduction goal for the shipping industry be determined and how would it be achieved?

A goal for reduction of shipping industry emissions should be determined based on the industry's proportional contribution to global GHG emissions and by reference to long-term global emissions trajectories that science says is required to limit warming to 1.5 to 2 °C, and taking into account the unique technological and financial circumstances of the world shipping sector. Achievement of the goal would ultimately be driven by a number of different approaches, with IMO-determined measures at the heart. The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), which represents over 80 per cent of the world's merchant fleet has already indicated strong support for an ambitious market-based approach to reducing shipping emissions.

Why must action be taken by the IMO, as opposed to the UNFCCC or domestically by national governments?

As the preeminent global body for regulating international shipping, the IMO is the preferred forum for addressing emissions from this sector. The IMO is much better informed than the UNFCCC or any other body as to the workings and limitations of the sector, and it has the unique capacity to facilitate industry-wide action. Moreover, international shipping does not adhere to traditional national boundaries, which makes any effort to address the sector's emissions through a nationally-based process extremely difficult.