

**5th meeting of the Arctic Shipping Best Practices Information Forum
(16-18 Nov 2021)**

Dear participants,

It is a pleasure for me to address you today. I will provide you with a brief update on IMO's work since your 4th meeting in November of last year, including developments that are not directly concerning the Arctic but may be of general interest to this Forum. I, and other IMO colleagues present here, are of course happy to answer any questions afterwards. Let me first give you a brief overview on what has kept us busy at IMO during this time of the pandemic, in addition to our normal work programme which largely was and still is conducted remotely.

Crew change crisis

As most of you will know, seafarers have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Hundreds of thousands of seafarers were, and to a large extent still are, effectively trapped on their ships due to the travel restrictions imposed, being unable to return home and relief crews are unable to join ships.

IMO has taken action to address the issue through the Seafarer Crisis Action Team (SCAT), established by the Secretary-General in March 2020. Its main tasks are: addressing of individual cases (over 500); policy development; bilateral and multilateral engagement; and outreach. The IMO Assembly, meeting for its 32nd session in December, is expected to adopt an Assembly resolution on *Comprehensive action to address seafarers' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic*, urging IMO Member States and national authorities, among other issues, to designate seafarers as "key workers" in order to facilitate shore leave and safe and unhindered movement across borders, consider the implementation of the Industry recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (MSC.1/Circ.1636/Rev.1); as well as prioritize vaccination of seafarers, as far as practicable.

As you can imagine, work on these matters is ongoing.

IMO regulatory developments for the protection of the Arctic marine environment

MEPC

IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee, the MEPC 76, adopted at its 76th session in June of this year amendments to MARPOL Annex I to introduce a prohibition on the use and carriage for use as fuel of heavy fuel oil (HFO) by ships in Arctic waters on and after 1 July 2024.

During its 77th session next week, the MEPC will consider terms of reference for further work to reduce the impact on the Arctic of black carbon emissions from international shipping, having previously noted candidate control measures that had been identified by the Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR).

Additionally, PPR at its 8th session next year is expected to commence work on the development of amendments to MARPOL Annexes I, II, IV, V and VI to allow States with ports in the Arctic region to establish regional arrangements for port reception facilities.

MSC

Regarding the work of the Maritime Safety Committee, at your last meeting I informed you that IMO was about to finalize Guidelines for safety measures for fishing vessels, as well as pleasure yachts, operating in polar waters. These two sets of Guidelines were approved by MSC 103 in May of this year as circulars MSC.1/Circ.1641 and MSC.1/Circ.1642, respectively.

MSC 102 in May 2020 requested the SDC (Ship Design and Equipment) Sub-Committee to work on similar guidelines for commercial yachts and cargo ships of 300 GT and above but less than 500 GT. SDC 8 in January 2022 has this on its agenda. SDC 8 has also been tasked by MEPC 76 (June 2021) to commence a review of the 2014 *Guidelines for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping* (MEPC.1/Circ.833).

The last MSC meeting, MSC 104 in October of this year, agreed to include the implementation of the Polar Code as one of the priorities in our Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme, the ITCP for the 2022-2023 biennium. The objective is to enhance Member States' capabilities to implement the Polar Code. The details still need to be discussed but are envisaging a range of activities to achieve this objective, including seminars or regional workshops and the development of training material.

Additionally, IMO's Polar Code Training Programme, which I already referred to at last years' Forum, with specific relevance to chapter 12 'Manning and Training' as highlighted on the Web portal submissions for that Chapter, continues. I am pleased to inform you that my colleague Milton Baron-Perico will inform you of the latest developments regarding the programme with a presentation at the third day of the Forum.

Update on methodologies for assessing ships' operational capabilities and limitations in ice

When MSC 96 approved, in May 2016, the *Guidance on methodologies for assessing operational capabilities and limitations in ice* (MSC.1/Circ.1519). As this was considered to be interim Guidance, it was agreed that it should be reviewed four years after the entry into force of the Polar Code by the SDC Sub-Committee. I am therefore pleased to see Arctic voyage planning on the agenda at this Forum and look forward to the outcome which I hope will feed into our work at IMO.

Promoting national ratification of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement

We have been pleased to be more actively engaged in the work of PAME and other Arctic Council Working Groups such as EPPR following IMO gaining observer status in 2019. We also greatly

value the opportunity to participate in this Forum, given its relevance for the ongoing polar work in IMO.

We are also delighted to co-lead, with Iceland and Spain, the PAME project *'Raising awareness in the Arctic Council of the provisions of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement for the safety of fishing vessels'*. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Arctic Council States, permanent participants, observer states and organizations, and of course the PAME Secretariat, for the extensive work on that project which will hopefully help to finally bring a binding international instrument regulating the safety of fishing vessels into force.

PAME's Web Portal

I would like to again express my gratitude to the organizers of this Forum who have worked hard to establish and run the Web Portal, providing vital information, in quite a leading and unique way that sets an example for others, to enhance and facilitate IMO's regulatory work. Central to the project is to provide up to date information for those involved in Arctic operations on the Web Portal. IMO thanks the organizers for the dedicated IMO information page on the Portal and the IMO team has included current information that explains and supports the Polar Code, including a link to the Polar Code Section on the IMO website, links to important circulars with information about various aspects of the Polar Code requirements, links to videos created by our hard-working communications team and other relevant information.

Closing

In closing, I would like to let you know that the IMO Council last week agreed to grant provisional consultative status to the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) which will be reviewed after two years. We are looking forward to an active contribution of the ICC to the ongoing polar shipping related work.

As the IMO Liaison Officer for the Arctic Council, I will continue to promote the work of PAME and staff from the Maritime Safety and Marine Environment Division has been assigned to attend relevant meetings. With the strong representation of IMO at meetings of the Arctic Council and its Working Groups we hope to facilitate consideration of any work accomplished by PAME and other working groups by IMO's rule-making bodies, in accordance with our procedures.

Finally, I would like to commend the Russian Federation for their ambitious and rich programme for the Arctic Council for 2021-2023 during their chairmanship and wish them all success.

Thank you.
