# Important subjects from MEPC 70

The 70th session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 70) was held under the chairmanship of Mr. Arsenio Dominguez (Panama) and Vice-Chairman Hideaki Saito (Japan) also attended the meeting.

**Ballast water management**

The International Ballast Water Management Convention will enter into force on 8 September 2017, and it is supported by more than 50 per cent of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant fleet.

In the week prior to MEPC 70, an inter-sessional (intermediate) meeting was held on the finalisation of Guidelines G8 for the approval of ballast water management systems. This work was finalised at the meeting through the adoption of the revised Guidelines. Furthermore, the Guidelines will become mandatory and be rewritten into a Code.

At the MEPC session as such, it was – following prolonged debate on the possible postponement of the installation dates stipulated in regulation B-3 of the MARPOL Convention – decided to maintain the decision taken at MEPC 69, according to which the installation dates were updated in accordance with A.1088. However, it was accepted to attach a document containing an alternative to the dates as an annex to the summary from MEPC 70. The alternative contains a postponement of the installation dates and will be considered at the 71st session of the MEPC before a final decision is taken.

The concept of a "Same Risk Area", which had been developed by Denmark, was considered by the review group, and it was decided to make it possible to use the concept now, while Guidelines G7 for risk assessments can be adjusted at MEPC 71 so that the "Same Risk Area" is mentioned and defined in the Guidelines. This means that, instead of developing a risk assessment per ship route, which is the requirement today, it is possible to make a risk assessment for an area (following agreement among the authorities in all the countries concerned), which will be considerably simpler to handle for both shipowners and authorities.

**Energy efficiency design index (EEDI)**

The regulations on the energy efficiency design index are divided into three phases – phases 1, 2 and 3 – which will become effective in 2015, 2020 and 2025, respectively. A correspondence group which has scrutinized the status on the technological development for EEDI ships presented its report to the MEPC; this work showed that it is necessary to revise the EEDI provisions for both ro-ro cargo and passenger ships since it will not be possible to build new, larger ro-ro ships that meet the phase 2 requirements. At the next session of the Committee, the minimum requirements for ships' propulsion power are also to be revised in order to ensure that the ships are manoeuvrable also in adverse weather conditions. On the basis of the work made by the correspondence group, it was furthermore decided to make a status of technological developments immediately after this revision of the minimum requirements for the propulsion power and, on the basis of this status, to examine the possibility of shortening phase 2 and thereby bring about phase 3 earlier than planned and, simultaneously, introduce a subsequent phase 4 with additional energy efficiency requirements.

**Data collection**

MEPC 70 adopted regulations on a "data collection system for fuel consumption", which is intended to provide information about ships' fuel consumption. The system is to apply to ships with a gross tonnage above 5,000 GT and, from 2019, the ships are required to forward information annually to the IMO via the flag State about their total fuel consumption, distance travelled and time at sea. The system is a first step of a three-step plan. At first, the subsequent steps will consist in an analysis of the data collected followed by a decision on which additional measures to be taken to reduce shipping's CO2 emissions. The provisions will be included in MARPOL Annex VI.

Furthermore, the MEPC has approved guidelines for ships on how to collect the required data and report them to the IMO. At the same time, the information from this "data collection system" will form part of the work on the IMO climate agenda.

**Greenhouse gas emissions**

The considerations on how to reduce shipping's greenhouse gas emissions took place in a working group which, following prolonged debate, agreed on a roadmap for how the shipping industry can contribute to the global efforts made to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The roadmap which was adopted by the MEPC is an important step in the IMO's work to follow up on the Paris Agreement from December 2015, and it paves the way for also global shipping's ability to contribute to reductions of global greenhouse gas emissions. The roadmap launches a new process parallel to the IMO's established three-step approach. The roadmap means that the IMO must develop a strategy for reducing ships' greenhouse gas emissions, inter alia develop new global measures in both the long and the short term. Initially, the strategy must be ready in 2018 with a view to contributing to the first status deliberations as regards compliance with the long-term climate goals of the Paris Agreement. The strategy is subsequently to be updated and finally adopted in 2023. With the adoption of the roadmap, it has furthermore been decided that, in coming years, the IMO climate work must be given higher priority and that a number of inter-sessional meetings are to be held, the first of which should be held before MEPC 71.

**Sulphur**

It was confirmed that, from 1 January 2020, ships' fuels must have a maximum sulphur content of 0.5 per cent compared to the current 3.5 per cent. The decision to confirm the date was made by a surprisingly clear majority of the IMO countries.

In connection with the decision on the 2020 date, a number of major flag States, including Denmark, stressed that the work on the implementation should be taken very seriously. Against this background, the Committee therefore decided simultaneously to launch the work on an implementation plan to be prepared by the PPR Sub-Committee in January 2017 and debated at MEPC 71. The MEPC approved two proposals that may contribute to efficient and homogeneous enforcement of the sulphur regulations: A set of guidelines for fuel sampling to be used on board ships as well as an amendment of the bunker delivery note that means that, after 2020, ships fitted with scrubbers can be supplied with fuel that exceeds the global limit value of 0.50 per cent.

The new regulations will bring about a reduction of up to 85 per cent for the benefit of health and the environment all over the world. It was important to take a decision on the entry into force date in order to create clarity for the industry and the authorities. The North Sea and the Baltic Sea as well as the waters

around North America have, since 1 January 2015, been special emission control areas as regards sulphur with a limit of no more than 0.1 per cent sulphur in ships' fuel.

**NOx emission control areas (NECAs)**

The MEPC approved applications from the North Sea and Baltic Sea countries to designate the Baltic Sea and the North Sea as emission control areas for NOx emissions. This means that, from 2021, new ships operating in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea are required to decrease the emission of nitrogen oxides by 75 per cent. Similar regulations have applied in the waters around North America since early 2016.

For several years, Denmark has been striving to have stricter NOx requirements adopted for ships operating in the North Sea and the Baltic Sea. A reduction of ships' NOx emissions will have a positive impact on health and environment. The applications must be adopted at MEPC 72.

**New garbage record book**

At the meeting, it was decided to amend the garbage record book. Thus, in the future the garbage record book will consist of two parts, the first part of which is for recording operational waste from ships, and the second part of which is exclusively for use by ships carrying dry cargoes in bulk where the discharge of cargo residues must be recorded.

**The Hong Kong Convention**

Japan had submitted a request for the IMO to further fast accession to the Hong Kong Convention at the MEPC meeting. This proposal enjoyed general support. A number of countries, including Denmark, informed that they are in the process of preparing their ratification of the Convention.

**The Arctic region**

A group of green interest organisations had submitted a paper, in which the raise concern about the use of heavy oil in the Arctic region and mention what is done at the moment to counter the risks related to this. The submission is related to the recent address to the PAME group under the Arctic Council about the same subject. The MEPC agreed that the protection of the Arctic environment is an important issue that should be debated at coming meetings and decided to strengthen the collaboration between the IMO and the Arctic Council in the future.