



SEMAPHORE

Newsletter of the Maritime Law

Association of Australia and New Zealand



IMO Criticised for Decarbonisation Inaction

Strong criticism has been levelled at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) following the conclusion of its Maritime Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) 77 meeting late last year.

The meeting followed the COP26 conference which underlined the need for a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and most countries represented there were also present at MEPC 77.

However, a failure to prescribe actions to meet shipping's emissions goals for 2050 has not been well received by the shipping industry.

In particular, the butt of criticism is the IMO's failure to endorse the sector's proposals to set up a major research and development fund to accelerate the investigation, development and deployment of low-carbon and zero-carbon fuels, energy sources, propulsion systems and other new greenhouse gas (GHG)-reduction technologies

An International Maritime Research and Development Board (IMRB) has been proposed to serve as a non-governmental research and development (R&D) organisation that would be overseen by IMO member states.

The IMRB would manage a fund and be financed possibly by mandatory R&D contributions from shipping companies worldwide, applied to every tonne of marine fuel purchased.

According to the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) – the principal international trade association for shipowners and operators, representing all sectors and over 80% of the world's merchant fleet – the IMO has “... missed the opportunity to take forward a range of GHG reduction measures which would accelerate the development of zero emissions ships that are urgently needed at scale to decarbonise our sector”.



“It’s almost as if COP26 never happened,” states the ICS.

“Governments can’t keep kicking the can down the road; every delay moves us further away from reaching pressing climate goals ...

“... we fear this will signal to the world, following COP26, that IMO is no longer truly serious about maintaining its leadership on GHG issues and that others may then move in to fill the vacuum.”

The World Shipping Council (WSC), the voice of liner shipping, added to the criticism by saying governments had “failed to walk the talk” when it comes to real action at the IMO.

“Our challenge as a hard-to-abate sector is that the technology and fuels needed for a transition to zero are not yet available,” states the WSC.

“We see the direction and now need to drive progress towards a tipping point where the technologies for zero-GHG shipping can be applied and a clear demand picture can drive availability of and infrastructure for alternative fuels.

“That is why IMO member countries’ inexplicable stalling ... is so dangerous.”

The WSC and others have now submitted a proposal to MEPC 78 (ie, the next meeting of the IMO group), detailing a proposal for an International Maritime Research and Development Board and International Maritime Research and Development Fund.

March 2022

