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World Maritime Day 2009

CLIMATE CHANGE: a challenge for IMO too!

Today (24 September 2009) marks the 32nd celebration of World Maritime Day, the annual occasion when the International Maritime Organization (IMO) leads the world in highlighting a key issue for the Organization and the shipping industry. This year, the theme for World Maritime Day is CLIMATE CHANGE: a challenge for IMO too!

In his World Maritime Day message to the international maritime community, IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos said that now was the time to make tough decisions to address climate change, and to act with total and undivided commitment.

“At IMO, we are heavily and consistently engaged in the fight to protect and preserve our environment - both marine and atmospheric. Having, in 2008, achieved a breakthrough in our efforts to reduce air pollution from ships, we are now energetically pursuing the limitation and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from shipping operations - indeed, when considering which theme to choose for this year’s World Maritime Day, we unanimously opted for Climate change: a challenge for IMO too!, in recognition of the intense focus this topic is receiving within the Organization, especially this year,” Mr Mitropoulos said.

“Our work on this hugely important subject stems from the genuine concerns for the environment of our Member States and the industry organizations that help us make balanced decisions in the pursuit of the Organization’s objectives - not to mention those entrusted to us under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol, which specifically provide that the limitation or reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from ships should be pursued through IMO,” Mr Mitropoulos added.

He highlighted the work done to address GHG emissions to date, including the development of an Energy Efficiency Design Index for new ships and a Ship Energy Management Plan for all ships (which includes guidance on best practices for fuel-efficient ship operations) and an Energy Efficiency Operational Indicator (which helps to determine the fuel efficiency of a ship). IMO will report on the development of this comprehensive package of measures, together with a progress report on discussions held on potential market-based mechanisms, to the UNFCCC Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009.

Aside from the regulatory arena, which is IMO’s main field of competence and responsibility, the shipping industry itself has made considerable progress, from a technical perspective, to address energy efficiency issues, Mr. Mitropoulos noted. A range of technologies can reduce emissions from new ships, per tonne/mile, by 15 to 25 per cent, depending on the ship type and size. Since carbon emissions and fuel efficiency are directly linked, today’s improved propulsion systems and propeller designs can reduce fuel consumption by about 10 per cent, and concurrent improvements in hydrodynamics and vessel hull design have also succeeded in reducing fuel consumption by between two and four per cent.

“Climate change will, of course, affect everybody,” Mr. Mitropoulos said. “No one can be immune to it. By the same token, responsibility for finding the solution cannot, realistically, be laid at the door of any particular country or group of countries, nor of any particular region or continent - neither should it be pursued through only one or a few human activities. We are, perhaps as never before, all in this together.”

“To achieve the desired goals in the fight against climate change, the solutions we will opt for need to be realistic, pragmatic, workable, cost-effective and, above all, well-balanced, implemented through mechanisms that are clear, practical, transparent, fraud-free and easy to

administer”, Mr. Mitropoulos said, adding that the solutions “must be universally applied - and, for this to be achieved, there is a need for global involvement and endorsement by consensus”.

“The message is clear: to succeed in combating climate change, we must work together and play our part with the seriousness that the circumstances demand. If the problem pays no heed to man-made borders, then neither can the solution. Working together, with a sense of responsibility for future generations, the agreements the Copenhagen Conference will be able to make later this year can have genuine and lasting value,” Mr. Mitropoulos continued.

He concluded: “Climate change and our response to the multi-faceted problems it represents has really become ‘the defining challenge of our age’. Let there be no doubt that, as the 2009 World Maritime Day theme proclaims, it is a challenge for IMO too and that we - Member States, international shipping and Secretariat - are fully engaged in helping to redress it.”

Launch of DVD on climate change

Today, on World Maritime Day 2009, IMO also launches Climate Change: a challenge for IMO too!, a new short DVD film, which highlights the current situation of the world’s international merchant fleet with regard to its energy efficiency and carbon footprint, as well as the challenges faced by IMO in its efforts to effectively control greenhouse gas emissions from ships engaged in international trade.

The DVD was produced by Videotel and was funded by generous donations from the Governments of the Netherlands and Norway.

World Maritime Day Parallel Event in the United States

The United States is hosting the 2009 IMO World Maritime Day Parallel Event, with celebrations being held in New York City on Friday, 16 October 2009, including a conference on the theme CLIMATE CHANGE: a challenge for IMO too!. There will also be several public outreach activities, which will continue throughout the weekend of 17 and 18 October, to include an industry exhibition, vessel tours, and a student science fair and design competition.

Parallel Event website: <http://www.uscg.mil/worldmaritimeday>.

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IMO - the International Maritime Organization - is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships. Web site: www.imo.org

The full text of the message and background paper for World Maritime Day can be downloaded on the IMO website. An Audio MP3 file of the message can be downloaded in English.
http://www.imo.org/home.asp?topic_id=320

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