

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

ICP 18 – “The effects of climate change on oceans”

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has been concerned for some years about elevated levels of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere, caused by CO₂ emissions from the combustion of fossil fuel and the subsequent contribution to climate change and ocean acidification. The Organization has sought to tackle this issue on the following fronts:

- .1 through the adoption of a comprehensive mandatory regime aimed at limiting or reducing greenhouse gas emissions from ships. These include the adoption of both technical and operational measures, under MARPOL Annex VI, designed to put in place best practices for fuel efficiency (primarily, an energy efficiency design index for new vessels and an energy management plan for both new and existing ships). Amendments to MARPOL Annex VI entered into force on 1 January 2013. IMO is continuing its discussions and in October 2016 adopted a system for collecting data on ships' fuel oil consumption which will be mandatory and will apply globally, and approved a roadmap for the development of a comprehensive strategy on the reduction of GHG emissions from ships, which foresees an initial strategy being adopted in 2018.
 - .2 under the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972 and its 1996 Protocol (LP), Contracting Parties (CPs) adopted amendments to Annex 1 to the LP to regulate CO₂ sequestration in sub-seabed geological formations (entered into force on 10 February 2007). To facilitate the licensing process, CPs adopted a “Risk Assessment and Management Framework for CO₂ Sequestration in Sub-Seabed Geological Structures” and “Specific Guidelines on Assessment of CO₂ Streams for Disposal into a Sub-Seabed Geological Formations”. In order to ensure that this approach translates into the effective, invaluable climate mitigation tool it is intended to be, CPs adopted on, 30 October 2009, an amendment to Article 6 of the LP enabling the export of carbon dioxide streams for the purpose of sequestration in transboundary sub-seabed geological formations (not in force).
 - .3 In 2010 CPs adopted resolution LC-LP.2(2010) on the ‘Assessment Framework for Scientific Research Involving Ocean Fertilization’, which guides Parties on how to assess proposals they receive for ocean fertilization research and provides criteria for an initial assessment of such proposals, including detailed steps for completion of an environmental assessment, which encompasses risk management and monitoring. In 2013 the CPs adopted an amendment (LP.4(8)) to regulate the placement of matter for ocean fertilization and other marine geoengineering activities (not in force).
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