

MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION  
COMMITTEE  
78th session  
Agenda item 11

MEPC 78/11/1  
14 April 2022  
Original: ENGLISH  
Pre-session public release:

## IDENTIFICATION AND PROTECTION OF SPECIAL AREAS, ECAs AND PSSAs

### Proposal to designate the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides

Submitted by CSC

#### SUMMARY

*Executive summary:* This document welcomes the proposal submitted by all coastal States of the Mediterranean Sea, all Member States of the European Union and the European Commission in document MEPC 78/11 (Albania et al.) to designate the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area (ECA) for Sulphur Oxides. The designation of a MED SO<sub>x</sub> ECA will improve air quality and provide health benefits for millions of residents as well as for nature, agriculture, and heritage conservation. This document supports a quick agreement on, and implementation of, an ECA for SO<sub>x</sub> emissions in the Mediterranean Sea as a whole.

*Strategic direction, if applicable:* 4

*Output:* 4.1

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 8

*Related documents:* MEPC 78/11; MEPC 76/INF.63 and MEPC 74/INF.5

#### Introduction

1 This document comments on document MEPC 78/11 (Albania et al.) and is submitted in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 6.12.5 of the *Organization and method of work of the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee and their subsidiary bodies* (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.2).

2 At the twenty-second meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention (COP 22), the Contracting Parties agreed to submit a proposal for the designation of the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area (ECA) to prevent, reduce and control emissions of sulphur oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>) and particulate matter (PM) from ships pursuant to regulation 14 and Appendix III to MARPOL Annex VI.

3 Document MEPC 78/11), submitted by Albania, Algeria, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lebanon, Latvia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Monaco, Montenegro, Morocco, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey and European Commission proposes to designate the Mediterranean Sea, as a whole, as an Emission Control Area for Sulphur Oxides (MED SO<sub>x</sub> ECA, and requests the Committee to approve the proposed designation of an SO<sub>x</sub> Emission Control Area.

4 CSC welcomes document MEPC 78/11 and congratulates all Parties and organizations, including REMPEC, for their concerted and extraordinary efforts following extensive consultations to make this proposal a reality. Environmental groups have long called for the more widespread designation of ECAs to protect human health and the environment from the significant threats posed by high air pollutant concentrations from shipping and this proposal for a SO<sub>x</sub> ECA in the Mediterranean Sea confirms the many evidence-based arguments for doing so.

5 As the proposal makes clear, "the designation of the proposed Med SO<sub>x</sub> ECA is necessary to protect public health and the environment in the Mediterranean Sea, regional waters and coastlines, and in the communities of the Mediterranean coastal States by reducing exposure to harmful levels of air pollution resulting from those emissions [...] [it] provides additional needed benefits beyond those provided by the implementation of the global fuel quality standards, notably the 0.5% global sulphur limit [...]. The burden on international shipping is small compared to the improvements in air quality, the reductions in premature mortality and health incidences associated with this air pollution, and the other benefits to the environment [...] [it] will significantly reduce emissions from ships and deliver substantial benefits to large segments of the population, as well as to marine and terrestrial ecosystems. Air pollution from ships occurs not just in the Mediterranean ports and coastlines but is also carried hundreds of kilometres inland. When people breathe this polluted air, their health is adversely affected, leading to lost productivity due to increased illnesses, hospitalisations, and even premature deaths. In the Mediterranean region, 507 million people live in areas with air pollution at levels exceeding respective national ambient air quality standards, and/or levels which are unhealthy according to the World Health Organization (WHO)."

6 Experience with ECAs implemented in Europe, North America and the US Caribbean area have already demonstrated huge positive impacts with significant local air quality improvements, while studies found that there were no economic disturbances and no modal shift.

7 It is noted that a combined ECA for SO<sub>x</sub> and NO<sub>x</sub> would bring further health benefits in the Mediterranean as shown in document MEPC 74/INF.5 (France). So, from an environmental and health protection perspective, the decision of the Barcelona Convention Contracting Parties to further investigate nitrogen oxide emissions is very welcome.

#### **Action requested of the Committee**

8 The Committee is invited to note these views which wholeheartedly support the proposed designation of the Mediterranean Sea as a whole as an Emission Control Area for SO<sub>x</sub> as set out in document MEPC 78/11.