

MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION  
COMMITTEE  
83rd session  
Agenda item 12

MEPC 83/12/3  
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## IDENTIFICATION AND PROTECTION OF SPECIAL AREAS, ECAs AND PSSAs

### Comment in response to the proposal to designate the North-East Atlantic Ocean as an emission control area for sulphur oxides, particulate matter and nitrogen oxides (MEPC 83/12)

Submitted by FOEI, WWF, Pacific Environment and CSC

#### SUMMARY

*Executive summary:* This document welcomes the proposal to designate the North-East Atlantic as an emission control area (ECA). The designation of an ECA will improve air quality and provide health benefits for millions of residents as well as protection for nature, agriculture, and the ocean from pollution deposition and ocean acidification. This document supports the efficient agreement and implementation of the ECA.

*Strategic direction, if applicable:* 4

*Output:* 4.1

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 8

*Related documents:* MEPC 80/INF.35 and MEPC 83/12

#### Introduction

1 This submission comments on document MEPC 83/12 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.5).

2 Document MEPC 83/12 proposes to designate the North-East Atlantic Emission Control Area (NE Atlantic ECA) for sulphur oxide (SO<sub>x</sub>), particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen oxide (NO<sub>x</sub>) ship emissions, including the territorial seas and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) of Denmark (Greenland), France, Iceland, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom and the Faroes, and requests the Committee to approve the proposed designation of an ECA. The NE Atlantic ECA will contribute to preventing, reducing and controlling NO<sub>x</sub>, SO<sub>x</sub> and PM emissions from ships, pursuant to regulations 13 and 14 and appendix III of MARPOL Annex VI, and constitutes a fundamental step towards tackling air pollution from international shipping.

3 The co-sponsors support the proposal contained in document MEPC 83/12 and congratulate all Member States and International Bodies for their concerted and extraordinary efforts, following extensive consultations, to make this proposal a reality and welcome the proposed entry into force at the earliest possible date in 2027. 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 confirms the many evidence-based arguments for doing so.

4 The co-sponsors welcome the fact that the NE Atlantic ECA will significantly reduce ship emissions, improve air quality, and contribute to improving public health and environmental protection in the North-East Atlantic region. The NE Atlantic ECA establishment could immediately lead to an up to 82% reduction in SO<sub>x</sub> emissions and a 64% reduction in PM emissions. Note that the reductions in PM emissions will also have a co-benefit of reducing Black Carbon (BC) emissions, provided distillate fuel is used for compliance. NO<sub>x</sub> emissions could also be reduced by up to 71% through fleet renewal. These emissions reductions could result in preventing between 118 and 176 premature deaths in 2030, and between 2,900 and 4,300 premature deaths cumulatively between 2030 and 2050.

5 The co-sponsors particularly welcome the fact that the NE Atlantic ECA will help protect over 1,500 marine protected areas, 17 key marine mammal habitats, and 148 UNESCO sites by mitigating environmental damage from pollution deposition and ocean acidification.

6 Experiences with ECAs implemented in Europe and North America ("Canadian Arctic ECA" (MEPC 81/11), and the Norwegian Sea ECA (MEPC 81/11/1)) have demonstrated significant positive impacts, including substantial air quality improvements. Studies annexed to document MEPC 83/12 found that there were no economic disruptions, technical obstacles, fuel availability issues, or modal shifts, providing a scenario of easy compliance.

7 It is noted that a further extension of the NE Atlantic ECA to the outermost regions of Portugal (Azores and Madeira archipelagos) and Spain (Canary Islands) and other bordering national waters would bring further air quality improvements, but would also help to preserve a level playing field for economic operators and contribute to better public health and environmental protection.

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

8 The Committee is invited to note these views, which wholeheartedly support the proposed designation of the North-East Atlantic Ocean as an ECA, with a view to entry into force at the earliest possible date in 2027.

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