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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Proposal for an ad hoc working group to address shipping at the intersection of climate, biodiversity and pollution

Submitted by Pacific Environment and CSC

SUMMARY

Executive summary: Document MEPC 82/7/10 proposed a new approach to address shipping within the triple planetary crisis of climate, biodiversity and pollution, in order to prioritize solutions with co-benefits to address these crises. This document updates the Committee on relevant research and initiatives and recommends establishing an ad hoc working group to make progress on reversing biodiversity loss and reducing pollution which supports climate action and vice versa.

Strategic direction, if applicable: 3

Output: 3.2

Action to be taken: Paragraph 26

Related documents: C 132/16(c); MEPC 82/7/10, MEPC 82/INF.35; MEPC 83/INF.2 and resolution A.982(24)

Background

1 The shipping nexus concept was introduced to IMO members in document MEPC 82/7/10. That submission situated shipping within the triple planetary crisis of climate, biodiversity and pollution, and outlined solutions with co-benefits to address these crises. The co-sponsors suggested that, by focusing on solutions with co-benefits, action on reversing biodiversity loss and reducing pollution could support climate action and vice versa. In order to formalize this new approach, the co-sponsors of document MEPC 82/7/10 recommended an IMO framework be developed, similar to the revised GHG strategy, and a task force struck to consider this proposal.

2 The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) submitted document MEPC 82/INF.35, introducing the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in December 2022, and its relevance to international shipping and the work of MEPC. The Committee was invited to take note of the information presented in the document, in

particular the importance of the work of IMO in relation to the GBF. IMO was also invited to formally endorse the GBF and to align efforts and work under IMO with the GBF. The Committee subsequently welcomed the GBF, and the CBD Secretariat's intervention and presence at MEPC 82 was unanimously supported. Many members viewed these developments as the beginning of renewed connections and more focus for joint initiatives in the future between the CBD and IMO.

3 This submission builds from documents MEPC 82/7/10 and MEPC 82/INF.35 and is motivated by the 2022 [political declaration](#) of the 2022 UN Ocean Conference, which offers an invitation to think holistically about shipping and its inextricable link to the ocean, and gives needed inspiration for concerted work on the shipping nexus issue. This submission aims to expand on the shipping nexus concept and to present and invite feedback on the proposal of an ad hoc working group, including its implementation at MEPC 84.

The state of the triple planetary crisis

4 The triple planetary crisis is a term utilized by the United Nations to refer to the interconnectedness of the crises of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss. The term aims to reflect the interdependency of the three crises and their combined associated risks for ecosystems, societies and economies. The triple planetary crisis is an existential threat crossing geographies and borders. Shipping is at the intersection of these crises and can be instrumental in tackling them.

Climate crisis

5 The world is becoming increasingly dangerous with every fraction of a degree of temperature rise. According to the 2023 IPCC Synthesis Report, global temperature increases are expected to reach or exceed 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels between 2021 and 2040, and were exceeded for the first time in 2024. As temperature continues to rise, the risks associated with climate change will become more complex and more challenging and costly to manage. For some areas of the planet, the effects of climate change are already far-reaching. [The Arctic Report Card](#) signals a dramatic shift in the Arctic ecosystem, which could have widespread implications for the global climate. The Arctic is heating more rapidly than the global average, and significant changes are being documented, including the dramatic loss of sea ice, rapid melt of the Greenland ice sheet, transformation of the Arctic tundra from a carbon sink to a carbon source, declines in once-abundant inland caribou herds, and rising winter precipitation. In recent months, serious concern and warnings have been expressed by scientists about an abrupt shutdown of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC) amidst signs that it has slowed over the past decades. Shutdown of the AMOC will result in dramatic changes in the climate and food production across Scandinavia and Europe, accelerate sea level rise around North America and raise the frequency of extreme weather events.

Biodiversity loss

6 Nature is experiencing a rapid global decline, with species extinction rising at an unprecedented rate. Climate change and pollution are drivers of biodiversity loss, and degraded ecosystems worsen climate change. The "State of the World's Mangroves" [report](#) underscores critical links to biodiversity, climate and communities. Mangrove ecosystems are an important indicator of biodiversity health, and critical for climate mitigation and adaptation. The report shows that half of all mangrove ecosystems [are at risk of collapse by 2050](#) due to climate change, and that land-based conversion activities are also having an impact on mangrove ecosystems; conversion to aquaculture, oil palm plantations, and rice cultivation account for up to 43% of mangrove losses between 2000 and 2020.

7 90% of the world's marine species are under threat. Warming oceans and climate extremes are pushing species to migrate into deeper, cooler, and more northern regions, reshaping their behaviours and transforming marine ecosystems in unprecedented ways. These were findings from the [Climate Risk Index for Biodiversity](#), which looked at nearly 25,000 marine species and their ecosystems and examined ripple effects for people who most rely on the ocean. The index found that climate risks for fished species, such as cod and lobsters, were consistently greater within the territories of low-income nations, where people depend more on fisheries to meet their nutritional needs. This is another example of climate inequality, where low-income countries, despite contributing the least to the climate crisis, bear the brunt of its worst impacts while having the least capacity to adapt.

8 [Extinctions will accelerate](#) rapidly if global temperatures exceed 1.5°C, and in a high-emission scenario approximately one-third of species would be threatened globally. Amphibians, species from mountain, island and freshwater ecosystems, and species inhabiting South America, Australia and New Zealand face the greatest threats, according to new research [published](#) late in 2024.

9 Global shipping traffic overlaps with about 92% of major whale species' habitat ranges, with mandatory measures to reduce whale-ship collisions being very rare. By protecting just 2.6% of the ocean, [new research](#) suggests it could significantly reduce whale fatalities from ship strikes, which are the leading cause of whale deaths globally. This emphasizes the potential of targeted conservation efforts to make a significant impact, especially when paired with international cooperation and policy changes to designate and enforce safer zones for whales.

Pollution

10 With the climate crisis breaking records and emissions rising, addressing its catastrophic impacts on health and human survival demands action from all sectors. However, engagement on health and climate is waning: mentions of health in UN General Debate statements dropped from 50% in 2022 to 35% in 2023, and only 47% of updated NDCs referenced health by early 2024. Media focus also declined, with health references in climate articles falling 10% between 2022 and 2023. The [2024 Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: facing record-breaking threats from delayed action](#) revealed the most concerning findings yet in the collaboration's eight years of monitoring. Of the 15 indicators monitoring climate change-related health hazards, exposures and impacts, 10 reached concerning new records in their most recent year of data:

- .1 Heat-related mortality of people older than 65 years increased by a record-breaking 167%. In 2023, heat exposure put people engaging in outdoor physical activity at risk of heat stress (moderate or higher) for a record high of 27.7% more hours than on average in the 1990s and led to a record 6% more hours of sleep lost in 2023 than the average during 1986-2005.
- .2 61% of the global land area saw an increase in the number of days of extreme precipitation, which in turn increases the risk of flooding, infectious disease spread, and water contamination.
- .3 48% of the global land area was affected by at least 1 month of extreme drought in 2023, the second largest affected area since 1951. The increase in drought/heatwave events since 1981–2010 was, in turn, associated with 151 million more people experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity across 124 countries assessed in 2022, the highest recorded value.

- .4 There was a 31% increase in the number of people exposed to dangerously high particulate matter concentrations between 2003–07 and 2018–22.
- .5 Changing precipitation patterns and rising temperatures favoured the transmission of deadly infectious diseases such as dengue, malaria, West Nile virus-related illness, and vibriosis, putting people at risk of transmission in previously unaffected locations.

11 Air pollution ranked as the second leading risk factor for death among children under five years in 2021, following malnutrition. That year, over 700,000 deaths of children under five were attributed to air pollution, accounting for 15% of all global deaths in this age group, equating to nearly 2,000 children under five dying each day due to health impacts associated with air pollution. In 2021, air pollution contributed to 34% of preterm births globally, circumstances in which babies often face lifelong health challenges, including disabilities and developmental delays. [The State of Global Air 2024 report](#) documented these impacts to children and underscored the interconnected relationship between air pollution and climate change, showing how particulate matter from sectors like transportation cause health impacts and also contribute to global heating.

12 [New research](#) estimates up to 11 million tonnes of plastic pollution is sitting on the ocean floor. Every minute, a garbage truck's worth of plastic enters the ocean. With plastic use expected to double by 2040 the plastic mass clusters around continents, approximately half (46%) of the predicted plastic mass on the global ocean floor resides above 200 m depth. Ocean depths, from 200 m to 11,000 m, contain the remainder of predicted plastic mass (54%).

CBD COP 16 outcomes

13 The 16th Conference of the Parties (COP 16) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), held in Cali, Colombia, from 21 October to 1 November 2024, addressed several critical issues related to marine and coastal biodiversity. Multiple outcomes from COP 16 have implications for maritime activities which should be considered by the Committee and included in ongoing discussions on the development of a shipping nexus framework.

14 Ecologically or Biologically Significant Marine Areas (EBSAs): After more than eight years of negotiations, COP 16 adopted [a decision](#) on new modalities for the modification or description of EBSAs. This advancement is crucial for identifying, mapping and describing the most vital parts of the ocean, providing a strong basis to inform planning and management measures, including in international shipping.

15 Programme of Work on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity: The COP updated the Programme of Work, identifying key gaps and areas in need of further attention in order to support the implementation of the GBF. Key areas of focus in this update include: 1) mapping, monitoring, restoring, and effectively managing marine and coastal ecosystems that contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation; and 2) enhancing the use of nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches across various coastal and marine ecosystems. These priorities underscore the importance of sustainable maritime practices and may inform guidelines affecting shipping operations to protect marine biodiversity.

16 Biodiversity and Climate Change Integration: COP 16 adopted a decision emphasizing the [integration of biodiversity considerations into climate change actions](#). It calls for strengthening multilateral coordination and synergies between the CBD and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (see MEPC 83/INF.2 for an update on UNFCCC COP 29) and implementing nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches. This decision highlights the interconnectedness of biodiversity and climate change, areas where IMO plays a significant role, particularly concerning GHG emissions and their impact on marine ecosystems and with respect to pollution from ships and ocean health.

17 Invasive Alien Species (IAS): The Conference addressed IAS, one of the top drivers of biodiversity loss, by highlighting the need for international cooperation, capacity-building, and technical support for developing countries and proposing guidelines for managing IAS, including issues related to e-commerce and trade regulations.

Connecting outcomes from MEPC 83 to the 2025 UN Ocean Conference and the 2025 World Maritime Day

18 In France, in June 2025, the UN is convening its world ocean conference, UNOC 2025. The overarching theme of the Conference is "Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean". UNOC 2025 provides a unique opportunity to showcase outcomes from MEPC 83 and link those outcomes to a broader biodiversity agenda which addresses the triple planetary crisis and shipping's role in it. Creating an outline at MEPC 83 of a way forward, showing that momentum is building for new approaches to boost action in this space, which can be brought to UNOC 2025, is an opportunity IMO members should not pass up.

19 The Secretary General has designated the 2025 World Maritime Day theme as "Our Ocean – Our Obligation – Our Opportunity". This provides a prime opportunity to level up biodiversity and kick start a new approach to tackling climate and biodiversity together. Being held in September, this will allow the Secretariat and Member States to draw on successful engagement at UNOC 2025 and milestones achieved at MEPC 83, but only if attention is given during MEPC 83 towards setting a new pathway on the intersectionality of shipping.

Justice and equity

20 The triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution) is rooted in a colonial and extractive economic model that exacerbates global inequalities. While its impacts are felt universally, they disproportionately burden low-income and small-island States, Indigenous Peoples, and coastal communities. To address these inequities effectively, the shipping sector's transition to clean and sustainable practices must integrate a just and equitable approach. The United Nations defines a just and equitable transition as a path toward environmental sustainability that is inclusive and reduces inequalities.

21 At the IMO level, environmental sustainability and regulatory effectiveness must be foundational principles. This requires that regulations are science-based, aligned with the ambition of the Paris Agreement, adopt a full life-cycle approach to greenhouse gases and other pollutants, and are underpinned by sustainability principles. Inclusive governance is equally essential, ensuring diversity and inclusivity in decision-making processes to promote equity, strengthen democratic practices, and create more effective and sustainable policies. In practice, this could include granting permanent status at IMO to Indigenous organizations, such as the Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC). It would also involve broader dissemination of IMO roles and policy impacts at the coastal community level, alongside greater engagement of local authors and stakeholders in shaping the Organization's agenda.

22 A just and equitable policy framework acknowledges that systemic solutions, much like nature-based solutions, are already being developed and championed by communities worldwide. Recognizing and supporting transformative technological and systemic innovations can lead to more efficient, participatory and impactful outcomes. For example, initiatives like the [Imagining Sail Culture in the Caribbean and Atlantic](#) project demonstrate how new approaches to system design can decarbonize supply chains while promoting local trade and economic benefits. With appropriate financing and innovative ship designs, this Caribbean-led sail culture model has the potential to transform shipping practices in the region and serve as a blueprint for global maritime innovation.

23 Establishing a People's Summit at IMO, similar to those convened alongside UN meetings and global trade negotiations, would amplify the voices of those most affected by the triple planetary crisis. Too often, communities facing rising temperatures, sea levels, biodiversity loss, habitat degradation and food insecurity lack representation in critical discussions shaping global shipping policies. A People's Summit would bring diverse perspectives into the dialogue, fostering more holistic and resilient solutions at IMO and ensuring the maritime industry's path forward addresses these urgent challenges comprehensively.

Establishing an ad hoc working group

24 The status quo is not a viable option for addressing the intersectionality of these pressing human and ecological issues. IMO and its members have the opportunity to act decisively to address these crises within the shipping sector. A viable approach could be to establish an ad hoc working group, with outreach to the CBD Secretariat and other relevant agencies such as the UNFCCC, to enable swift action and give advice on critical next steps. The key focus areas of the group's work could be to:

- .1 Examine science and knowledge that focuses on the intersection of shipping within the triple planetary crisis. Collate and summarize, for the Committee, research which makes these connections and supports the understanding of shipping within this dynamic.
- .2 Develop a co-benefits resource list which includes measures and policies that address multiple goals. This list could include: ship efficiency contributing to underwater noise and GHG reduction; black carbon and particulate matter elimination addressing habitat loss, health impacts and climate change; in-water pollution reduction boosting ocean carbon sequestration and reversing biodiversity loss; and PSSAs contributing to food security and ecosystem resilience.
- .3 Connect preparations for UNFCCC COP 30, CBD COP 17, UN Ocean Conference, and Our Ocean Conference, with IMO goals and priorities which focus on co-benefits and addressing the triple planetary crisis.
- .4 Consider and prioritize a just and equitable transition (JET) in the context of addressing shipping at the intersection of the triple planetary crisis. Make recommendations to the Committee on current mechanisms and develop new approaches to comprehensively integrate a JET mind set in all of IMO's work, but especially related to prioritizing solutions with co-benefits.

25 The co-sponsors suggest the Committee call for submissions to MEPC 84 on what the mandate, scope, timeline, resources, participants, outputs and goals of the ad hoc working group should be. At MEPC 84, based on IMO member submissions, the ad hoc working group could be established and begin its work with urgency.

Action requested of the Committee

26 The Committee is invited to consider the recommendations in paragraphs 21 and 23 to 25 and take action as appropriate.