

REFERENCES TO OTHER TOPICS

IMO: Phase-out of Single-Hull Tankers

The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) approved a report at its meeting in October proposing the accelerated phasing out of single-hull oil tankers. At the same meeting, it tabled a list of amendments to the existing international law (Regulation 13G of Annex I of the MARPOL Convention 73/78).

The proposed amendments are aimed at speeding up the phasing out of single-hull tankers from 2003. The precise terms of the agreement, which distinguishes three categories of tankers and provides scope for what it terms "flexibility" in respect of tankers of exceptional quality, have still to be defined but should be forthcoming for the Committee's interim session at the end of January 2001.

The proposal to revise the MARPOL Regulation was introduced by Belgium, France and Germany, who jointly submitted the amendments. This initiative follows moves within the EU Commission, following the loss of the *Erika* oil tanker in December 1999 and the accompanying problems.

At the EU Transport Council in Luxembourg in October, the relevant ministers endorsed a compromise concerning the phasing out of single-hull tankers between 2003 and 2015, according to the category and age of vessels. This permitted Member State delegations to present a joint front at the IMO meeting. The EU had already indicated that, in the absence of an international decision, the option of EU legislation would be examined at the December 2000 Transport Council.

The IMO Secretary-General welcomed the initiative. He is reluctant to see the EU introduce Community legislation, as he fears that any attempt to impose regional standards will simply divert the problem elsewhere. Restricted ships will move to other areas and continue trading.

In order to facilitate discussion within the working party charged with drafting a report on the phasing out of single-hull tankers, the IMO Secretary-General commissioned a study in August 2000 to assess the impact, especially the economic consequences, of scrapping such vessels. The study takes into account the volume of oil and oil products carried worldwide and by region, the number of single-hull tankers to be affected by the proposal, the capacity of shipyards to replace vessels and the capacity of ship-breakers.

The document will now be submitted before the IMO's Members to enable them to study the amendments proposed. These may then be formally adopted at the April 2001 session, but will not enter into force before August 2002 at the earliest.

UNEP: Voluntary Environmental Initiatives

Representatives of industry, government, labour, environmental groups and academia, met in September with representatives from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Meeting reviewed the lessons learnt from voluntary initiatives and the steps that need to be taken if these are to become environmentally effective and publicly credible tools for sustainable development.

Experiences were shared on different types of voluntary initiatives, including the following:

- The chemical industry's Responsible Care Programme;
- Experience of the Netherlands government with negotiated voluntary agreements;
- Partnership of the international financial industry with UNEP;
- Sustainable Fisheries Initiative of the Marine Stewardship Council;
- Automotive Voluntary Initiative of the European Commission; and
- Sustainable workplace initiatives of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

Participants agreed that voluntary initiatives do not undermine the need for an effective regulatory and legislative framework and that key challenges in the future include finding the right policy mix, ensuring that workers are involved, and clarifying the role of non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders.

In 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) formally encouraged the development of voluntary initiatives in Agenda 21 as an experimental policy tool to achieve sustainable development objectives. Voluntary initiatives have since multiplied in use and diversity, ranging from improving environmental practices in specific industry sectors such as chemicals and finance, to the sustainable management of resources such as forests and fisheries. However, Jacqueline Aloisi de Larderel, Director of UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (UNEP/DTIE), pointed out that "there are diverse points of view as to the real environmental effectiveness of voluntary initiatives, their relation to regulations and other government policy tools, and the role of different stakeholders in making voluntary initiatives an effective tool for sustainable development."

The role of UNEP in spreading internationally the best practices and developing a common, global reporting framework (Global Reporting Initiative) was considered to be essential in making voluntary initiatives more environmentally effective, credible and relevant in today's context of rapid globalisation.

UNEP will be following up the issues raised with industry at its annual industry and trade association consultation. It will also continue discussions with other international organisations with whom it works on voluntary initiatives – for example, the UN Secretary-General on the Global Compact, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the International Labour Organisation and others.

A second workshop on voluntary initiatives will be held in Nairobi in February 2001, during UNEP's 21st Governing Council, to enable more participation from developing countries.

Methyl Bromide: Regional Policy Development Workshop

Policy-makers from ten Eastern and Central European countries convened at the end of October for the first Regional Policy Development Workshop to identify the key policy measures and national action plans necessary to replace the ozone-depleting pesticide methyl bromide.

The aim of the Meeting, organised jointly by the UNEP/DTIE Ozone Action Programme, the government of Poland and the Research Institute for Vegetable Crops, was to raise awareness about the importance of establishing strong national policies to meet the methyl bromide phase-out requirements under the Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer. This activity is part of a UNEP project funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) entitled "Initiating the Early Phase-out of Methyl Bromide Through Awareness-Raising, Demonstration and Training Activities."

Participants came from National Ozone Units, Ministries of Agriculture, extension agencies from Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland and Slovakia. In addition, UNEP, UNIDO (the UN Industrial Development Organisation), Italy, the UK, non-governmental organisations and the US participated to share their expertise on the issue.

Policy and training measures will play an important role in achieving a smooth and timely phase-out of methyl bromide and

* Parties agreed in 1997 to a global phase-out schedule for methyl bromide. This requires that industrialised countries reduce methyl bromide consumption by 25 per cent in 1999, 50 per cent in 2001, 70 per cent in 2003 and phase out by 2005 (except for quarantine and pre-shipment uses). Methyl bromide is a fumigant used in horticulture and agriculture on such crops as tomatoes and strawberries, for pest control in structures and stored commodities and for quarantine and pre-shipment treatments. In Eastern and Central Europe, methyl bromide is used to fumigate soil in greenhouses and in the open field prior to growing crops such as peppers, strawberries, tomatoes and tobacco. A smaller amount is used to protect stored products such as grains and other commodities.

in ensuring that methyl bromide users receive the necessary assistance to make a smooth transition to safe and effective alternatives.

Agreed activities leading to policy development at the national level were:

1. Developing national licensing systems to control imports/exports.
2. Modifying existing regulations on methyl bromide phase-out to conform to European Union regulations.
3. National training of trainers' activities to implement alternatives.
4. Awareness-raising programmes.
5. Economic incentives to promote a shift towards alternatives.
6. Reviewing alternatives for quarantine and pre-shipment uses.
7. Consulting with key methyl bromide users and other stakeholders to develop a methyl bromide phase-out plan.

Agreed activities leading to policy development at the regional level were:

1. Regional demonstration projects on methyl bromide alternatives for tomatoes, peppers and strawberries.
2. Regional training workshops on alternatives for soil and post-harvest uses.
3. Information exchange to share experiences on alternatives.

Wetland Resources

Two workshops were held between September and October 2000 in Odessa, Ukraine to address issues relating to wetland resources, focusing on the Black Sea area.

The first workshop, on Conservation, Restoration and Wise Use of Wetlands and Wetland Resources along the Black Sea Coast, was organised by Wetlands International with support from the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries. Participants heard presentations on a draft directory of Black Sea coastal wetlands, discussed an action plan for coordinated waterbird surveys, and considered issues relating to the development of regional Black Sea wetlands initiatives, using the experience of the Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative (Med-Wet) as an example.

The resulting Odessa 2000 Declaration on Black Sea Wetlands stated that activities and cooperation on the Black-Azov Sea wetlands area should be intensified. Participants also decided that a small coordination group should develop next steps for the establishment of a coordinated experts' network and action programme.

The second workshop, on Water Issues and Natural Resources Management, discussed the wise use of water and natural resources of deltas, as well as the monitoring of water resources and hydrological and chemical characteristics of delta ecosystems.

Urban Environment Forum

The Urban Environment Forum (UEF) met in Cape Town, South Africa, in September 2000. The UEF, established in 1996 at the Istanbul Summit on Human Settlements, is a global coalition of development practitioners in urban environmental agencies. Within the UN system, the UN Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the UN Environment Programme are considering the UEF as a key instrument for the implementation of the environmental dimension of the Habitat Agenda, as well as Agenda 21.

The Meeting drew from experience gained via the multitude of partnerships being established between cities as well as international support programmes, which are developing innovative models for planning and managing the urban environment. Some key questions were raised which will form the basis of future work by many of those who participated.

These included: (1) How can stakeholders become involved in the creation of international agreements so that they reflect the work that needs to be done by them? (2) What can be done at the international level to create the tools that enable stakeholders, particularly at the city level, to take international agreements and enact them into local decision making processes?

It was recognised at the workshop that this was not happening and much more work needs to be done in engaging stakeholders early enough in the process to make the agreement more focused.

UN/ECE: Sustainable Development in Central and Eastern Europe

As the environmental situation in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States (NIS) remains a subject of concern both for the people in those countries and for the international community, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) is making a special effort to help these countries achieve a sustainable type of development.

Consequently, the UN/ECE and the Netherlands Management Cooperation Programme (NMCP) have concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on developing and running special programmes for sustainable development in those areas.

The cooperation between UN/ECE and NMCP will focus initially on a number of programmes initiated and coordinated by UN/ECE. They include a project on rational and efficient use of water and energy resources in Central Asia. Other projects are planned within the framework of the Stability Pact for South East Europe, such as the comprehensive water environment protection programme for the Adriatic-Ionian region, and a programme of demonstration zones for environmental infrastructure projects on water and waste for small municipalities in South East Europe.

Council of Europe: Calls for Stricter Environmental Safety Measures

In September, the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly stressed the need for coordinated European policies to prevent accidents causing environmental damage and ease their consequences for the ecology and human health. The Assembly said this need was dramatically illustrated by four recent disasters: the wrecks of the *Erika* and *Volgoneft 248* oil tankers, a dam burst in Romania causing cyanide pollution of the Danube basin, and a discharge into a Danube tributary of sludge rich in heavy metals from a non-operating mine, also in Romania. The parliamentarians welcomed the European Commission's proposals aimed, among other things, at enforcing existing shipping safety standards and setting up a European safety agency.

The Assembly backed the proposal to raise compensation limits and called for bilateral and multilateral agreements between Council of Europe member States to ensure appropriate compensation to parties which suffered from accidents causing environmental damage. It stressed the need for a strict control over ship activities in international waters, including through satellites, and called on the Council's member States to take a concerted position on the EU's proposals for improving the safety of oil shipping. The Assembly noted in particular that the Council's EUROPA Major Hazards Partial Agreement is a suitable platform for cooperation between Eastern Europe, Western Europe and the South of the Mediterranean.

The parliamentarians also debated a report on the protection and management of the Danube basin, in the light of the two accidents in Romania. Stressing the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to the many initiatives and activities concerning the Danube, the Assembly recommended that the Committee of Ministers consider adopting a draft European Charter of the Danube basin, proposed by the Assembly in 1997.

Regional Meeting on Desertification

The Sixth Regional Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean on the implementation of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) took place from 16–19 October 2000 in El Salvador. It was organised by the UNCCD Secretariat and the Government of El Salvador, and attended by representatives of 28 countries from the region, as well as non-governmental and international organisations and UN agencies.

Participants evaluated the progress that had taken place on obstacles and identified further needs and requirements in terms of implementing the Convention. The need for additional support for the Regional Coordinating Unit was expressed. The Unit is based in Mexico City and is responsible for coordinating the elaboration of the Regional Action Programme. Participants also highlighted the value of encouraging greater civil society involvement and developing synergies in terms of the links with other relevant environmental agreements. They also emphasised the need to integrate desertification-related work into the wider economic development process.

