

MARPOL AT 50 – OUR COMMITMENT GOES ON

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One of the major issues confronted in the world especially in marine domain is pollution at sea. Shipping is one of the most globalized businesses and the backbone of the world economy which caters for more than 90 % of global maritime trade volume. At the same time, Shipping is the eighth-largest source of carbon emissions globally, which contributes around 3% of global carbon dioxide emissions. Apart from emission, throwing garbage, oil, plastics etc. also damages the ecosystem of the sea. In this regards International Maritime Organization (IMO) oversees rules to ensure safe and secure shipping practices, and guards against ship-generated marine & atmospheric pollution.

IMO is fulfilling its role as the global regulator for shipping ensuring that the maritime sector delivers cargo safely and in an environmentally sustainable manner. An environmentally sound shipping sector started over 50 years ago, at that time the world recognized the need to protect our planet and, the marine environment from all sources of pollution. Several maritime pollution incidents were a strong catalyst for action. Against this background, IMO decided to adopt a treaty to prevent pollution from ships into the marine environment, named the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships – or MARPOL. It was adopted on 2 November 1973, implemented on 2 October 1983 and Pakistan ratified MARPOL on 22 November 1994. The Convention includes regulations aimed at preventing and minimizing pollution from ships - both accidental pollution and that from routine operations.

As MARPOL is 50 years old in 2023 and to mark this special occasion, World Maritime Theme for 2023 is “MARPOL at 50 – our commitment goes on”. It promotes discussions on the next phase of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As both are tied to the IMO's efforts to further preserve the environment and the seas. These include affordable and clean energy (SDG 7); industry, innovation, and infrastructure (SDG 9); climate action (SDG 13) life below sea (SDG 14) and partnerships of the goal (SDG 17).

The world owes a lot to IMO as it is strongly working to address the issue of pollution at sea by ever since the adaptation of MARPOL. The

MARPOL's scope also enhanced from accidental and operational oil spills from tankers to the prevention of pollution from chemicals carried in bulk, packaged dangerous commodities, sewage, and ultimately, the prevention of air pollution from ships.

The marine ecosystem has benefited a lot from implementation of MARPOL. It has altered the construction and operation of ships. Due to these and other focused efforts, the number of oil spills has decreased by nearly 90% during the last 50 years.

Other wastes, such as rubbish and sewage, cannot just be disposed at sea and are subject to regulations. Discharge of plastic trash into the sea is also prohibited. Similarly, Sulphur oxide emissions from ships have also been drastically reduced due to air pollution regulations.

The latest efforts focus on decarbonization of shipping, but as the world works to reduce its carbon footprint, green shipping is the only way forward. IMO has set ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping by 46% by 2030 and 96% by 2050, compared to 2008 level. The developed countries / top shipping industries are carrying out research to find better fuel and adopt new technologies to reduce carbon emissions.

The countries are working on new ideas for ship propulsion to run on alternative fuels such LNG, Methanol, Ammonia, Electric Propulsion, and Biofuels. Compared to conventional fuels like oil, they release fewer greenhouse gases but presently three times expensive than conventional fuels. Recently a container ship sailed from Ulsan, South Korea to Copenhagen, Denmark covering 21500 km in 45 days. Efforts are in hand to reduce the cost to make it economically feasible option.

As we know that global population has already touched 8 billion mark, and land resources are depleting at very fast rates. Ocean is considered as future source of food security; hence, it is need of the hour to preserve the ocean health for use by future generations. Polluting Oceans should be avoided at all costs. However, none of the country can tackle the future challenges in maritime affairs alone, so we must collaborate in the maritime business and to address the pressing concerns of the day, turning obstacles into chances. As we look forward to the next 50 years, MARPOL will have a significant impact on shipping as well as preserving the health of our oceans.