

2. INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANISATION

(c) MEPC 53 Marine Environment Protection Committee 53

18 July 2005 - Michael Devonshire

This is a short note about the meeting of the MEPC at IMO, which I attended, on behalf of Alan Green, this week. I was present on Monday Tuesday afternoon and Thursday. David Brunskill was present on Tuesday morning. The topics on the agenda which appear to be of immediate relevance were:

- (i) The **ballast water** guide lines for recreational craft and search and rescue vessels (G3). This had been approved in principle at the spring working group meeting and slipped through quite quietly.
- (ii) The **Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas** in the Canaries, Baltic, Torres Strait and the Galapagos. These were all approved with protective measures, the rules that support the designation, which do not apply to recreational craft less than 500 gross tons. The initial draft for the Canaries applied to all ships which was amended when the Spanish government realised the effect that this would have on the local economy. There was a considerable debate about the criteria for the designation of areas, which are likely to proliferate as they provide a mechanism for the control of larger ships, and in particular tankers, with a view to minimising future oil pollution. There were some political overtones in the debate which was eventually resolved in a technical group. There will be two part process, first the area will be identified and, if this received approval in principle, then the associated protective measures will be drafted and considered separately. One of the criteria for designation will be the sensitivity of a given area for economic reasons, which includes tourism and recreation.
- (iii) **Marine Pollution** - During discussion on Thursday the question of the sustainable management of marine litter was raised and the UN environmental section paper was circulated. IMO will consider revisions to MARPOL annex five. This will require some careful examination as pleasure craft are described as one of the principal sources of marine litter. I was able to obtain only one copy of the UN paper, it may be available on the UN website at WWW.unep.org. I had sent this to Southampton. There was some related discussion about reception facilities ashore, this related to the problems of large ships. There was no mention the difficulties that many small recreational craft face in many marinas.

I was given during the course of the meeting a copy of the MSC circular on basic safety guidance for oceanic voyages by non-regulated craft issued by the Maritime Safety Committee. It could form the basis for national legislation.