Action Required: IR Commission members are invited to note the relevant outcomes of MEPC84.

The Marine Environment Protection Committee of the IMO held its 84th session from 27 April to 1 May 2026 in London, United Kingdom.

Key Outcomes

1. IMO Net Zero Framework

The Committee agreed to establish an intersessional Working Group to further develop a global measure on Net Zero ahead of MEPC 85.

2. Strait of Hormuz and the marine environment

The Committee adopted a resolution condemning the attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz region and the related risks of marine pollution from oil, hazardous and noxious substances and hazardous residues arising from missiles, drones, fires and explosions. The Committee requested Secretary-General to monitor environmental impacts and report to the next IMO Council session.

3. New Emissions Control Area for the North-East Atlantic

The Committee adopted a new Emission Control Area (ECA) in the North-East Atlantic, introducing stricter emission limits on nitrogen oxides (NOx), sulphur oxides (SOx) and particulate matter (PM). The entry into force date is set for 1 September 2027, with the ECA taking effect 12 months later in 2028.

The ECA covers the exclusive economic zones and territorial seas, extending up to 200 nautical miles from their baselines of Greenland, Iceland, the Faroes, Ireland, the mainlands of the United Kingdom, France, Spain and Portugal.

Within ECAs, ships must use fuel with a sulphur content of no more than 0.10%.

4. 2026 Strategy and Action Plan on marine plastic litter

The Committee adopted the 2026 Strategy and the Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, reaffirming IMO's goal of zero plastic waste discharges to sea from ships by 2030.

The Strategy and Action Plan work to improve port reception facilities and waste processing, strengthen regulatory compliance, and expand public awareness, seafarer training and international cooperation, including targeted technical assistance and capacity-building.

5. Developing a Code for transporting plastic pellets

The Committee agreed to develop a mandatory code governing the maritime transport of plastic pellets in freight containers, under MARPOL Annex III and/or the SOLAS Convention.

6. Combatting harmful aquatic organisms in ballast water

The Committee approved a package of amendments to the Ballast Water Management (BWM) Convention and adopted revised Guidelines for ballast water management and development of Ballast Water Management Plans (G4).

7. Reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping

The Committee advanced its work on underwater radiated noise (URN), agreeing in principle to extend the experience-building phase (EBP) by two years, to the end of 2028. The EBP aims to address barriers Member States face in applying IMO's Revised guidelines for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life.

8. New outputs

The Committee agreed on new outputs to work on over the next two years:

- Amendments to regulation 12 of MARPOL Annex VI to prohibit the reintroduction of ozone-depleting substances on ships; and
- Measures to address maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS) in the instruments under the purview of the Marine Environment Protection Committee.

A new output on "Supporting the implementation of the BBNJ Agreement within IMO's regulatory framework for protecting the seas and oceans and marine biodiversity" was agreed in principle, subject to further consideration by MEPC 85.

9. Other key decisions

The Committee also took action on the following:

- Approved the Terms of Reference for the Fifth IMO GHG Study;
- Adopted 2026 Guidelines for test bed and onboard measurements of CH4 and/or N2O emissions from marine diesel engines;
- Approved draft amendments to the 2008 NOx Technical Code in relation to non-carbon containing fuels;

- Agreed that a standalone legally binding instrument should be developed for the control and management of ships' biofouling to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species.