



IMO

E

MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
COMMITTEE
44th session
Agenda item 16

MEPC 44/16/4
14 January 2000
Original: ENGLISH

RECYCLING OF SHIPS

Comments on the proposal for an IMO Work Plan

**Submitted by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS),
the Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO),
the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO), the
International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners (INTERCARGO),
the Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF)
and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)**

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document responds to proposals made by Norway (MEPC 44/16/2) and The Netherlands (MEPC 44/16/1) on including ship recycling in the work programme and agenda of MEPC and also reports on work in hand by the industry in response to environmental and safety concerns in respect of the recycling of ships.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 10

Related documents: MEPC 44/16/1 and MEPC 44/16/2

1 This paper comments on the proposals made by Norway in MEPC 44/16/2, and is submitted in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 46.5 of the Guidelines on the Organization and Method of Work of the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee and their subsidiary bodies.

2 ICS, BIMCO, INTERTANKO, INTERCARGO, OCIMF and ICFTU fully endorse the proposal made by Norway (MEPC 44/16/2), supported by The Netherlands (MEPC 44/16/1), to include issues related to the recycling of ships on the work programme and agenda of MEPC. The organizations also welcome the reported intended participation of representatives of Basel Convention Parties in any work undertaken by MEPC, as well as the recommendation that close contact be maintained with ILO.

3 There is a need for an early international exchange on this subject. It is important that a clear understanding is reached on the issues and that, as far as possible, consensus is reached as to how existing international instruments apply to the decommissioning of ships to avoid individual national actions on the basis of a unilateral interpretation of the current rules.

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly asked to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.

4 The authors of this note recognize the concerns expressed by administrations and the wider community in respect of personal safety of workers in the industry and the potential local environmental impact of ship recycling. However, we believe that ship recycling, in principle, offers an environmentally sound method of ship disposal. The beneficial impact of ship recycling activities on both the local and national economies concerned should also not be discounted.

5 The continuing availability of an efficient ship recycling industry is an essential element in the drive to enhance maritime safety and environmental protection. It is widely accepted that the withdrawal of ships from service will accelerate during the next few years and it is most important to avoid unnecessary barriers to the decommissioning of ships which have reached the end of their useful commercial life.

6 There are different views as to whether the development of “a binding international regime” is an inevitable outcome of any deliberations and developments which take place under the auspices of IMO. There is clearly a role for various parties, including the shipping industry, in addressing the issues, whether within or outside a formal instrument. At the same time, the subject is not the responsibility of the shipping industry alone. There are areas, such as working conditions in the recycling yards, over which the shipping industry has no direct control. Nonetheless, the industry is willing to contribute to the debate in the appropriate fora, addressing concerns where it can.

7 ICS has established a working group, involving all the other authors of this paper, to consider practical measures which will help to contribute to acceptable decommissioning practices. These are expected to include, inter alia, a standard inventory of potentially harmful materials on vessels sold for recycling, guidance on minimising residues and other substances prior to arrival at the yards and the pre-arrival condition of the vessel, including the condition of tanks, all designed to protect the environment and to enhance safe working practices at the site. Work is in hand on these questions and an industry policy on ship recycling and an associated “Code of Practice”, and associated documentation, is under preparation.

8 As a next stage, the working group hopes to develop proposals with the ship-building industry on issues related to the “cradle to grave” approach.

9 The authors of this note support the proposal to establish a correspondence group on ship recycling and will be happy to participate in, and contribute to, its work. In the meantime, however, work will continue in the industry working group whether or not MEPC agrees to proceed as recommended by Norway and The Netherlands.

Action requested of the Committee

10 The Committee is invited to note the foregoing comments.
