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Key Outcomes of the MEPC 82 Working Group on GHG Emissions Reduction from Ships

London, October 2024 – The 82nd session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 82) has concluded its Working Group discussions on the reduction of GreenHouse Gas (GHG) emissions from ships, marking a critical juncture in global maritime decarbonization efforts. The Working Group met from October 1–3, 2024, and addressed key proposals aimed at shaping the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) net-zero framework. The session produced both progress and challenges, reflecting the diverse interests of global shipping stakeholders.

Below are the key takeaways from the Working Group report, highlighting the decisions made under each main topic of discussion.

1. Development of Mid-Term GHG Reduction Measures

The Working Group focused on further developing the basket of mid-term measures, building on the outcomes from ISWG-GHG 17. These measures include technical and economic elements designed to achieve the IMO's 2023 Strategy goal of reducing emissions to net-zero by 2050. The report outlines that the progress was made in streamlining and consolidating text for the IMO net-zero framework. This included refining the calculation methodologies for Attained Annual GHG Fuel Intensity (GFI) and drafting regulations on the Target Annual GFI. However, final agreement on specific reduction values and timelines remains unresolved, leaving room for further work ahead of MEPC 83.

2. Economic Mechanisms and Centralized Fund

A key topic was the proposal for a centralized economic mechanism, a global carbon levy, to incentivize the transition to low-emission fuels. The mechanism would involve the creation of an IMO-administered fund to collect contributions from ships based on their GHG emissions. While the Group acknowledged the potential of economic mechanisms, it stopped short of agreeing on a universal carbon levy. There was, however, consensus that any mechanism established must be transparent and equitable, with an oversight body ensuring balanced geographical representation. The Working Group deferred final decisions on the specific economic design until further work can be completed, particularly on revenue distribution modalities.

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3. Revenue Distribution and Fund Oversight

The Working Group also discussed how revenue generated from the proposed levy or other economic measures would be distributed. Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) have called for a system that prioritizes vulnerable nations, many of whom are disproportionately negatively affected by the impacts of climate change. The Group recognized the importance of ensuring that revenue distribution supports a just and equitable transition. It was agreed that developing a legal framework for fund oversight and distribution will require substantial work, which will continue into future sessions. However, no concrete revenue distribution formula has yet been agreed upon.

4. Impact of GHG Measures on Food Security

Given that SIDS and LDCs are highly dependent on maritime trade for essential goods, there was strong concern from the African bloc about the potential rise in shipping costs due to GHG measures which was supported by the Pacific delegations. These costs could disproportionately affect food security and access to essential goods. The Working Group agreed to conduct further studies on the impact of GHG measures on food security, particularly in vulnerable nations. Draft terms of reference were developed for this work, which will include assessments by organizations such as the FAO and World Food Programme, and expert workshops will be held before MEPC 83.

The 6PAC+ alliance—comprising of Belize, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Palau, Solomon Islands, Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu - is advocating for the implementation of a universal carbon levy and greater recognition of the disproportionate impacts of climate change on Pacific Island nations.

At MEPC 82, the alliance achieved several small wins, particularly in securing agreement that the IMO's economic mechanism should prioritize vulnerable nations in its design. The decision to conduct food security studies was another victory, as it acknowledged the specific needs of SIDS in global shipping discussions. The alliance's emphasis on ensuring that any global levy remains transparent and equitable was also well-received, with the Working Group committing to further work on these fronts.

Despite these successes, there were also significant setbacks. The failure to secure immediate consensus on a universal carbon levy, a key goal for the 6PAC+ nations, represents a major challenge. While the topic remains on the table, the lack of decisive action at MEPC 82 means that critical time is being lost as climate impacts worsen.

The Group's inability to agree on specific targets and reduction values for the mid-term GHG measures also signals that the global maritime community has yet to fully embrace the level of urgency needed to combat the climate crisis. For the 6PAC+, this delay risks leaving vulnerable nations at greater risk, both environmentally and economically.

As the IMO looks ahead to MEPC 83, the 6PAC+ will continue to press for stronger, faster, and more equitable actions that ensure a just transition for all nations, particularly those on the frontlines of climate change.
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6PAC+ submission can be read and downloaded here:
https://www.mcst-rmiusp.org/index.php/projects/current-projects/mepc-82-submissions

Case studies and Report can be downloaded here:
https://www.mcst-rmiusp.org/index.php/news/breaking-stories/1326-potential-impact-of-imo-mid-term-measures-pacific-island-country-case-studies

Watch the videos explaining on the 6PAC+ submissions here:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLj3Pr9ziP81w0_3tW7TJtrf5WonVUucaA

About 6PAC+: The 6PAC+ coalition represents a group of Pacific and Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that are at the forefront of climate advocacy, working together to influence international climate policy with a particular focus on maritime emissions and environmental sustainability.

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