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Maritime Group
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Action required

The Meeting is invited to consider the attached proposal by Sweden to initiate a discussion regarding scrubbing technology and associated legislation and consequently to extend the ToR of the SECA correspondence group and include these matters on the group's agenda.

Aspects related to Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (EGCS)

Introduction

The aim of this submission is to initiate a discussion regarding scrubbing technology and related outstanding issues that require clarification. There are frequent inquiries from the shipping industry about possible restrictions to use open loop scrubbers in the Baltic Sea, rules that will be applicable within the territorial waters and ports, availability of reception facilities, etc.

Background

To meet the stricter sulphur limits that enter into force 1 January 2015 in the Sulphur Emission Control Areas (SECA), vessels may choose to either use distillate fuel or other alternative means of compliance. Among those alternatives are technologies that clean the exhaust gases and reduce emissions of sulphur oxides to the required level.

During the eleventh Meeting of HELCOM MARITIME (6-8 November 2012) some aspects related to Exhaust Gas Cleaning Systems (EGCS) were discussed. The Meeting took note of the information from Denmark about results of a study conducted to analyze the impact of wash water from scrubber on the marine environment. The meeting took further note of the comment from Germany that the issue of open scrubbers should be followed by the HELCOM Maritime Group and be taken up at the next meeting of HELCOM MARITIME (7.23 and 7.24, Minutes of HELCOM MARITIME 12).

At the following meeting, HELCOM MARITIME 13, the importance of harmonized enforcement of the SO_x emission limits in the Baltic Sea region and the need for cooperation was emphasized. To discuss common issues, such as possibilities for a harmonized application of the regulations within the Baltic Sea area and enforcement measures, a correspondence group (HELCOM CG SECA) was established for the period 2014 to 2016 (4.21 - 4.27, Minutes of the meeting). The group started its work in May and submitted its first report to this meeting. The matters that have been discussed so far are possible joint enforcement actions to ensure compliance with the regulations, such as follow up of observed violations, inspection and fuel samplings procedures as well as harmonized approach regarding measures to be taken in case of damaged EGCS onboard. It was also mentioned that a common understanding is needed related to the use of open loop scrubbers in ports/coastal waters. However, neither of these issues nor other matters related to the use of technology were discussed in depth, since they were considered as being outside the group's ToR.

Proposal

With reference to the working programme for the HELCOM MARITIME Group 2014-2015 specifying that the group shall "follow up implementation of more stringent limits of SO_x emissions that will come into force in 2015", the discussions taken place at the previous meetings, as well as inquiries from the industry, Sweden is of the opinion that there is a need for a common approach to the matters related to scrubbers and the use of this technology by ships in the Baltic Sea region. Thus, Sweden proposes to initiate a discussion regarding scrubbing technology and associated legislation and consequently to extend the ToR of the SECA correspondence group and include these matters on the group's agenda.