

MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION  
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Agenda item 8

MEPC 81/8/1  
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## **FOLLOW-UP WORK EMANATING FROM THE ACTION PLAN TO ADDRESS MARINE PLASTIC LITTER FROM SHIPS**

### **Review of Action Plan and other sources of microplastics from ships**

**Submitted by FOEI<sup>1</sup> and CSC**

#### **SUMMARY**

*Executive summary:* This submission comments on document MEPC 81/8 (CSC) and reminds the Committee that, while elements of the Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships have been addressed, there is still work to do to achieve the Organization's vision of zero plastic waste discharged to sea from ships by 2025.

*Strategic direction, if applicable:* 4

*Output:* 4.3

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 9

*Related documents:* Resolutions MEPC.310(73) and MEPC.341(77); MEPC 81/8; MEPC 80/INF.9 and MEPC 77/8/4

#### **Introduction**

1 This submission comments on document MEPC 81/8 (CSC) and is submitted in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 6.12.5 of the *Organization and method of work of the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee and their subsidiary bodies* (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.5).

2 Document MEPC 81/8 (CSC) refers to resolution MEPC.310(73) adopted in October 2018, which agreed to keep the Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships (Action Plan) under review and to assess the effectiveness of actions against the intended outcomes in 2023. The review of the actions within the Action Plan is also referred to in resolution MEPC.341(77) which should precede a review of the Strategy to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships (the Strategy) in 2025. The year 2025 is also the deadline for the measures in the Action Plan to be completed, as well as for the target of SDG 14 to prevent, and significantly reduce, marine pollution of all kinds. Indeed, the vision developed for the Strategy is to endeavour to achieve zero plastic waste discharges to sea from ships by 2025.

<sup>1</sup> The Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition has supported the development of this commenting submission.

3 FOEI supports the action invited of the Committee in paragraph 14 of document MEPC 81/8, particularly the need for an update on progress of items in the Action Plan to MEPC 81; substantive discussion on the recommendations from GESAMP WG 43; and the provision of an update to the fourth and fifth sessions of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee under UNEA 5/14 on the current legal and regulatory framework on marine plastic pollution under IMO.

### **Improving the understanding of the contribution of ships to marine plastic litter**

4 The Action Plan was adopted in October 2018 and the actions are due to be completed by 2025. The Action Plan includes a number of outcomes including:

- .1 reduction of marine plastic litter generated from, and retrieved by, fishing vessels;
- .2 reduction of shipping's contribution to marine plastic litter;
- .3 improvement of the effectiveness of port reception facilities and treatment in reducing marine plastic litter;
- .4 enhanced public awareness, education and seafarer training;
- .5 improved understanding of the contribution of ships to marine plastic litter;
- .6 improved understanding of the regulatory framework associated with marine plastic litter from ships;
- .7 strengthened international cooperation; and
- .8 targeted technical cooperation and capacity-building.

5 While work has been undertaken to take forward and deliver the Action Plan in respect of the outcomes, there remain a number of gaps still to be addressed, in particular improved understanding of the contribution of ships to marine plastic litter. Documents have been submitted to MEPC since the adoption of the Action Plan aimed at improving the understanding on the contribution of ships to marine plastic litter, but there remains work to be done to address these sources.

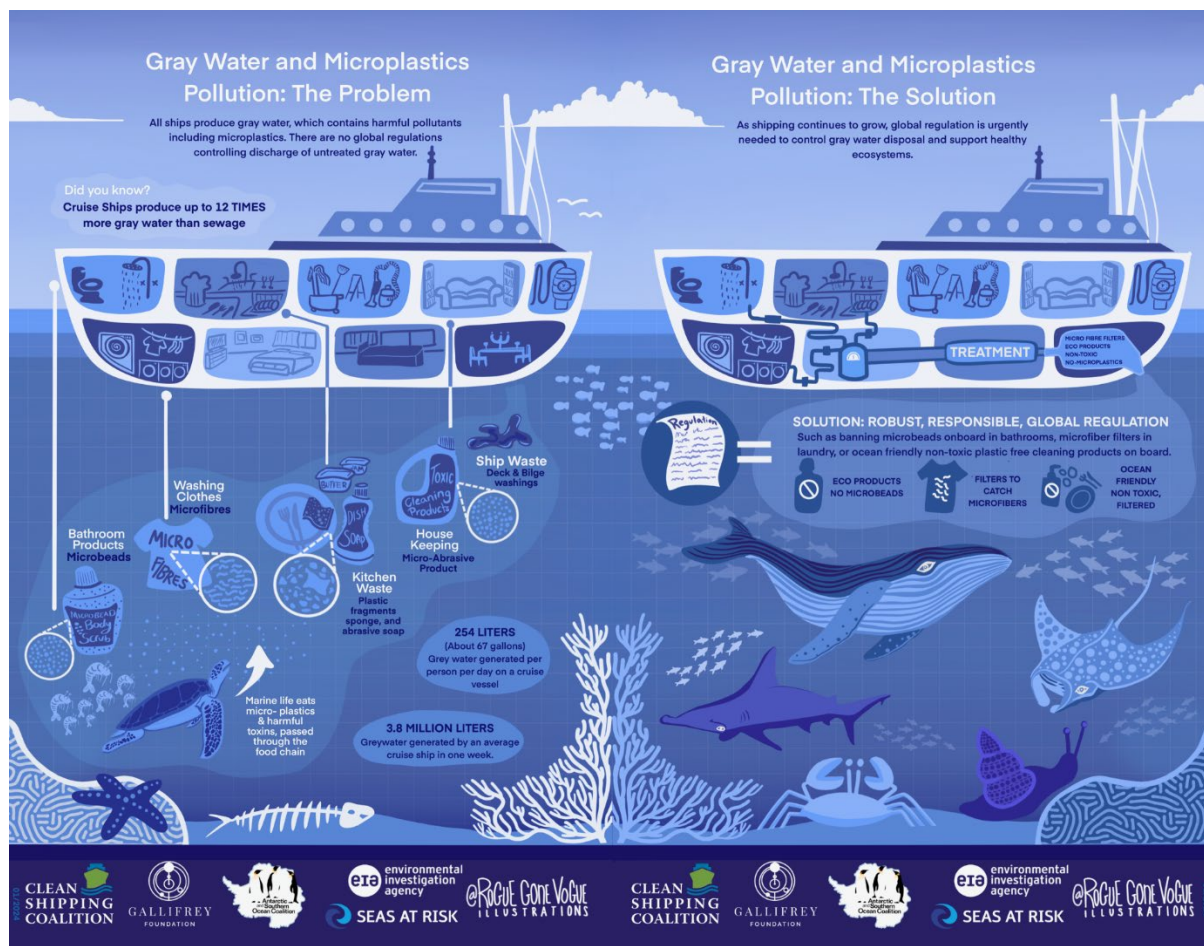
6 In document MEPC 77/8/4 (FOEI, Greenpeace International, WWF, Pacific Environment and CSC), the co-sponsors highlighted new research undertaken by the University of Plymouth's International Marine Litter Research Unit, which revealed that billions of microplastic fragments enter the ocean each year from the hauling of rope on board vessels. The study, which tested a variety of ropes of different ages and made from different polymers, identified that new rope released significantly less microplastic fragments (not fibres), between 700 to 2000 pieces, than older ropes, which could emit 36,000 to 38,000, based on a 50m length of rope. The research went on to recommend that standards be developed for rope maintenance, replacement and recycling.<sup>2</sup>

7 A further source of microplastics on board ships, identified in document MEPC 77/8/4, is grey water (see figure 1). A large passenger ship can generate over 700,000 litres of grey water daily, which might contain high levels of bacteria, nutrients, and other harmful substances, including microplastics. Currently, grey water can be released into the ocean without any treatment. Action is needed to reduce the environmental impact of lack of regulation of grey water and to address this source of microplastic pollution.

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<sup>2</sup> [Potential microplastic release from the maritime industry: Abrasion of rope - ScienceDirect.](#)

8 In document MEPC 80/INF.9, Norway provided information on the release of microplastics and other harmful substances from antifouling paints during hull cleaning based on a Norwegian study by DNV on ship paints and antifoulants containing plastic components. Document MEPC 80/INF.9 recorded that around 6,900 tonnes of microplastics are released by the world fleet from antifouling paints annually and concludes that this plastic will accumulate in the oceans if targeted measures are not taken to restrict releases.



**Figure 1: Infographic showing sources of microplastics in grey water and possible solutions to reduce microplastic emissions into the ocean**

### Action requested of the Committee

9 The Committee is invited to take note of the views expressed in paragraphs 2 and 3, and the information provided in paragraphs 4 to 7 on sources of marine plastics from ships, and to consider action to address these sources of microplastics during the review of the Organization's Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships.