

MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
COMMITTEE
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Agenda item 8

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**FOLLOW-UP WORK EMANATING FROM THE ACTION PLAN TO
ADDRESS MARINE PLASTIC LITTER FROM SHIPS**

**Improving the understanding of the contribution of ships to
marine plastic litter: microplastics**

Submitted by FOEI¹ and CSC

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document refers to document MEPC 81/8/1 (FOEI and CSC) submitted to MEPC 81 and deferred to MEPC 82. It provides additional information from a new study which identifies a further source of microplastics from shipping which are entering the ocean and the marine and human food chain.

*Strategic direction, 4
if applicable:*

Output: 4.3

Action to be taken: Paragraph 5

Related documents: MEPC 81/8/1 and MEPC 82/8

Introduction

1 This document 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) and provides comments on document MEPC 81/8/1 (FOEI and CSC) (deferred to MEPC 82).

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

2 In relation to actions aimed at improving the understanding of the contribution of ships to marine plastic litter and specifically action 26 inviting Member States and international organizations to undertake studies to better understand microplastics from ships, the co-sponsors have submitted document MEPC 81/8/1 which was deferred to MEPC 82 for consideration.

¹ This document is supported by the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition.

3 In document MEPC 81/8/1, the co-sponsors invite the Committee, while reviewing the Action Plan, to consider action needed to address sources of microplastics entering the ocean from shipping. Attention is drawn to previous submissions, in particular document MEPC 77/8/4 (FOEI, Greenpeace International, WWF, Pacific Environment and CSC) which highlights research by the 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 and highlights greywater as a further source of microplastics. Also, document MEPC 80/INF.9 (Norway) which provided information on the release of microplastics from antifouling paints during hull cleaning based on a DNV study on ship paints and antifoulants and concluded that around 6,900 tonnes of microplastics are released by the world fleet from antifouling paints annually.

4 In addition to these sources of microplastics, the co-sponsors would like to draw attention to a recent study which highlights the "worrying levels" of fibreglass (glass reinforced plastic (GRP)) entering the food chain which raises urgent environmental and health concerns.² Fibreglass particles were detected in both oysters (concentrations up to 11,220 particles/kg wet weight) and mussels (concentrations of 2740 particles/kg wet weight) collected from natural populations near to an active boatyard. The study showed that higher accumulation took place during the winter months when boat maintenance activities peaked. The study concluded that further studies were necessary to investigate the potential transfer up the food chain and consequences for human health.

Action requested of the Committee

5 The Committee is invited to note the information contained in paragraphs 3 and 4 and, while reviewing the Action Plan, consider further action to urgently address sources of microplastics entering the ocean and food chains from shipping, in order to achieve IMO's Strategy Vision of achieving zero plastic waste discharges to sea from ships by 2025.

² [Glass reinforced plastic \(GRP\) boats and the impact on coastal environment – Evidence of fibreglass ingestion by marine bivalves from natural populations - ScienceDirect](#)