



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

**Enforcement of MARPOL Annex V**

**Submitted by FOEI and CSC**

**SUMMARY**

*Executive summary:* This document draws attention to the need to address the enforcement of MARPOL Annex V along with the need to consider mechanisms to enhance the enforcement of MARPOL Annex V requirements for the delivery of garbage to port reception facilities. If MEPC is to review the 2026 Strategy and the Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships in 2030 and achieve zero plastic discharges from ships in line with the revised Strategy and Action Plan, then action to progress the measures must commence immediately.

*Strategic direction,  
if applicable:* 4

*Output:* 4.3

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 14

*Related documents:* MEPC 84/8/1, MEPC 84/10; MEPC 82/8/3 and PPR 13/WP.1/Rev.1

**Introduction**

1 This document is submitted in accordance with 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.6) and provides comments on paragraph 2.17 of document MEPC 84/10 (Secretariat).

2 The co-sponsors<sup>1</sup> welcome the draft 2026 Strategy and the Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, and the acknowledgement that the intent of the IMO Assembly in 2017 was to recognize the ongoing problem of marine plastic pollution and contribute to the pursuance of SDG 14 to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds by 2025. Clearly, there is still work to be done, and the co-sponsors recognize the importance of monitoring and evaluating the 2026 Strategy and the Action Plan to ensure that the objective, outcomes and actions are delivered in a timely manner.

<sup>1</sup> The support of the Antarctic and Southern Ocean Coalition in drafting this submission is acknowledged.

3 The vision to strengthen the international framework and compliance with relevant IMO instruments, endeavouring to achieve zero plastic waste discharges from ships by 2030, is necessary but also ambitious. With the measures within the Action Plan to be completed by 2030, it will be essential that work is initiated immediately. Achieving this objective will depend not only on the effective implementation of existing obligations under MARPOL Annex V, but also on the development of new measures.

4 With this in mind, the co-sponsors draw attention to the need to address the enforcement of MARPOL Annex V, a short-term measure, along with the need to consider mechanisms to enhance the enforcement of MARPOL Annex V requirements for the delivery of garbage to port reception facilities, a midterm measure. Since the 2013 amendment to MARPOL Annex V banning the dumping of all solid waste from ships was agreed by Member States, researchers have noted the lack of assessments of the implementation and effectiveness of the regulation in tangibly reducing the volume of plastic and other debris accumulating on beaches. Studies have also highlighted the importance of access to large-scale data sets, including community monitoring data sets, to undertake such assessments.<sup>2</sup>

5 Document MEPC 84/8/1 (Antigua and Barbuda et al.) proposes conducting an information gathering survey to establish baseline data on the onboard management of waste generated by ships during their normal operations, with the aim of supporting the IMO Study on Marine Plastic Litter from Ships. Such information could contribute to improved understanding of operational waste management practices and the use of port reception facilities; however, the co-sponsors note that information gathered through such surveys would primarily relate to onboard waste management practices and not provide insight into the quantities of plastic waste entering the marine environment or the effectiveness of MARPOL Annex V in preventing illegal discharges. Addressing this challenge will be a critical component of evaluating the effectiveness of the agreed actions.

### **Ongoing reports of marine plastic litter from ships accumulating on beaches**

6 Marine litter, including plastics and microplastics, has grown significantly in recent years and is projected to more than double by 2030 and nearly triple by 2040 without meaningful action.<sup>3</sup> Recognizing this, in 2024 the co-sponsors submitted document MEPC 82/8/3, which drew attention to the fact that the figure of 20% of marine plastic litter arising from sea-based sources is unreliable, and highlighted regional studies which suggest that as much as 32% to 50% of marine litter in some parts of Europe originates from sea-based sources. Looking at the composition of litter in the oceans, researchers have estimated that 60-90% is plastics,<sup>4</sup> a pollution challenge further complicated by fragmented global governance and a globalized plastics industry resistant to regulation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Catarina Serra-Gonçalves et al., (2023) *Assessing the effectiveness of MARPOL Annex V at reducing marine debris on Australian beaches*, Marine Pollution Bulletin, Volume 191, 2023.

<sup>3</sup> UNEP (2021) *From Pollution to Solution: A Global Assessment of Marine Litter and Microplastics. Synthesis*.

<sup>4</sup> Jenna R. Jambeck et al., (2015) *Plastic waste inputs from land into the ocean*. *Science* 347, 768-771.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Dauvergne (2018) *Why is the global governance of plastic failing the oceans?* Global Environmental Change, Volume 51, 2018, pages 22-31.

7 Document MEPC 82/8/3 also provided examples of marine plastic litter being recorded after washing up on beaches across the planet; in Europe, the South Atlantic, South America and Australia. A 2019 paper examined the rapid rise in Asian plastic bottles in the South Atlantic Ocean, with more than 2,500 plastic bottles and containers examined from a 72-day monitoring programme. Indeed, during the monitoring period, 174 bottles washed ashore, of which 90% were date-stamped within two years of stranding. The work found that 73% of the accumulated bottles and 83% of the newly arrived bottles were from Asia, and it concluded that most of the bottles were sourced from shipping.

8 Beach cleaning activities from a wide range of locations – from the mouth of the Amazon River<sup>6</sup> to the entrance of the English Channel (La Manche),<sup>7</sup> from the Baltic Sea coast<sup>8</sup> to Japanese beaches<sup>9</sup> – are consistently collecting the same brands of plastic bottles or food products that have clearly not been sold locally and appear to have been dumped at sea from ships. In a single week in July 2024, beach cleaners on the island of Guernsey collected and recorded plastic bottles washing up from Argentina, Bulgaria, China, Mexico, India, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Türkiye and Viet nam. Earlier in 2026, following predominantly south-easterly winds over Guernsey for many weeks, mariculture and fishing litter was being washed up on the beach, but when the wind direction changed briefly to westerly and north-westerly, shipping litter was brought to the shore with Guernsey beach cleaners collecting plastic bottles originating in Bulgaria, China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Türkiye and the United States.

9 Plastic bottles have been found washed up containing a wide variety of wastes from medical ampules to nut casings, fruit seeds, food and drink packaging labels, solvents, paints, and oils. As the co-sponsors explained in document MEPC 82/8/3, most of the bottles are easy to identify, and based on their condition, have not been in the sea for long. Beach cleaners from different regions of the globe share experiences online – producing excellent video and still-photography evidence of shipping litter washing up – and while it is clear that ship-sourced litter washes up at certain hot spots, it is not limited to a few coastlines.

10 This video<sup>10</sup> from beach combing and cleaning activities in Australia explains how it is possible to trace via the bar code the source of a product. Local stakeholders, such as Beach Patrol based in Australia, develop local action plans to address the issue of shipping debris in the region; however, while beach clearing can be undertaken, it is "an end-of-pipe" solution and only action to prevent the pollution at source by national agencies and authorities will be effective. See this presentation video<sup>11</sup> on dumping of plastic and waste by ships from Beach Patrol.

11 These observations indicate that litter originating from ships can reach coastlines across multiple regions depending on oceanographic conditions. They also demonstrate the value of systemically collected monitoring data in identifying patterns of marine pollution associated with shipping activities.

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6 <https://www.instagram.com/farawaytrash.to.marajo/>

7 <https://www.sealordphotography.net/SustainabilityandEnvironment/Waste-management/Beach-litter-and-beach-cleans>

8 [https://www.instagram.com/p/C9eMtU1tt\\_X/?igsh=OXdtmFicTU2Y3J1](https://www.instagram.com/p/C9eMtU1tt_X/?igsh=OXdtmFicTU2Y3J1)

9 <https://www.instagram.com/p/CPfMbS5H-gu/?igsh=MWoxenoxZDZxNmxocQ%3D%3D>

10 <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DVW75fYE8x-/?igsh=c2kyeHRnaWN5emhq>

11 <https://vimeo.com/824037731?fl=pl&fe=sh>

### **A crime scene investigation (CSI) into a plastic bag of marine litter**

12 In January, a full bag of rubbish washed up on a shoreline in Australia. The bag was investigated and found to contain foreign-branded plastic products, along with ship documents, crew lists, security tags, and DNA on sanitary wipes. It was reported to the authorities but was blamed on an uneducated crew member. A lack of awareness and education is an easy excuse; however, the plastic bag also contained a copy of the onboard garbage management plan! A short video of the investigation into the black garbage bag is available on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DTsF6RYEer-/>.

### **Conclusion**

13 If MEPC is to review the 2026 Strategy and the Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships in 2030 and achieve zero plastic discharges from ships in line with the revised Strategy and Action Plan, then action to progress the measures must commence immediately.

### **Action requested of the Committee**

14 The Committee is invited to note the information contained in paragraphs 2 to 13 and take action as appropriate.

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