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Circular Letter No.4198  
31 January 2020

To: IMO Members and other Governments  
United Nations and specialized agencies  
Intergovernmental organizations  
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **World Maritime Day and Day of the Seafarer, 2020**

1 The Secretary-General has the honour to advise that:

- .1 **World Maritime Day** will be celebrated at IMO Headquarters on 24 September 2020, when the traditional diplomatic reception will take place;
- .2 the **2020 World Maritime Day Parallel Event** will be celebrated in Durban, South Africa, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, in the last week of October; and
- .3 the annual **Day of the Seafarer** will be celebrated on 25 June 2020.

2 This year's World Maritime theme is "**Sustainable Shipping for a Sustainable Planet**" and a background document is annexed to this circular letter to assist Member Governments and international organizations in preparing their own activities and communications for use in observing **World Maritime Day**.

3 The 2020 logo is already available to download from the IMO website in all of the Organization's official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish (click [here](#) for direct access). In addition, the Secretary-General's message on this year's theme will be distributed in due course.

4 In order to promote the Day more widely, Member Governments and observer international organizations are encouraged to organize, wherever possible, suitable events throughout the year to celebrate World Maritime Day and inform the Secretariat as early as possible of any planned activities. Social media participation is also encouraged via Twitter, by using the hashtag #WorldMaritimeDay. Photographs of the events can also be sent to: [media@imo.org](mailto:media@imo.org).

5 The focus for the **World Maritime Day Parallel Event** will also be this year's theme: "Sustainable Shipping for a Sustainable Planet". Activities will include panel discussions by distinguished international experts addressing important areas of the maritime sector. There will also be a separate Ministerial roundtable highlighting the World Maritime theme, as well as addressing other pressing issues in the maritime community.

6 Member States and international organizations are invited to attend the World Maritime Day Parallel Event in Durban, South Africa, and further details will be circulated in good time.

7 For 2020, the **Day of the Seafarer** campaign will focus on the theme "Our Seafaring Future", which is closely related to the World Maritime theme. Under this overall theme, IMO will instigate and curate a conversation with seafarers and the wider maritime world about the future for seafaring.

8 A secondary but key objective will be to educate and engage the seafaring profession about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – both on what the SDGs mean to them and how seafarers can continue to play an important role in achieving them. Seafarers and the maritime community will be invited to consider and share their vision for the future of seafaring in a sustainable world.

9 The campaign will be driven across all social media platforms and the hashtags #OurSeafaringFuture and #DayoftheSeafarer will be used and promoted. Further details of the campaign on how to participate, together with a variety of materials and "content opportunities" to assist participation, will be posted on the IMO website ([www.imo.org](http://www.imo.org)) in due course.

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## **ANNEX**

### **WORLD MARITIME DAY 2020 SUSTAINABLE SHIPPING FOR A SUSTAINABLE PLANET**

#### **Background document**

Four years ago, world leaders came together at the United Nations and adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as an ambitious shared plan towards a sustainable future for our planet.

Heads of State gave a clear renewal of the commitments to implement the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement at the Climate Action and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Summits, held during the General Assembly in September 2019.

The UN Secretary General specifically highlighted in his closing remarks at the Climate Action Summit, the sectoral commitment of the maritime industry as a huge step ahead towards a more sustainable future.

The shipping industry, with the support of the IMO regulatory framework, is indeed in the forefront, driving the transition towards a sustainable future.

Shipping is essential for sustainable development. It provides a dependable, low-cost way to transport around 90% of global trade, linking peoples and communities across the globe. By providing improved access to basic materials, goods and products, shipping helps lift millions of people out of poverty.

Through IMO, the Organization's Member States, civil society and the shipping industry are all working in collaboration to ensure shipping continues contributing towards a green economy and sustainable growth.

IMO is the global standard-setting authority for international shipping. It has adopted more than 50 international instruments which, together, create a regulatory framework that ensures shipping is safe, secure and environmentally friendly.

IMO has adopted and continues to develop measures to reduce pollution from ships, implement the Ballast Water Management Convention, protect the polar regions, reduce marine litter, improve the efficiency of shipping through the electronic exchange of information, meet the challenges of the digitalization of shipping and enhance the participation of women in the maritime community.

Thanks to IMO, international shipping was the first global industry to be subject to mandatory, binding energy-efficiency regulations and standards which address GHG emissions throughout the industry. In 2018, IMO adopted an initial strategy to reduce and eliminate greenhouse gas emissions from ships as soon as possible.

From 1 January 2020, sulphur oxide emissions from ships have been reduced considerably with significant benefits for human health and the environment, which could not have been achieved without the commitment of the maritime industry and key stakeholders throughout the supply-chain.

Combatting climate change and air pollution is a vital strategic direction for IMO, both in the short and the long term. IMO will continue to develop appropriate, ambitious and realistic solutions to minimize shipping's contribution to air pollution and its impact on climate change.

IMO's Strategic Plan for 2018-2023 underlines that IMO is fully committed to support the 2030 Agenda and its Member States in their efforts to implement it. It further highlights that the Organization, its Member States, civil society and the maritime industry will continue to work together to achieve the SDGs.

The Organization's approach towards showcasing its contribution to the SDGs is outlined in the IMO SDGs Strategy (see image on page 3), which aims to set general directions for the efforts of the Secretariat to further enhance the SDGs' integration into its programming and planning, to establish a more tangible and targeted approach to support Member States in their implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to strengthen visibility of IMO and, as such, the shipping industry in the United Nations and beyond, as a key contributor to sustainable development.

The year 2020, dedicated to "Sustainable Shipping for a Sustainable Planet" provides a unique opportunity to IMO and the maritime community to embrace these commitments and showcase the importance of the maritime sector to achieve the SDGs, with a specific focus on SDG 14, 13, 9 and 5, as identified in the IMO SDGs Strategy.

It also provides an opportunity to follow-up on last year's theme, in relation to SDG 5, and build on the momentum created by the adoption of the Assembly resolution urging further firm action in coming years to advance gender equality throughout the maritime sector and reach a barrier-free environment.

The theme also showcases IMO's commitment to SDG 9, as it is in the core of its mandate. By promoting trade by sea and promoting seafaring as a career, by improving and investing in port infrastructure and efficiency, by developing and strengthening inter-modal links and hinterland connections and by managing and protecting fisheries, exploring offshore energy production and even by fostering tourism – maritime activity can both drive and support a growing and sustainable economy.

IMO contributes to SDG 9 by providing a legal and regulatory framework, capacity-building initiatives and a forum for Member States to exchange knowledge and experiences. IMO regulations for shipping provide a tangible focus for investors and innovators to develop novel game-changing technical solutions.

Providing a regulatory framework for sustainable growth of the industry also puts IMO into focus as a key contributor to SDG 16, but these achievements would not be possible without partnerships and, as such, SDG 17 is also a core area for the Organization's work.

IMO actively pursues partnerships with its Member States, industry stakeholders, financial institutions and others to execute individual projects or initiatives at both regional and global level. Most of these are aimed at developing regions, which typically benefit from training events, fellowships and technical advisory missions.

Major examples of recent partnership initiatives from IMO include the Globalast and GloFouling Partnerships projects, which tackle marine biodiversity. The Global Industry Alliance, under the GloMEEP energy efficiency project, the GMN-MTCC maritime technology cooperation centre project and GreenVoyage-2050, are partnerships addressing greenhouse gas emissions and climate change.

On a wider front, IMO currently has cooperation agreements with more than 60 intergovernmental organizations and other arrangements with more than 70 non-governmental organizations, including major global environmental organizations and bodies.

Together, these – and many other partnerships involving IMO – make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of the maritime community.

Additionally, through key international events such as the Intergovernmental Conference on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ), the 26th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 26) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the UN Ocean Conference, IMO will have the opportunity to contribute and to showcase the maritime industry's efforts in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, IMO will be able to provide targeted input into the global conversation on how to move towards a sustainable planet, in light of the Organization's achievements and ongoing work.

