INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

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MEPC.1/Circ.917
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INTERIM GUIDANCE ON THE CARRIAGE OF BLENDS OF BIOFUELS AND MARPOL ANNEX I CARGOES BY CONVENTIONAL BUNKER SHIPS

1 The Marine Environment Protection Committee, at its eighty-third session (7 to 11 April 2025), approved *Interim guidance on the carriage of blends of biofuels and MARPOL Annex I cargoes by conventional bunker ships* (Interim Guidance) set out in the annex.

2 The Interim Guidance does not intend to prejudge or delay the process of developing technically reliable and robust carriage requirements for bunker ships engaged in the carriage of blends of biofuels and MARPOL Annex I cargoes intended for use on board a ship and will be revoked immediately upon implementation of the comprehensive carriage requirements for such bunker ships.

3 Member Governments and international organizations are invited to provide information to the Organization on:

.1 typical arrangements of conventional bunker ships and other similar ship types, subject to SOLAS and MARPOL; and

.2 the requirements of the competent authorities for conventional bunker ships and other similar ship types operating within territorial waters, carrying blends of biofuels.

4 Member Governments and international organizations are also invited to bring the annexed Interim Guidance to the attention of Administrations, recognized organizations, port authorities, shipowners, ship operators and other parties concerned.

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ANNEX

INTERIM GUIDANCE ON THE CARRIAGE OF BLENDS OF BIOFUELS AND MARPOL ANNEX I CARGOES BY CONVENTIONAL BUNKER SHIPS

1 The MEPC.2 circular on *Provisional categorization of liquid substances in accordance with MARPOL Annex II and the IBC Code* (updated every December[1]) sets out, in its annex 11, the list of approved biofuels, as covered by the *2019 Guidelines for the carriage of blends of biofuels and MARPOL Annex I cargoes* (MSC-MEPC.2/Circ.17), and includes tert-Amyl ethyl ether, Ethyl alcohol, Fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) and Vegetable fatty acid distillates. MSC-MEPC.2/Circ.17 provides that biofuel blends containing more than 1% but less than 75% of a MARPOL Annex I cargo are subject to MARPOL Annex II, with carriage requirements as set out in chapter 17 of the IBC Code.

2 The *Guidelines for the carriage of energy-rich fuels and their blends* (MEPC.1/Circ.879) set out that energy-rich products and their blends may be carried in conventional bunker ships subject to MARPOL Annex I when containing 75% or more of the energy-rich fuels, which are of biological origin or originate from non-petroleum sources, e.g. algae, vegetable oils, gas-to-liquid (GTL) process and hydrotreated vegetable oils (HVO).

3 The unified interpretations to regulation 18.3 of MARPOL Annex VI (MEPC.1/Circ.795/Rev.9, section 15) provide, inter alia:

.1 the interpretation that "a fuel oil which is a blend of not more than 30% by volume of biofuel or synthetic fuel" should meet the requirements of regulation 18.3.1 of MARPOL Annex VI, which covers blends of hydrocarbons derived from petroleum refining;

.2 the definition of a biofuel as "a fuel oil which is derived from biomass and hence includes, but is not limited to, processed used cooking oils, fatty acid methyl esters (FAME) or fatty acid ethyl esters (FAEE), straight vegetable oils (SVO), hydrotreated vegetable oils (HVO), glycerol or other biomass to liquid (BTL) type products"; and

.3 the application of NO_x requirements to biofuel, synthetic fuel and blends of these fuels.

4 Within the scope of this Interim Guidance, a "conventional bunker ship" refers to an oil tanker, as defined in regulation 1.5 of MARPOL Annex I, that is engaged in the transport and delivery of fuel oil for use by ships.

5 Pending further development of carriage requirements on biofuels for conventional bunker ships certified for carriage of oil fuels under MARPOL Annex I or the revision of the current carriage requirements as provided in the IBC Code and circular MSC-MEPC.2/Circ.17, conventional bunker ships may transport blends of not more than 30% by volume of biofuel, as long as all residues or tank washings are discharged ashore unless the oil discharge monitoring equipment (ODME)[2] is approved for the biofuel blend(s) being shipped.

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1 MEPC.2/Circ.30 was issued in December 2024.

2 *Revised guidelines and specifications for oil discharge monitoring and control systems for oil tankers* (resolution MEPC.108(49), as amended by resolution MEPC.240(65)).

6 The international Oil Pollution Prevention certificate (IOPP certificate) issued to a conventional bunker ship carrying blends between 25% and 30% by volume of biofuel or synthetic fuel does not need to be modified.