

Opinion: World shipping meeting must tackle climate and toxic fuel

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Credit: NOAA's National Ocean Service Image Gallery

The world's leading shipping organisation should agree a ban on the use of heavy fuel oil in the Arctic and also shoulder some of the responsibility for reducing climate change during its meeting in London

this week.

The meeting of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) presents the opportunity to take action against the highly polluting fuel, at a time when shipping in Arctic waters is increasing risk of an accident.

"There is some momentum behind taking action on heavy fuel oil," said WWF Arctic spokesperson Andrew Dumbille. "The US and Canada agreed this year to look at how best to address the risks from heavy fuel oil. We are telling them, and the other countries of the world, that the best way to address the risks is to bring in a ban on using it as a shipping fuel."

The use of heavy fuel oil for ship operations has already been phased out in the Southern Ocean and around Svalbard in the Norwegian Arctic. The thick, toxic sludge is hard to clean up in the best of conditions. In the Arctic, with its ice, severe weather and limited capacity, effective clean-up is near impossible.

Increased shipping in the Arctic means increased risk of a major spill. Such a spill could spread over thousands of square kilometres, kill hundreds of thousands of seabirds, and have long term impacts on the marine ecosystem that will harm local livelihoods such as fisheries.

The IMO should also follow the lead of the international aviation organization in limiting the sector's impact on [climate change](#). Shipping [climate impacts](#) are not covered by the Paris climate deal.

"We know that it will take everyone doing everything to reduce emissions sufficiently to keep global temperatures to 1.5°C, and the international shipping sector has an important part to play in this. We expect shippers to establish a process to determine shipping's fair share contribution toward reducing the world's total CO2 emissions, as well as

the development of long-term targets and market-based mechanisms to deliver these targets," said Manuel Pulgar-Vidal, leader of WWF's Climate and Energy Practise.

International shipping currently accounts for around 2.5 per cent of global emissions and is one of the fastest growing global sectors. Failure to control emissions will mean increasing risks to vulnerable countries and communities from climatic disruptions and [extreme weather events](#).

Provided by WWF

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