

## **International Maritime Organization (IMO) contribution on the Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

1 Shipping, which is the backbone of international trade, moves over 90% of the world's commodities and transfers approximately 3 to 5 billion tons of ballast water internationally each year. A similar volume may also be transferred domestically within countries and regions each year. While ballast water is absolutely essential to the safe and efficient operation of modern shipping, providing balance and stability to un-laden ships, ballast water discharge can pose a serious environmental threat, in that more than 10,000 different species of aquatic microbes, plants and animals may be carried globally in ballast water each day. When discharged into new environments, such species may become invasive, disrupt the native ecology and/or have serious impacts on the economy and/or human health. The introduction of invasive aquatic species to new environments, including through ships' ballast water and sediments, is considered to be one of the greatest threats to the world's freshwater, coastal and marine environments.

2 Developing countries are among the largest "importers" of ballast water due to their significant exports of bulk commodities. Exports of oil, ores, phosphates and other raw materials and bulk cargoes are in many cases the primary source of revenue for developing countries and an important component of their national economies. On the other hand, developing countries are frequently dependent on their coastal and marine environments as the main source of living for coastal populations and as a major tourist attraction. Countries where ballast water is loaded are also under pressure to see that the ballast is safe enough to be discharged at the destination ports.

3 Invasion of the European Zebra Mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) in the North American Great Lakes in the 1980s, the Asian Golden Mussel (*Limnoperna fortunei*) in the inland waterways of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay threatening the whole Amazon Basin, the Comb Jelly Fish (*Mnemiopsis leidyi*) in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea and the introduction of toxic dinoflagellate algae in several new areas around the globe are some of the classic examples of ballast water-mediated bio-invasions. The severe economic and ecological impacts of these invaders provide some of the starkest case studies of the potential negative effects of ballast water introductions. The list of examples could continue as hundreds of aquatic bio-invasions have been identified around the world.

4 There have been numerous global calls for action at the international level and international law provides a strong mandate for the adoption of relevant responses. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea requires States to work together "to prevent, reduce and control human-caused pollution of the marine environment, including the intentional or accidental introduction of harmful or alien species to a particular part of the marine environment."

5 Controls on the introduction of alien species that threaten ecosystems are mandated under the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992). The Convention recognizes invasive alien species as being an important threat to biological diversity, and a serious impediment to conservation and sustainable use of global, regional and local biodiversity. Article 8(h) of the Convention states that:

"Contracting Parties to the Convention should, as far as possible and appropriate, prevent the introduction of, control or eradicate, those alien species which threaten ecosystems, habitats or species."

6 The adoption of the Ballast Water Management Convention (BWM Convention) in February 2004 provided a much needed standardized, international regime to address this global threat arising from ballast water transfer of invasive species and the second paragraph of its preamble explicitly identifies the links with the CBD. The complementary character of the two conventions resides in the fact that while CBD is addressing biodiversity loss from a global perspective, the BWM Convention is focused on one particular driver, namely, the aquatic invasive species, and addresses, along with biodiversity loss, all the other effects including the human health and commercial impacts.

7 It is surprising, to some extent, that IMO and its work has not been mentioned at all in the proposals for updating the CBD Strategic Plan as it appears that BWM Convention is one of the few, if not the only driver of biodiversity loss successfully regulated and operationalized at international level. The BWM Convention has been ratified to date by 18 countries and a number of IMO Member States expressed their intention to ratify the instrument in the near future.

8 In our view, the adoption of the BWM Convention by IMO Member States serves as a perfect showcase of integration of biodiversity considerations into cross-sectoral policies and offers a unique opportunity for CBD to encourage participation of its constituencies in IMO activities related to biodiversity protection.

9 The following aspects reflected in the Synthesis/Analysis in UNEP/CBD/SP/PREP/1 may have particular relevance for IMO and could be seen as synergies and possible joint work plans and initiatives:

- prevention of the loss of biodiversity;
- highlight of the links between biodiversity and human well-being (including poverty eradication) and economics;
- development of methods for accounting for the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services in national accounts;
- greater coherence among relevant MEAs and other international institutions;
- active engagement of all the stakeholders;
- ecosystem approach;
- mechanisms to support implementation and monitoring of implementation;
- identification of milestones or time-bound measures of progress; and
- effective and far-reaching communication tools.

10 In the global endeavour to address the threats posed by aquatic invasive species, IMO is prepared and willing to explore the possibilities to work, on a mutually-supportive basis, with relevant CBD constituencies towards the above-mentioned initiatives and towards practical implementation of the targets agreed.