

IMO and marine debris

MARPOL

The most important aspect of IMO's work relates to the regulations on prevention of pollution

from ships, as contained in Annex V to the International Convention for the

Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)¹.

The revised MARPOL Annex V was adopted in 2011 by IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) by resolution MEPC.201(62), and entered into force on 1 January 2013.

The revised Annex V prohibits the discharge of all types of garbage into the sea from ships except in the cases explicitly permitted under the Annex (such as food waste and other organic matter that are not harmful to the marine environment). MARPOL Annex V has been acceded to by 148 Contracting States, representing more than 98 percent of the world's tonnage. In March 2012, MEPC 63 adopted the 2012 Guidelines for the implementation of MARPOL Annex V (resolution MEPC.219(63)) and the 2012 Guidelines for the development of garbage

marine environment: a global assessment' (Working Group 40). In 2015, the Working Group published its first report³, and had its terms of reference revised to contribute to the study of plastics in the marine environment, as requested by the First session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA Resolution 1/6). To support the implementation of this resolution, the GESAMP Working Group will deliver a second part of its global review of microplastics.

Challenges and future actions

The regulations in MARPOL and the London Convention/Protocol provide a total ban on discharging or dumping plastics from ships. However, the effectiveness of ships to comply with the discharge requirements of MARPOL depends largely upon the availability of adequate port reception facilities (PRF), especially within Special Areas. Hence, MARPOL Annex V also obliges Governments to ensure the provision of adequate facilities at ports and terminals for the reception of garbage without causing undue delay to ships, and according to the needs of the ships using them. Since 2006, a Port Reception Facility (PRF) module is available on IMO's Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS) website. It contains information on the available PRFs for the delivery of the ship-generated waste, as provided by the competent authorities of the IMO Member States and allows reporting of alleged inadequacies of port

reception facilities⁴.

In addition to the environmental and health problem posed by marine litter, garbage and