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Circular Letter No.5117
30 January 2026

To: All IMO Member States

Subject: **Call for Expression of Interest (EOI): Future Ready Shipping (FRS) in Africa Project support for Strengthening Maritime Governance and Policy Frameworks for Decarbonization, Environmental Sustainability, and Digitalization in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Overview of the Future Ready Shipping (FRS) in Africa

1 Effective maritime decarbonization, environmental protection and digital transformation depend on robust governance structures and coherent legal and policy frameworks at national and regional levels. The implementation and enforcement of international maritime conventions, including MARPOL Annex VI, require adequate institutional capacity, updated legislation and effective coordination among public authorities and stakeholders. In this context, the Future Ready Shipping (FRS) in Africa Project aims to support African countries in strengthening maritime governance systems to enable the effective implementation of international standards, promote environmental sustainability, and facilitate the transition towards a decarbonized and digitally enabled maritime sector. The FRS in Africa Project is implemented by IMO and funded by the European Union (EU).

2 Recognizing the diverse legal, institutional and capacity needs of Sub-Saharan African Member States, IMO invites Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from eligible Member States to participate in targeted technical assistance activities focused on strengthening maritime governance and policy frameworks in support of decarbonization, environmental sustainability and digitalization.

3 Under the Future-Ready Shipping (FRS) in Africa Project, the selected beneficiary Member States will receive technical assistance to support the strengthening of maritime governance and institutional capacity, including the development or updating of national maritime legislation. This will include multi-stakeholder consultations, national workshops to enhance understanding of MARPOL Annex VI, reviews of existing legal and policy frameworks, and the development of draft policy and legislative recommendations.

Assistance provided by the Future Ready Shipping (FRS) in Africa Project

4 The FRS in Africa Project will provide support in:

- Conduct of multi-stakeholder consultations in each selected beneficiary Member State to support inclusive and coordinated policy development.
- Review of existing maritime legislation, policies and compliance status with MARPOL Annex VI and other relevant international and regional instruments, as applicable.

- Presentation of findings and draft recommendations to national authorities and refinement based on feedback.
- Provision of in-country technical assistance for legislative drafting.
- Organization of legislative drafting workshops for national maritime authorities and legal experts.
- Identification of gaps, challenges and capacity needs affecting effective implementation and enforcement.

5 Please note that the assistance provided does not include any form of direct cash or financial assistance. Beneficiary Member State is expected to contribute in-kind support to facilitate local coordination, stakeholder engagement, and related national activities. This includes, but is not limited to, coordination support, access to data, facilitation of stakeholder engagement, organizing local meetings or workshops, venue hire, catering, interpretation services, printing of materials or domestic travel.

Eligibility and expectations from the beneficiary Member State

6 The Expressions of Interest (EOIs) are invited from interested government entities in the Sub-Saharan African region (e.g. ministries, departments, agencies, etc.), including maritime administrations or other authorities responsible for maritime regulation, environmental protection, and transport.

7 Submissions must be made by, or formally endorsed by, the relevant government authority, such as the maritime administration, Ministry of Transport, or equivalent body.

8 Beneficiary Member State is expected to:

- Demonstrate political and institutional commitment to strengthening maritime governance and environmental regulation.
- Designate a national focal point to coordinate project activities and liaise with the Project Coordination Unit.
- Facilitate access to relevant legal, policy and institutional information.
- Convene and engage relevant stakeholders, including port authorities, energy providers, ship operators and financial institutions.
- Support workshops, consultations, and follow-up actions related to legislative and policy development.

Submission of Expressions of Interest (EOIs)

9 The EOIs should provide the following information (refer the EOI template in the annex):

- Overview of the proposing Member State and responsible institutions.
- Description of existing maritime legal and policy frameworks.

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- Preliminary assessment (if available) of gaps or challenges related to MARPOL Annex VI implementation and enforcement.
 - Overview of key stakeholders and partners involved or to be engaged including public and private entities.
 - Commitment letter from government.

10 Completed EOIs, along with governmental endorsement (preferably from the maritime administration), should be sent to frs@imo.org.

11 The deadline for submission of EOIs is **9 March 2026, 23:59 hrs** UK time. However, Member States are encouraged to submit their applications as early as possible.

12 Requests for further information or clarification should be directed to frs@imo.org.

13 The Future Ready Shipping (FRS) in Africa Project Coordination Unit will acknowledge receipt of all eligible EOIs following the closure of the submission deadline.

Evaluation and selection criteria

14 All Expressions of Interest (EOIs) received within the specified deadline will be reviewed and assessed by an Evaluation Committee, which will be composed of the Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and an independent panel of technical and legal experts.

15 The Evaluation Committee will compile a shortlist of applications. Shortlisted EOIs may be requested to provide additional technical or contextual information prior to final selection.

16 The selection criteria will take into account:

- Demonstrated need for strengthening maritime governance and legal frameworks.
- Commitment to implementing MARPOL Annex VI and relevant international instruments.
- Alignment with Association of African Maritime Administration (AAMA) resolutions and regional priorities.
- Demonstrated readiness and capacity to engage in legislative and policy reform processes.
- Demonstrated potential for replication and regional learning.
- Absence of prior or ongoing IMO assistance providing similar support.
- Relevance to regional or international connectivity, including green corridor potential.
- Identified needs for institutional, regulatory or capacity strengthening.

17 Based on this assessment, up to five (5) EOIs will be selected for the conduct of feasibility studies under the Future Ready Shipping in Africa Project.

18 Following the evaluation, the proposed selection results will be submitted for final approval by the Project Steering Committee, in accordance with the Project's governance arrangements. The PCU will notify all applicant Member States of the outcome of the selection process following the Project Steering Committee's decision.

Evaluation and beneficiary selection process

19 The selection process for the Expressions of Interest (EOIs) will include the following steps:

- Submission of EOIs (by 9 March 2026, 23:59 hrs)
- Review of EOIs: Initial screening and evaluation against eligibility and selection criteria (by 16 March 2026)
- Reaching out to shortlisted EOIs: Additional technical and operational information requested for short listed EOIs (by 23 March 2026)
- Selection of the beneficiary: Confirmation of the project beneficiary based on the overall evaluation (8 April 2026)

ANNEX

Expression of Interest Template

- 1 General Information
 - Proposing Member State:
 - Responsible Institutions / Authorities:
- 2 Overview of the Proposing Member State and Responsible Institutions
Provide a brief overview of the proposing Member State's maritime sector and the roles of the responsible institutions, including:
 - Institutional mandates and coordination arrangements
 - Responsibilities related to implementation and enforcement of MARPOL Annex VI
 - Relevant experience with IMO instruments and compliance activities
- 3 Existing Maritime Legal and Policy Frameworks
Describe the current maritime legal and policy frameworks relevant to MARPOL Annex VI, including:
 - Status of ratification and transposition into national legislation
 - Existing regulations, policies, or administrative measures supporting Annex VI implementation
 - Institutional or procedural arrangements for compliance and enforcement
- 4 Preliminary Assessment of Gaps and Challenges (if available)
Provide a preliminary assessment, where available, of key gaps or challenges related to MARPOL Annex VI implementation and enforcement, such as:
 - Legislative or regulatory gaps
 - Institutional capacity or coordination challenges
 - Technical, operational, or monitoring limitations
 - Training, awareness, or resource constraints

Applicants may note where further assessment or technical support is required.
- 5 Key Stakeholders and Partnerships
Provide an overview of key stakeholders and partners involved or to be engaged, including:
 - Public sector entities (ministries, maritime administrations, port authorities)
 - Private sector stakeholders (shipowners, operators, service providers)
 - Regional organizations or cooperation mechanisms (if applicable)
 - Roles and anticipated contributions to Annex VI implementation and enforcement

6 Government Commitment

Attach a Commitment Letter from the Government, confirming:

- Endorsement of the EOI submission
- Support for strengthening implementation and enforcement of MARPOL Annex VI
- Designation of responsible institutions and focal points
- Willingness to facilitate implementation of project activities and ensure sustainability of outcomes

7 Contact Information

- Designated Focal Point:
 - Institution/Organization:
 - Email and Telephone:
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