

**OPENING REMARKS BY MS. HEIKE DEGGIM,
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**Polar Maritime Seminar
23 and 24 January 2025**

Good morning, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to the IMO Polar Maritime Seminar, which is co-sponsored by IMO and Norway's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, in cooperation with the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group of the Arctic Council (PAME).

Over 250 participants have registered for this event and I am glad to see so many of you here in person today in London, representing the full spectrum of stakeholders in polar shipping, including IMO Member States and observer delegations, participants from Arctic indigenous people's organizations, academia and industry. I am delighted to see that quite a number of students have also registered.

As you know, the International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters, better known in its short form, the Polar Code, came into force on 1 January 2017. The Code, which is partly mandatory under the SOLAS Convention, was developed to supplement existing IMO instruments to provide a comprehensive set of requirements addressing design, construction, equipment, training, search and rescue and marine environment protection of ships that intend to sail in polar waters.

In order to promote the implementation of the Polar Code, relevant thematic priorities have been included in IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme, the ITCP, for the 2024-2025 biennium. One was established by the Maritime Safety Committee and concerns capacity-building and facilitating international cooperation regarding safety measures for ships operating in polar waters. The other one comes from the Marine Environment Protection Committee and concerns the provision of assistance to countries regarding the environmental requirements of the Polar Code. By including this as part of our technical cooperation work, IMO will carry out a range of activities to enhance Member States capabilities to implement the Polar Code. This seminar is intended to support these measures by acting as an information-sharing platform, including updating participants on polar shipping developments such as vessel activity trends; regulations and governance; polar navigational safety; polar safety training; Arctic Indigenous Peoples' perspectives; marine insurance and inspections.

IMO has also been working on several other initiatives concerning both recommendatory requirements for ships operating in polar waters, such as fishing vessels and pleasure craft, and proposed mandatory requirements for fishing vessels. Additionally, IMO's Marine Environment Division has been working on several environmental initiatives the seminar will hear about, both from colleagues here at IMO and from invited expert speakers.

I am confident that the input and ideas from stakeholders and experts participating in this seminar will provide further momentum for the

implementation of the Polar Code, as well as highlighting other regulatory requirements and developments concerning polar shipping.

The two-day seminar will see a wide range of speakers covering a variety of aspects related to polar shipping in its 8 sessions, including current regulatory developments at IMO; feedback from polar ship operators on the implementation of the Code; ongoing work to ensure that ships receive timely navigational, meteorological and ice warnings of a high standard; maritime training and education; and protection of the pristine marine polar environment. At the end of each panel, 15 minutes discussion time has been set aside for questions and answers. I encourage you to share your perspectives on the topics discussed so that we may facilitate proposals for improvements.

This seminar builds on the success of the [previous Polar Maritime Seminar in 2022](#), convened by IMO and The Nautical Institute in consultation with Arctic and Antarctic States and other interested parties, with a particular focus on the Polar Code and fishing vessel safety.

IMO, as an active observer member of the Arctic Council, has continued to contribute to the work of the Council, also highlighting the importance of cross-collaboration with the Antarctic. Taking this opportunity, I would like to draw your attention to two particular projects of the Arctic Council's Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment Working Group.

The first, co-sponsored by Iceland, Spain and IMO, aims at enhancing fishing vessel safety by promoting the ratification of the 2012 Cape Town

Agreement for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, which, while not polar-specific, is intended to regulate fishing vessel safety internationally by providing minimum standards for the design and operation of fishing vessels. Given the harsh environment of the two polar areas, nowhere could the implementation of this Agreement be more important.

I would like to highlight PAME's POLARIS Review Project, co-led by IMO and Canada, which will be introduced in detail during the seminar.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my colleagues on the Organizing Committee of this seminar, including Siv Christin Gaalaas of Norway and my fellow IMO Director Hiro Yamada. But in particular I would like to acknowledge the work of Loukas Kontogiannis, IMO's Head of Marine Pollution, and Michael Kingston, our tried and tested expert consultant, who both did a great job in bringing it all together. I would also like to thank the Member States involved in the preparations for their assistance and support, as well as all speakers and presenters for coming to London to share their knowledge and experience.

I am sure we are all looking forward to interesting presentations, good discussions and a successful outcome of this seminar.

Thank you.
