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TECHNICAL COOPERATION PLANNING AND REPORTING

(b) Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) and Technical Cooperation Fund allocation for 2026 and 2027

Note by the Secretariat

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This document presents the proposed Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme for the 2026-2027 biennium and the proposed annual allocations from the TC Fund to support the delivery of the technical cooperation programme for 2026 and 2027.
<i>Strategic direction, if applicable:</i>	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
<i>Output:</i>	1.19
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 15
<i>Related documents:</i>	Resolutions A.1126(30), A.1166(32), A.1167(32) and A.1173(33); TC.1/Circ.76; TC 68/4(a); TC 73/3(b) and TC 75/4

Purpose

1 This document sets out the proposed IMO Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) for the 2026–2027 biennium and the proposed annual allocations from the Technical Cooperation Fund (TC Fund)* to support the delivery of the programme, which is set out in the annex, containing three parts. Part 1 provides the strategic context of the ITCP, including the technical cooperation (TC) strategic framework, the ITCP planning approach and principles, and a section on tailoring the ITCP to regional and national needs. Part 2 provides the TC Fund allocation for the 2026-2027 biennium. Part 3 contains the proposed thematic programmes for 2026-2027, subject to availability of funds.

Background

2 The *Strategic plan for the Organization for the six-year period 2024 to 2029* (resolution A.1173(33)) (the Strategic Plan), places IMO's technical cooperation at the forefront of achieving the vision and mission of uniform implementation of IMO instruments, while

* Refer to the Revised Rules of Operation of the Technical Cooperation Fund (TC.1/Circ.76).

supporting inclusive development and contribution to the implementation of the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking into account the *Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy* (resolution A.1166(32)).

3 In this regard, and in accordance with Articles 2(e) and 15(k) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization (IMO Convention), IMO has established two major TC components. Firstly, the ITCP, which is funded by IMO's dedicated TC Fund and supplemented by donor contributions as per the *Revised financing and partnership arrangements for an effective and sustainable integrated technical cooperation programme* (resolution A.1167(32)). The primary objective of the ITCP is to assist States, which are either IMO Member States or Parties / Contracting Governments to the various international multilateral treaties, enhance their human and institutional capacities to implement IMO's regulatory framework. It is also aimed at ensuring uniform and effective implementation of the provisions of those treaties, thus ensuring that Parties adequately discharge their rights, duties and responsibilities as flag, port and coastal States. The ITCP follows a biennial cycle and is prepared on the basis of the programme-building directives approved by the Technical Cooperation Committee (TCC).

4 Secondly, in addition to the ITCP, IMO also provides technical assistance through thematic long-term projects, which are delivered using extrabudgetary funds obtained under the Strategy for resource mobilization for IMO's technical cooperation activities (TC 68/4(a)). These projects address global challenges within IMO's mandate on a much larger scale than the ITCP, and are delivered with the support of national, regional and global stakeholders and strategic partners on a multi-year project basis under agreements that have been negotiated with the respective donor.

5 While recognizing that these two components of IMO's technical cooperation are governed by different rules and procedures in regard to the funding sources, following the joining of these two TC components under the umbrella of the Technical Cooperation and Implementation Division (TCID) in January 2024, the Secretariat has undertaken an alignment of the respective projects and ITCP programmes under one TC strategic framework to ensure that all capacity-development efforts are coherent and aligned with IMO's overall goals. This avoids fragmentation and ensures that all technical assistance activities are complementary and contribute meaningfully to the same global maritime priorities. A unified approach also helps IMO allocate resources more effectively by avoiding duplication of efforts and identifying synergies between the ITCP and long-term thematic projects. This is especially important when dealing with limited funding and the need for cost-effective delivery of assistance. Additionally, in line with feedback from Member States during the evaluation of IMO's ITCP for 2016-2019 to integrate ITCP interventions within larger multi-year projects (TC 71/6), utilizing a single TC strategic framework for ITCP and projects provides a means for planning longer-term interventions for capacity-development in Member States, thus ensuring that technical assistance is not just reactive or piecemeal, but part of a strategic, sustainable development effort.

6 The Committee will recall that an update was provided at its seventy-fourth session (TC 74/6/1, paragraph 6 to 8) and its seventy-third session (TC 73/6, paragraphs 7 and 13) on work related to the development of this TC strategic framework to progress efforts for improved coordination and streamlining of TC planning, programming, implementation, and enhanced reporting of TC achievements and impact to IMO's organs. This has been conducted in parallel with the Committee's work on the draft IMO Capacity Development Strategy (TC 74/16, paragraphs 6.3 to 6.10 and 6.24 to 6.40, and TC 75/6), and further alignment of the ITCP can occur once this work is completed.

Proposed ITCP and TC Fund allocation for the 2026-2027 biennium

7 These developments have led to the proposal for a revised ITCP programme structure for the 2026-2027 biennium, consisting of 11 thematic programmes, which align with IMO's core maritime mandate and the strategic directions of the IMO Strategic Plan, as well as cross-cutting themes that facilitate the achievement of the overall goals of the maritime themes, and the achievement of the UN SDGs (annex, paragraph 8 and table 1 and 2).

8 Each thematic programme, as described in detail in part 3 of the annex (paragraphs 53 to 285) consist of an overall approach that describes the programme objectives, a list of outputs to achieve the objectives (which are the same as the thematic priorities for technical cooperation agreed by each IMO Committee, where applicable) and the types of technical assistance that will be implemented during the 2026-2027 biennium to deliver the outputs. The capacity-development interventions will be planned globally at the thematic level and then implemented locally to ensure national and regional needs are effectively addressed, taking into consideration the findings of the analysis of the IMSAS Consolidated Audit Summary Reports (CASRs) (III 10/8 and III 10/INF.6) and other important inputs as outlined in the annex (paragraphs 10 to 14).

9 Further, each thematic programme contains a description of the existing capacity-development efforts that IMO is already delivering to achieve the programme objectives, where applicable, to demonstrate coherence with the proposed ITCP initiatives and TC Fund allocation, and designed accordingly to complement and address gaps, rather than duplicate existing efforts.

10 It is proposed that, upon the Committee's approval of the ITCP for the 2026-2027 biennium, the thematic programmes will be mapped against the SDGs to further demonstrate the ITCP's contribution to the achievement of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, taking into consideration the Committee's work on this matter (TC 74/16, section 5). It is further proposed to develop programme level performance indicators for each thematic programme to demonstrate their impact to IMO's overall strategic maritime objectives and submit these for the Committee's consideration at a future session.

11 The TC Fund allocation amounts to \$14.8 million (USD) for the next biennium, which is 10% higher than the allocation of \$13.4 million for the current biennium. The amount available to the TC Fund is primarily related to the level of surplus generated by the Trading Fund on an annual basis, but with Trading Fund surplus levels exceeding budgeted figures in the current biennium, and the movement in USD:GBP exchange rate from \$1.25:£1 to \$1.30:£1 an increase is appropriate.

12 The proposed allocation of TC Fund resources to support the delivery of core ITCP activities for 2026 and 2027 is submitted for the Committee's consideration (annex, part 2). This is in compliance with rule 4 of the *Revised Rules of Operation of the TC Fund*, which requires that the resources of the TC Fund "shall be used to finance or co-finance activities that support the objectives, priorities and key principles of the ITCP" (TC.1/Circ.76). Accordingly, the proposals identify the components of the new ITCP to be supported through the annual allocations, including objectives, expected outputs and activities. In considering how the effective and efficient delivery of the ITCP can be further improved through focus on a biennial programme of work, consideration will be given to any further proposed amendments appropriate in those Rules of Operation to provide for greater responsiveness to changing circumstances and emerging needs, particularly in the second year of the biennium, while maintaining appropriate financial control. Any such proposed amendments would be prepared by the Secretariat for submission to the Committee for consideration at TC 76.

13 The scope for each ITCP thematic programme and associated TC fund allocation (annex, paragraphs 43 and 44) takes into account existing IMO capacity-development initiatives that already invest significant resources in specific regions to achieve the goals of the thematic programmes. As such, the ITCP has been planned to complement existing efforts, rather than duplicating these efforts. This ensures the coherence of IMO's overall technical cooperation programme and supports integration of the ITCP within larger multi-year projects (paragraph 5). Further, where long-term implementation needs are identified, the Secretariat will consider using the TC Fund to support early phases of these longer-term interventions, while efforts are made to mobilize additional resources to transition these interventions into long-term thematic projects for maximum impact within a multi-year approach.

14 In connection to the above, in view of the limited resources available to IMO for implementing the ITCP, the Secretariat will continue to engage with donors and other technical cooperation partners in accordance with the Strategy for resource mobilization for IMO's technical cooperation activities (TC 68/4(a)) and resolution A.1167(32) on *Revised financing and partnership arrangements for an effective and sustainable Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme*. This urges the Organization's development partners to acknowledge and respond to their obligations as IMO Member States by providing and enhancing financial support to the ITCP through long-term sustainable arrangements.

Action requested of the Committee

15 The Committee is invited to:

- .1 approve the revised thematic programme structure for the ITCP for the 2026-2027 biennium (paragraphs 7 to 10 and tables 1 and 2 of the annex);
- .2 approve the proposed annual allocations from the TC Fund and their programmed use during 2026 and 2027 (paragraphs 11 and 12 and table 3 of the annex);
- .3 agree to the proposal to align the thematic programmes to the UN SDG's, as well as develop programme level performance indicators for submission to a future session of the Committee (paragraph 10);
- .4 urge Member States to provide and enhance financial support to the ITCP through long-term sustainable arrangements (paragraph 14); and
- .5 transmit its views and recommendations, related to the ITCP and TC Fund allocation for the 2026-2027 biennium, to the 134th session of the Council for final endorsement of the proposal.

ANNEX

TECHNICAL COOPERATION PLANNING AND REPORTING

**Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) and Technical Cooperation Fund
allocation for 2026 and 2027**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART 1 – EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW	4
Introduction and strategic context	4
TC strategic framework	5
ITCP planning approach and principles	5
United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	11
Tailoring the ITCP to regional and national needs	11
<i>Africa</i>	12
<i>Arab States and Mediterranean</i>	13
<i>Asia</i>	14
<i>Pacific</i>	16
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	17
<i>Latin America</i>	18
<i>Caribbean</i>	19
PART 2 – TC FUND BUDGET AND ALLOCATION FOR 2026 AND 2027	21
TC Fund budget for the 2026-2027 biennium	21
TC Fund allocation for the 2026-2027 biennium	21
Authority for the use of unprogrammed funds	22
Resource mobilization to support the ITCP	22
PART 3 –THEMATIC PROGRAMMES	26
THEME 1: ENHANCED GLOBAL MARITIME SAFETY FOR FEWER MARITIME INCIDENTS, CASUALTIES AND LOSS OF LIVES	26
Overall approach	26
IMO focus in 2026-2027	27
THEME 2: ENHANCED GLOBAL MARITIME SECURITY RESULTING IN FEWER SECURITY INCIDENTS AND STRENGTHENED PROTECTION OF SHIPS AND SEAFARERS	37
Overall approach	37
IMO focus in 2026-2027	40
THEME 3: ENHANCED PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT	41
Overall approach	41
IMO focus in 2026-2027	42
THEME 4: SUPPORTING CLIMATE ACTION AND CLEAN AIR IN SHIPPING	51
Overall approach	51
IMO focus in 2026-2027	54

THEME 5: ENHANCED EFFICIENCY AND HARMONIZED PROCEDURES TO FACILITATE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME TRAFFIC AND TRADE	55
Overall approach	55
IMO focus in 2026-2027	56
THEME 6: STRENGTHENED LEGAL CAPABILITY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR EFFECTIVE MARITIME GOVERNANCE	61
Overall approach	61
IMO focus in 2026-2027	63
THEME 7: GENDER EQUALITY AND A BARRIER FREE ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN IN MARITIME	65
Overall approach	65
IMO focus in 2026-2027	67
THEME 8: ACCESS TO MARITIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE WHOLE GLOBAL MARITIME COMMUNITY	69
Overall approach	69
IMO focus in 2026-2027	70
THEME 9: IMPROVED COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL MARITIME STANDARDS THROUGH THE IMO MEMBER STATE AUDIT SCHEME	73
Overall approach	73
IMO focus in 2026-2027	74
THEME 10: TC OUTREACH – PROMOTING THE MARITIME SECTOR AND ACHIEVING GLOBAL GOALS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS	77
Overall approach	77
IMO focus in 2026-2027	78
THEME 11: IMO REGIONAL PRESENCE SCHEME – MEMBER STATES ENGAGING WITH IMO AND RECEIVING LOCAL ASSISTANCE	80
Overall approach	80
IMO focus in 2026-2027	82

PART 1 – EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Introduction and strategic context

1 Maritime transport is an essential and integral part of the global economy. Given the fact that more than 80% of the volume of global trade is carried by sea, waterborne transport is by far the most cost-effective means of moving a large volume of goods and raw materials around the world. As the United Nations' (UN) regulatory agency for the maritime sector, IMO's mission statement is "to promote safe, secure and environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping through cooperation". This is accomplished by adopting the highest practical standards of maritime safety and security, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of pollution from ships, as well as through consideration of the related legal matters and effective implementation of IMO instruments, with a view to their universal and uniform application.

2 As set out in the *Strategic plan for the Organization for the six-year period 2024 to 2029* (resolution A.1173(33), paragraph 18) (the Strategic Plan), IMO has around 70 years of experience developing more than 50 international treaties, together with the related standards, guidelines and other texts. Only through the entry into force of those instruments and the effective, efficient and consistent implementation and enforcement of their provisions can the full benefits from this extensive body of international law be realized. To that end, it is imperative that IMO place strong focus on the continuous, effective and uniform implementation of IMO instruments by Member States, promotion of their entry into force, reduction of administrative burdens and delivery of robust capacity development initiatives.

3 In this connection, the Strategic Plan places IMO's technical cooperation (TC) at the forefront of achieving the vision and mission of uniform implementation of IMO instruments, while supporting inclusive development and contribution to the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), taking into account the *Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy* (resolution A.1166(32)). It states that IMO will provide targeted capacity development that fosters, promotes and supports implementation efforts, especially those of developing countries, in particular small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs), paying due attention to their needs. This includes thorough analysis of the findings from the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) and/or data from other sources; promoting the exchange of best practices among all stakeholders; and supporting the implementation of corrective action plans by Member States following their audits. IMO will also continue to develop and execute projects and partnerships in line with its *Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy* and the Organization's resource mobilization strategy, as outlined in the Strategic Plan (resolution A.1173(33), paragraph 20 and 21).

4 In this regard, in accordance with Articles 2(e) and 15(k) of the IMO Convention, IMO has established two major technical cooperation components. Firstly, the Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP), which is funded by IMO's dedicated Technical Cooperation Fund (TC Fund) (TC.1/Circ.76) and supplemented by donor contributions as per the *Revised financing and partnership arrangements for an effective and sustainable integrated technical cooperation programme* (resolution A.1167(32)). The ITCP primarily fosters capacity development for IMO Member States, particularly developing countries, to support implementation and compliance with IMO's international multilateral treaties, thereby supporting Member States to effectively discharge their rights, duties, and responsibilities as flag, port and coastal States. The ITCP is planned and presented to the Technical Cooperation Committee (TCC) for approval on a biennial basis.

5 Secondly, in addition to the ITCP, IMO also provides technical assistance through thematic long-term projects, which are delivered using extrabudgetary funds obtained under the Strategy for resource mobilization for IMO's technical cooperation activities (TC 68/4(a)). These projects address global challenges within IMO's mandate on a much larger scale than the ITCP, and are delivered with the support of national, regional and global stakeholders and strategic partners on a multi-year project basis under agreements that have been negotiated with the respective donor.

TC strategic framework

6 While the two components of IMO's technical cooperation are governed by different rules and procedures in regard to the funding sources, they have been aligned within the same TC strategic framework to ensure that all capacity-development efforts are coherent and aligned with IMO's overall goals. This avoids fragmentation and ensures that all technical assistance activities are complementary and contribute meaningfully to the same global maritime priorities. A unified approach also helps IMO allocate resources more effectively by avoiding duplication of efforts and identifying synergies between the ITCP and long-term thematic projects. This is especially important when dealing with limited funding and the need for cost-effective delivery of assistance.

7 Additionally, in line with feedback from Member States during the evaluation of IMO's ITCP for 2016-2019 to integrate ITCP interventions within larger multi-year projects (TC 71/6), utilizing a single TC strategic framework for ITCP and projects provides a means for planning longer-term interventions for capacity development in Member States, thus ensuring that technical assistance is not just reactive or piecemeal, but part of a strategic, sustainable development effort. This is in line with good practice results-based planning that focuses on achieving specific, measurable outcomes or results, rather than simply carrying out activities or delivering outputs.

8 This has led to a revised programme structure for the ITCP for the 2026-2027 biennium, consisting of 11 thematic programmes, which align with IMO's core maritime mandate, as reflected by each IMO Committee that agrees the thematic priorities for technical cooperation, as well as cross-cutting themes that facilitate the achievement of the overall goals of the maritime themes, as well as the achievement of the UN SDGs.

9 The 11 thematic programmes are presented in table 1 below. Each programme has been aligned with the strategic directions as contained in the IMO Strategic Plan to demonstrate the contribution of the overall TC programme to the vision and mission of the Organization. Table 2 presents a high-level view of the programmes' scope by illustrating the outputs that will be achieved within each programme. The outputs for the first six programmes are the same thematic priorities that were agreed by the respective IMO Committee.¹ The outputs for the cross-cutting programmes have been designed to achieve the objectives of each programme, which are outlined in part 3 of this annex.

ITCP planning approach and principles

10 Each thematic programme will plan and implement global, regional and national level capacity-development initiatives during the 2026-2027 biennium, giving priority to developing countries, especially SIDS and LDCs, as per resolution A.1127(30) on the *Guiding principles*

¹ The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) priorities are pending final approval at MSC 110 (18 to 27 June 2025). The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) priorities were agreed by MEPC 83 (MEPC 83/17, paragraph 16.3). The Facilitation Committee (FAL) priorities were agreed by FAL 49 (FAL 49/22, paragraph 16.5). The Legal Committee (LEG) priorities were agreed by LEG 112 (LEG 112/WP.1/Rev.1, paragraphs 11.2 to 11.5).

of IMO's *Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which was taken into account during the design of the ITCP for the 2026-2027 biennium. To further integrate the regional and national perspective into the thematic programme design, a section on "Tailoring the ITCP to regional and national needs" is included (annex, paragraph 20 to 40).

11 The scope and TC fund allocation for each ITCP thematic programme (annex, paragraph 43 and 44) takes into account existing IMO capacity-development initiatives that already invest significant resources in specific regions to achieve the goals of the thematic programmes. In this regard, each thematic programme presented in part 3 of this annex (paragraphs 53 to 285) outlines the related long-term thematic projects and other capacity-development initiatives. As such, the ITCP has been planned to complement existing efforts, rather than duplicating these efforts. This ensures the coherence of IMO's overall technical cooperation programme and supports integration of the ITCP within larger multi-year projects (annex, paragraph 7). Further, where long-term implementation needs are identified, the Secretariat will consider using the TC Fund to support early phases of these longer-term interventions, while efforts are made to mobilize additional resources to transition these interventions into long-term thematic projects for maximum impact within a multi-year approach.

12 Another key input to the planning of the ITCP 2026-2027 was the analysis of the IMSAS Consolidated Audit Summary Reports (CASRs) (III 10/8 and III 10/INF.6) to shape the design and implementation of technical assistance to ensure the thematic programmes effectively address the identified gaps and root causes. Additionally, IMSAS audits are also used as the equivalent of a national needs assessment, where regulations come under the audit scope (noting this does not apply to the Security or Facilitation thematic programmes), to ensure that the design of technical assistance is aligned with Member States' needs.

13 The ITCP 2026-2027 also takes into account capacity-building implications and needs based on amendments to existing instruments and the development of new instruments by IMO, as per resolution A.998(25) on *Need for capacity-building for the development and implementation of new, and amendments to existing, instruments*.

14 In addition to the aforementioned resolutions and inputs to the ITCP planning process, the following was also taken into account, to the extent possible:

- .1 recommendations of previous IMO missions and outcomes of evaluations from technical assistance activities;
- .2 written requests for technical assistance of Member States;
- .3 outcomes and recommendations from the regional meetings of Heads of Maritime Administrations;
- .4 regional and subregional strategies for maritime development (adopted at conferences, symposiums, etc. (i.e. resolutions and declarations);
- .5 lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic, including but not limited to the increased development of e-learning courses; and
- .6 lessons learned from ongoing and past IMO projects supporting developing countries in specific areas of implementation.

15 As a biennial management and planning tool for IMO's TC activities, the ITCP aims to transform priority areas of assistance into thematic programmes in accordance with the IMO Strategic Plan using a results-based approach; and link those activities directly to the assessed

needs of the beneficiaries, the approved work programme of the Organization, the thematic priorities of IMO's technical bodies, related work of UN agencies and multiagency capacity-development efforts, and the interest of TC development partners.

- 16 The ITCP enables IMO to:
- .1 conceive, plan and deliver technical assistance through a structured TC framework of thematic programmes;
 - .2 allocate financial resources for such programmes through the Organization's TC Fund as well as multi-donor trust funds;
 - .3 mobilize any additional financial and in-kind support that is required in coordination with the Member States and TC development partners; and
 - .4 monitor, evaluate and assess progress and impact of assistance delivered against the IMO Strategic Plan, utilizing TC related performance indicators.

Table 1 – Thematic programme structure for the ITCP for the 2026-2027 biennium

		ITCP 2026-2027 Programme structure	IMO Strategic Plan 2024-2029 Alignment
		Thematic programmes	
MARITIME THEMES	1	Enhanced global maritime safety for fewer maritime incidents, casualties and loss of lives	SD 1 (PI 1.7, 1.8) SD 6
	2	Enhanced global maritime security resulting in fewer security incidents and strengthened protection of ships and seafarers	SD 1 (PI 1.7, 1.8) SD 5 (PI 5.7) SD 6
	3	Enhanced protection and preservation of the marine environment	SD 1 (PI 1.7, 1.8) SD 4 (PI 4.4) SD 6
	4	Supporting climate action and clean air in shipping	SD 1 (PI 1.7, 1.8) SD 3 (PI 3.3) SD 6
	5	Enhanced efficiency and harmonized procedures to facilitate international maritime traffic and trade	SD 1 (PI 1.7, 1.8) SD 5 (PI 5.6) SD 6
	6	Strengthened legal capability and institutional frameworks for effective maritime governance	SD 1 (PI 1.7, 1.8)
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES	7	Gender equality and a barrier free environment for women in maritime	SD 6 (PI 6.3, 6.4)
	8	Access to maritime education and training for the whole global maritime community	SD 1 SD 6
	9	Improved compliance with international maritime standards through the IMO Member State Audit Scheme	SD 1 (PI 1.7, 1.8) SD 7
	10	TC Outreach : Promoting the maritime sector and achieving global goals through partnerships	SD 1 SD 8 (PI 8.3, 8.4, 8.8, 8.9, 8.10, 8.11)
	11	IMO Regional Presence : Member States engaging with IMO and receiving local assistance	SD 1 SD 8

Table 2 – Thematic programmes and outputs for the ITCP for the 2026-2027 biennium

	Thematic programmes	Outputs
1	Enhanced global maritime safety for fewer maritime incidents, casualties and loss of lives	MSC 1: Safety of fishing vessels, domestic ferries and other non-SOLAS vessels. MSC 2: Maritime security and anti-piracy measures (Refer to Theme 2) MSC 3: Training of seafarers and fishing vessel personnel and the human element. MSC 4: Maritime safety in polar waters. MSC 5: Implementation and enforcement of IMO instruments MSC 6: Safe handling of cargoes, including dangerous goods in packaged form, solid bulk cargoes and containers, and identification of alternative fuels and new technologies (GHG) MSC 7: Safety of navigation, including ships' routing measures and ship reporting systems, and implementation of Electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) S-100 products. MSC 8: Search and rescue (SAR) and related services provided as part of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).
2	Enhanced global maritime security resulting in fewer security incidents and strengthened protection of ships and seafarers	MSC 2: Maritime security and anti-piracy measures.
3	Enhanced protection and preservation of the marine environment	MEPC 1: Assist countries with the implementation of MARPOL Annexes I to V, also taking into consideration relevant IMSAS audit outcomes, the IMO Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, the environmental requirements of the Polar Code, as well as requirements for Special Areas and Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs). MEPC 2: (Refer to Theme 4) MEPC 3: Strengthening national and regional capacity and fostering regional cooperation for effective and consistent implementation of the BWM Convention, taking into account the comprehensive review of the Convention under the experience-building phase, the recently amended AFS Convention and the revised Biofouling Guidelines. In addition, assisting countries to raise awareness, build capacity and support the implementation of the <i>Revised guidelines for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life</i> (MEPC.1/Circ.906/Rev.1). MEPC 4: Enhancing countries' capacities and promoting national and regional cooperation for the ratification, and effective implementation and enforcement of the Hong Kong International Convention on Ship Recycling for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, in particular during the experience-building phase.

	Thematic programmes	Outputs
		MEPC 5: Assisting countries with the implementation of the OPRC Convention and the OPRC-HNS Protocol and enhancing regional cooperation in the field of marine pollution preparedness, response and coordination, as well as addressing aspects of the implementation of the relevant international regimes on liability and compensation for marine spills of oil and hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) pollution. MEPC 6. Assisting countries in building capacity for the ratification and implementation of the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Protocol), as well as supporting countries in implementing measures aimed at conservation and sustainable governance of the ocean.
4	Supporting climate action and clean air in shipping	MEPC 2: Assisting countries with the implementation of the <i>2023 IMO Strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships</i>, notably the short- and mid-term GHG reduction measures and resolution MEPC.367(79) on National Action Plans (NAPs); and MARPOL Annex VI and related instruments, in particular the NOx Technical Code, the consistent implementation of the global limit on the sulphur content of ships' fuel oil (IMO 2020) and Emission Control Areas (ECAs).
5	Enhanced efficiency and harmonized procedures to facilitate international maritime traffic and trade	FAL 1: Enhance the facilitation of international maritime traffic in the context of trade facilitation, through capacity development, to promote wider acceptance, understanding and effective implementation of the FAL Convention, also in the context of a pandemic crisis, taking into account the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and the provisions in section 6 of the FAL Convention, on public health and quarantine. FAL 2: Support Member States to establish systems for the electronic exchange of information and single window systems that allow information to be submitted once and reused to the maximum extent possible, to comply with Standards and text of the FAL Convention, respectively, and to promote the use of international standards in electronic data exchange systems in alignment with the IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business, to ensure their interoperability and to contribute both to the facilitation of maritime traffic and to the decarbonization of shipping and ports. FAL 3: Assisting Member States in preventing and addressing the severe problems caused for international maritime traffic by stowaways, migrants and refugees rescued at sea. FAL 4: Support Member States in the implementation of the <i>Revised guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of wildlife on ships engaged in international maritime traffic</i> (resolution FAL.17(48)).

	Thematic programmes	Outputs
6	Strengthened legal capability and institutional frameworks for effective maritime governance	LEG 1: Providing means to strengthen the legal capacity, maritime policy and infrastructure of national maritime authorities, with particular emphasis on least developed countries and small island developing States. LEG 2: With particular emphasis on the results and needs identified by the IMO Member State Audit Scheme, training national expert personnel to undertake the tasks of developing, reviewing and updating maritime legislation to assist Member Governments in the implementation of their rights and duties as flag, port and coastal States Parties / Contracting Governments to IMO instruments, including the enforcement of compliance with maritime safety and environmental standards by national and foreign ships. LEG 3: Providing advice on the legal (national and international) implications of acceptance of IMO conventions and the enactment of IMO codes and guidelines.
7	Gender equality and a barrier free environment for women in maritime	1. Visibility – Raising the profile of women in the maritime sector to achieve gender equality 2. Training – Develop and support training opportunities for women 3. Recognition – Mainstream gender within the maritime sector
8	Access to maritime education and training for the whole global maritime community	1. Reduce barriers for IMO Member States, especially SIDS and LDCs, to access specialized maritime training opportunities, including barriers related to financial access, physical participation, gender and language. 2. Increase the efficiency of training delivery, specifically to reduce costs of in-person training while simultaneously enhance learning outcomes and increase access to reach a wider audience across the maritime sector. 3. Establish IMO's Global Maritime Training Institutions (WMU and IMLI) as key partners in delivering maritime training to IMO Member States and supporting the core mandate of IMO.
9	Improved compliance with international maritime standards through the IMO Member State Audit Scheme	1. Maintain a pool of diverse and competent auditors to implement the IMSAS schedule across all regions 2. Develop Member States' capabilities for participating in the IMSAS audit process 3. Encourage a culture within member States of continuous improvement in compliance with international standards
10	TC Outreach : Promoting the maritime sector and achieving global goals through partnerships	1. Promotion of the maritime sector to ensure global maritime issues remain a high priority on global development agendas 2. Fostering partnerships for identification of capacity-building needs and resource mobilization

	Thematic programmes	Outputs
		3. Supporting the implementation of the <i>Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy</i> , including monitoring and evaluation of the TC strategic framework
11	IMO Regional Presence: Member States engaging with IMO and receiving local assistance	1. Facilitate the IMO Regional Presence Scheme for efficient and effective implementation of IMO's technical cooperation programme 2. Strategic regional coordination of needs and challenges for future capacity-building planning

United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

17 The vision statement of the *Strategic Plan for the Organization for the six-year period 2024 to 2029* (resolution A.1173(33)) reaffirms IMO's commitment to supporting Member States in achieving the objectives of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). This includes strengthening capacity development efforts, in line with the *Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy* (resolution A.1166(32)).

18 Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, IMO adopted the *Linkages between the technical assistance work of IMO and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (resolution A.1126(30)), linking the Organization's technical assistance work to the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in order to support Member States' implementation of the SDGs at the national level. Additionally, the Sustainable Development Goals Strategy 2020-2030 of the IMO Secretariat (C 122/3(a)/1) (IMO SDGs Strategy) aimed to guide IMO's efforts in mainstreaming the SDGs across the programming of technical cooperation activities, and increase the Organization's visibility as a contributor to global sustainable development.

19 As such, in support of the 2030 Agenda, the ITCP 2026-2027 reflects IMO's continued dedication to promoting safe, secure, and efficient shipping, while working to prevent marine and atmospheric pollution from ships. The thematic programme approach prioritizes the delivery of key SDGs most relevant to maritime development, notably, SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 14 (Life Below Water), along with the cross-cutting SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Particular emphasis is placed on addressing the needs of developing countries, especially SIDS and LDCs, and on empowering women as key stakeholders in the maritime sector.

Tailoring the ITCP to regional and national needs

20 The ITCP's global approach of thematic programmes recognizes that there are common maritime challenges to be addressed across all regions, but also allows for the programmes to be tailored to respond to regional and national priorities, taking into account Member State-specific needs and circumstances. This will ensure maximum relevance and impact for effective maritime governance, safety and sustainable development across diverse coastal and maritime regions.

21 Each major region for IMO capacity-building purposes (Africa, Arab States and Mediterranean, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Latin America and Pacific) has unique challenges, opportunities and priorities in the maritime sector, including varying levels of infrastructure, regulatory frameworks and environmental concerns. By customizing the programme to address these specific needs, it ensures that capacity-building efforts are

relevant, impactful, and aligned with both local and global maritime objectives. The ITCP addresses these through specialized initiatives and tailored activities to the identified needs.

22 This section examines the key maritime features and challenges of each region, which will inform the detailed planning of the thematic programmes in the regional and national contexts across the 2026-2027 biennium, with the aim of strengthening maritime capabilities while fostering cooperation, resilience and long-term sustainability in the maritime sector. The key challenges described below are not exhaustive and do not preclude common challenges encountered across the regions, especially in regard to supporting the transition to greener shipping and digitalization efforts. Capacity-building within each thematic programme is available to all Member States in line with identified needs through detailed analysis that is conducted at the programme level.

23 The ITCP's success hinges on strong ownership by beneficiary Member States, including timely identification and nomination of focal points, facilitation of in-country logistics, and readiness to implement corrective actions recommended by IMSAS audits. Achieving the key performance indicators (KPIs) established for each capacity-development initiative is a shared responsibility – IMO provides technical support and Member States commit in-kind resources, staff and political will to sustain maritime developments.

Africa

Context and composition

24 Africa comprises 48 developing countries bordering the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, of which 37 are IMO Member States (6 landlocked, 22 LDCs, 6 SIDS). The region's coastline is approximately 31,000 km and includes vast inland waterways and rich biodiversity and ecosystems. Maritime transport is central to Africa's trade, fisheries, and overall economic development.

25 Regional partnerships are central to successful implementation across the region, including collaboration with the African Union on the 2050 AIMS Strategy, and support through the Regional Presence Offices in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Kenya. The African region's needs focus on strengthening institutional capacity (e.g. maritime administration reforms, legislative assistance), addressing the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) audit findings, advancing maritime trade facilitation through digitalization, and bridging gaps in environmental protection and decarbonization efforts.

Key challenges

- **Capacity gaps in implementation:** While many African States have ratified IMO instruments, effective implementation and enforcement is a challenge, highlighting the need to strengthen institutional capacity in line with IMSAS audit findings. Common issues include policy and legislative frameworks, flag State implementation (FSI), port State control (PSC), environment protection, and ensuring suitably trained maritime personnel.
- **Environmental vulnerabilities:** Increased maritime traffic around major ports and shipping routes (e.g. the Cape of Good Hope) exacerbates environmental risks and poses a serious threat to Africa's ecosystems, which are already vulnerable to the effects of rising sea levels and changing weather patterns. Bridging gaps in environment protection, including oil spills, waste management, biofouling management, marine litter and climate impacts require robust national/regional contingency plans and strengthened regulatory capacity.

- **Implementation of the maritime net zero framework:** Many African countries face significant infrastructure limitations, limited access to green technologies, alternative fuels, and reliance on shipping as a major source of trade and economic growth. Implementation requires capital, technology, and skills. Pooling resources for regional green port development can help overcome scale and investment challenges. With the potential to increase shipping costs, there is also possible negative impact on food security in African countries.
- **Transition to greener shipping:** Many States need targeted assistance to implement decarbonization strategies. It is important that African countries consider how to effectively implement the *2023 IMO Strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships* (resolution MEPC.377(80) (2023 GHG Strategy), notably the potential challenges and opportunities in the transition to net zero shipping.
- **Digital modernization:** Access to funding, technology, skills and resources to facilitate the progress of African port-level digitalization (e.g. integration of maritime single window systems for trade facilitation) is a key challenge to improving port efficiency, regulatory compliance, and regional integration.
- **Security threats:** Complex security threats severely impact trade, economic development, and regional stability. Political instability often weakens the institutional capacity to enforce maritime laws and respond effectively to threats as a result of the power vacuums. Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea and the Gulf of Aden pose a serious threat to commercial shipping, giving rise to illegal fishing, and maritime crimes therefore highlighting the need for stronger security frameworks, including enhanced naval capabilities, regional cooperation, information-sharing platforms and the implementation of international maritime law and governance standards to safeguard Africa's maritime domain.

Arab States and Mediterranean

Context and composition

26 The region comprises 22 IMO Member States located in North Africa and West Asia, bordering the Arabian, Mediterranean, Red, Black and Dead Seas, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman and Persian Gulf, which oversee the Bab al-Mandab, Hormuz and Gibraltar Straits, and includes the Suez Canal. One IMO Member State in the region is categorized as a SIDS and three are LDCs, while nine countries have high income economic level, and the rest are classified as developing countries.

27 Owing to its vast coastline and strategic location, characterized by gulfs, channels, straits and numerous islands, the region has extensive interests in merchant shipping, fisheries and tourism, and is home to some of the world's busiest and most vital international shipping lanes. More than 12% of the global trade passes through the Suez Canal. As a consequence of its interests in oil, natural gas and chemical exportation and associated tanker traffic, as well as cruise trade, particularly in the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, the region is also concerned with marine environment protection. Further, the Mediterranean Sea has been designated a Sulphur Emission Control Area (SECA) under MARPOL Annex VI, effective May 1, 2025).

28 Regional partnerships with organizations such as the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) (Mediterranean), along with other regional implementing partners, provide targeted support for pollution response and marine environmental protection. The newly established IMO Regional Presence Office in Alexandria, Egypt, facilitates stronger and more direct engagement with Member States.

Key challenges

- **Capacity gaps in implementation:** Many States in this region have ratified IMO instruments but face challenges in effectively enforcing them, requiring a focus on institutional capacity-development. IMSAS audits reveal gaps in the national maritime legislation, procedures for dealing with Recognized Organizations, flag State oversight, PSC, and the need for a continuous plan for capacity-development for the maritime administrations.
- **Environmental vulnerabilities:** The region is home to major oil and gas shipping routes, making it susceptible to pollution incidents (e.g. oil spills). Limited port reception facilities, climate change risks (such as rising sea-levels in low-lying coastal zones), and cross-border marine pollution in enclosed or semi-enclosed seas (e.g. the Red Sea and the Mediterranean) call for enhanced contingency planning and regional cooperation to combat oil pollution.
- **Transition in digitalization and decarbonization:** Many countries are making significant advancements digitally, but others still rely on manual processes, with inconsistent access to modern port community systems, tracking, or data exchange platforms. Similarly, there are differences in the level of investment in green ports and alternative fuels, requiring infrastructure for shore power, clean bunkering options, and emissions control technologies. It is important that Arab States/Mediterranean countries consider how to effectively implement the 2023 GHG Strategy, notably the potential challenges and opportunities in the transition to net zero shipping. Technical assistance could be requested to support Member States with operational enforcement of the Med SOx ECA.
- **Security threats:** Political instability, piracy, and armed robbery (particularly near the Red Sea/Bab-el-Mandeb) highlight the need for strengthened maritime domain awareness through national and regional cooperation and the development of maritime security frameworks. Consistent implementation of instruments like the Djibouti Code of Conduct play a key role in fostering collaboration to combat piracy and enhance regional maritime security. Port facility and ship security and the protection of shipping lanes are critical priorities, especially given the region's high volume of oil exports.

Asia

Context and composition

29 Asia is the most populous and largest continent in the world by a considerable margin and plays a key role in international shipping from all aspects, including shipbuilding, seafarer supply, commercial fleet management and operations, ship recycling, port operations and fishing activities. Despite the region's leading role in industrial maritime activities and the presence of 22 IMO Member States and 2 Associate Members, 8 of these IMO Members are classified as LDCs. Additionally, 3 out of the 22 Member States are SIDS. While most Asian countries are maritime nations, there are five that are landlocked.

30 Asia is home to several of the world's busiest shipping lanes, including the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea. The region has highly varied maritime profiles: some States possess advanced port infrastructure and large ship registries, while others, especially SIDS and LDCs, face fundamental gaps in technical capacity. Rapid economic growth, combined with major sea routes and diverse legal frameworks, underscores the importance of robust collaboration and consistent implementation of IMO instruments.

31 The Regional Presence Office in the Philippines strengthens the Organization's outreach capability in East Asia and plays a vital role in supporting effective regional capacity-building efforts. In addition, collaboration with strategic regional forums and regional implementing partners enhances the Organization's ability to deliver tailored support, ensuring that capacity-building initiatives are more impactful and aligned with local needs and priorities.

Key challenges

- **Capacity gaps in implementation of IMO conventions:** Despite widespread ratifications, IMSAS audit findings point to persistent gaps in legislation, PSC, and training, requiring harmonization of maritime regulations and strengthening institutional capacity, particularly for safety oversight (flag State and PSC), improving domestic ferry safety frameworks, and environmental compliance (MARPOL, OPRC and BWM).
- **Environmental and safety pressures:** High traffic volumes heighten risks of pollution incidents, overfishing, and accidents; the region also leads in ship recycling, where occupational safety and environmental standards require bolstering.
- **Transition to greener shipping:** Many States need targeted assistance to implement decarbonization strategies. It is important that Asian countries consider how to effectively implement the 2023 GHG Strategy, notably the potential challenges and opportunities in the transition to net zero shipping.
- **Digitalization and emerging technologies:** While many Asian States spearhead innovation (e.g. maritime single window systems for trade facilitation, e-navigation), others require capacity-building to adopt digital solutions to foster digital modernization in ports, decarbonization measures and comply with MARPOL Annex VI for GHG emissions control.
- **Seafarers:** Addressing the shortage of seafarers, improving access to on board training, and mitigating challenges such as prolonged isolation, safety issues like harassment and bullying, and security concerns such as piracy and armed robbery are essential. Ensuring a safe working environment for seafarers in the handling of alternative fuels, along with the effective management and integration of future technologies on board, will support greener and more digitally connected ship operations, and help address gender imbalances in the maritime sector.
- **Local maritime industry:** A significant percentage of maritime activity in the region involves ships to which many IMO instruments do not fully apply. Domestic ferry safety and the protection of the marine environment require special attention.

Pacific

Context and composition

32 Encompassing 14 IMO Member States, 12 of which are SIDS (3 also classified as LDCs), the Pacific region is characterized by vast ocean spaces, rich marine biodiversity, remote island clusters, and comparatively small populations scattered across immense distances. Maritime transport is a lifeline for these States, supporting trade, mobility, and social services, even as many of them face the challenge of ageing and smaller fleets. Despite high ratification rates of IMO instruments, many Pacific Island countries struggle with limited administrative resources and technical capacity, making the implementation of international maritime regulations particularly challenging. The region's extreme vulnerability to climate change (rising sea-levels, frequent storms) further compounds existing constraints and necessitates effective regional cooperation and targeted technical assistance.

33 The newly established IMO Regional Presence Office in Suva (Fiji) provides hands-on coordination and accelerates capacity-building by working closely with regional implementing partners. Capacity-building efforts include strengthening domestic ferry safety frameworks, enhancing oil spill preparedness and response, addressing GHG emissions from shipping, sea-based marine litter, and streamlining port formalities through maritime single window initiatives. This integrated approach is designed to reinforce the resilience of Pacific SIDS, support compliance with IMO instruments, and ultimately protect the region's vital maritime lifelines.

Key challenges

- **Institutional and human resource constraints:** Owing to small national administrations, many Pacific States have difficulties overseeing expansive maritime territory, maintaining adequate expertise in maritime governance and safety oversight, PSC, monitoring and enforcement, and legislative drafting. This emphasizes the need for institutional strengthening in line with IMSAS results.
- **Domestic ferry safety and SAR services:** A significant percentage of maritime activity in the region involve ships to which many IMO instruments do not fully apply. Domestic ferry safety and the protection of the marine environment require special attention. With oceanic distances and intense weather patterns, ensuring reliable ferry links, sufficient digital maturity and search and rescue (SAR) coverage is both essential, and also logistically complex.
- **Environmental sensitivities:** Fragile coral reefs, fisheries, and coastal communities demand stricter protections under MARPOL, the BWM Convention and other IMO instruments, along with robust capacity to respond to marine pollution incidents. Responding to challenges associated with dumping of waste and marine litter provides an opportunity to enhance environmental governance, safeguard marine ecosystems and align with global commitments to sustainable development and climate resilience.
- **Transition to greener shipping:** Reliance on fossil fuels and availability of alternative fuels hinders transition to GHG emission reduction measures. Many States need targeted assistance to implement decarbonization strategies. It is important for the Pacific region to consider how to effectively implement the 2023 GHG Strategy, as well as the potential challenges and opportunities in the transition to net zero shipping.

- **Vulnerability to climate impacts:** Rising sea levels, extreme weather, and natural disasters disrupt transportation and livelihood of communities, threatens food security and damage vital maritime infrastructure, placing additional pressure on resilience measures, and disaster preparedness.
- **Digitalization and emerging technologies:** Additional capacity-building assistance needed to support the expanded use of digital solutions (such as maritime single window systems for trade facilitation), capacity-building to adopt digital solutions for modernization in ports, and implementation of decarbonization measures to enhance compliance with MARPOL Annex VI for GHG emissions control.

Eastern Europe

Context and composition

34 Eastern Europe is a geographically diverse region, encompassing countries with coastlines along the Adriatic, Baltic, Black, and Caspian Seas, as well as landlocked States linked to maritime trade through neighbouring ports via significant inland waterways. The region consists of 25 Member States with well-established maritime transport sectors, a long tradition of delivering high-quality maritime education through well-established maritime institutions and a strong record of supplying seafarers to the global fleet. There are no IMO Member States in this region categorized as SIDS or LDCs.

35 The maritime sector has played a pivotal role in catalysing economic development in the region, but it faces unique challenges owing to its diverse ecosystems, sensitive marine environments, and the varying capacities of maritime administrations for uniform implementation of the IMO instruments. The region's enclosed or semi-enclosed seas (especially the Black and Caspian Seas) present heightened pollution risks and call for coordinated governance to address transboundary challenges. The Black Sea, designated as a "Special Area" under MARPOL Annexes I and V, highlights the region's vulnerability to pollution and underscores the need for stringent environmental protection measures. Similarly, the Caspian Sea, the world's largest enclosed inland body of water, presents unique challenges due to its endorheic nature and sensitivity to marine pollutants.

36 Collaboration with regional strategic and implementing partners facilitates unified solutions to environmental risks. Enhanced outreach seeks to streamline maritime governance, while promoting decarbonization, e-navigation and digitalization.

Key challenges

- **Capacity gaps in implementation of IMO instruments:** While most States have ratified major IMO instruments, IMSAS findings show gaps in legislative and administrative frameworks. In this region gaps are evident in the IMO liability and compensation regime and the BWM Convention. There is a need to address IMSAS findings, including a focus on flag State oversight, PSC inspections aligned through the regional MoUs for PSC, and advanced port inspection procedures.
- **Pollution control in enclosed seas:** Oil, chemical, and waste discharges can rapidly spread across national waters, underscoring the need for joint contingency planning and specialized response capacities at a regional level.

- **Port State control and digitalization:** Achieving consistent PSC standards and adopting technologies such as single window systems for digital transformation are top priorities. Some States require targeted support to modernize port operations and fulfil obligations under MARPOL Annex VI to support decarbonization efforts.
- **Transition to greener shipping:** It is important that countries in the Eastern Europe region consider how to effectively implement the 2023 GHG Strategy, notably the potential challenges and opportunities in the transition to net zero shipping.

Latin America

Context and composition

37 The Latin America region is composed of 19 developing countries (two of which are landlocked while two others are island nations), encompassing a broad array of coastal States bordering both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, along with a few landlocked countries linked to maritime trade through neighbouring ports. All 19 countries in the region are IMO Member States and two of these are categorized as SIDS. There are no LDCs. The region hosts several major seafarer-supplying nations, is experiencing increasing cruise activity in countries bordering the Caribbean, and handles significant tanker traffic, making maritime transport central to trade, energy exports, and economic growth. Latin American countries address marine environment protection issues through regional strategies, yet capacity and compliance levels vary. While some countries boast well-developed maritime administrations, others face persistent gaps in implementing IMO conventions uniformly.

38 Fostering regional partnerships and aligning capacity-building initiatives with strategic regional and subregional bodies, as well as regional implementing partners, assists with regional harmonization and implementation of capacity-building efforts.

Key challenges

- **Regulatory fragmentation and uneven PSC performance:** Differing national legal frameworks can impede cohesive enforcement of IMO instruments. PSC regimes under the Viña del Mar Agreement often exhibit varying levels of oversight quality. This emphasizes the need for institutional capacity-building in line with key IMSAS audit findings, as well as analysis of instruments not covered by IMSAS, including joint training (e.g. PSC, casualty investigation) and the enforcement of IMO instruments (MARPOL, BWM, OPRC, SOLAS and STCW).
- **Environmental pressures:** Heavy tanker traffic and sensitive coastal/marine ecosystems heighten the risk of oil spills. Cruise ships heighten risk to biodiversity loss through single-use plastic waste. Inadequate port reception facilities and limited adoption of the BWM Convention, MARPOL Annex VI and other protective measures pose significant challenges.
- **Transition to greener shipping:** Many States need targeted assistance to implement decarbonization strategies, integrate maritime single window systems for trade facilitation, and foster digital modernization in ports. It is important that the Latin America region considers how to effectively implement the 2023 GHG Strategy, notably the potential challenges and opportunities in the transition to net zero shipping.

- **Increasing maritime security threats:** Maritime routes are increasingly challenged by transnational crime, including drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human traffic, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, oil theft and piracy, resulting in an increase in requests for capacity-building assistance to enhance institutional maritime security capability.
- **Institutional capacity, partnerships and regional coordination:** Existing regional and subregional bodies, as well as regional implementing partners, play a vital role in fostering cooperation and bridging differences among States. Nonetheless, limited resources and divergent priorities can hamper effective collaboration, highlighting the need for stronger governance structures.

Caribbean

Context and composition

39 The Caribbean region comprises 14 States and 16 Overseas Territories and/or Departments. All 14 are IMO Member States and classified as SIDS, with one also being classified as an LDC. With its archipelagic nature and reliance on maritime transport for trade, tourism, and fisheries, the Caribbean faces unique developmental and logistical challenges. Most States have ratified the majority of IMO instruments, yet limited human and financial resources frequently hinder full and effective implementation. Owing to this high dependency on shipping, domestic ferry services and other inter-island links play an essential role in sustaining economic and social cohesion across the region.

40 Support to the region is provided through the Regional Presence Office in Trinidad and Tobago, which facilitates the strengthening of the Organization's outreach capability in the region on maritime matters, in collaboration with key partners. By consolidating resources and expertise, IMO aims to ensure that each Caribbean State can meet its international obligations, protect fragile marine ecosystems, and strengthen the economic resilience provided by maritime activities.

Key challenges

- **Institutional constraints:** Many Caribbean maritime administrations are very small, with limited capacity to oversee flag and port State responsibilities, lack the capacity to update their legislative frameworks, and often have inadequate national oil spill contingency plans (NOSCPs) to respond to emergencies through effective national plans. This emphasizes the need for effective sustainable oil spill response capability, strengthening maritime governance and regulation through targeted legal and policy reviews, as well as expanded training on PSC procedures.
- **Environmental vulnerabilities:** Regional waters are designated as Special Areas under MARPOL (Annex V), underscoring the urgent need for improved port reception facilities, pollution prevention, including marine litter, and training on oil spill preparedness and response, and on sustainable biofouling management. Climate change impacts (e.g. stronger hurricanes, rising sea-levels) put further strain on maritime infrastructure and disaster response.
- **Transition to greener shipping:** It is important that the Caribbean region considers how to effectively implement the 2023 GHG Strategy, notably the potential challenges and opportunities in the transition to net zero shipping.

- **Digitalization and trade facilitation:** Although IMO promotes Maritime Single Window systems to streamline port operations, uptake can be slow due to budgetary constraints and technology gaps, indicating the need for digital modernization.
- **Inter-agency coordination:** The region's distinctive geography and wide-ranging national circumstances call for strong collaboration, particularly through subregional bodies and regional implementing partners.
- **Local maritime industry:** A significant percentage of maritime activity in the region involves ships to which many IMO instruments do not fully apply. Domestic ferry safety and the protection of the marine environment require special attention.
- **Maritime security vulnerabilities:** Small islands remain exposed to maritime security risks. Drug trafficking, human smuggling, IUU fishing and climate change impacts, which threaten port infrastructure and resilience, remain a source of concern to regional States. Limited maritime enforcement capabilities add more challenges for the region.

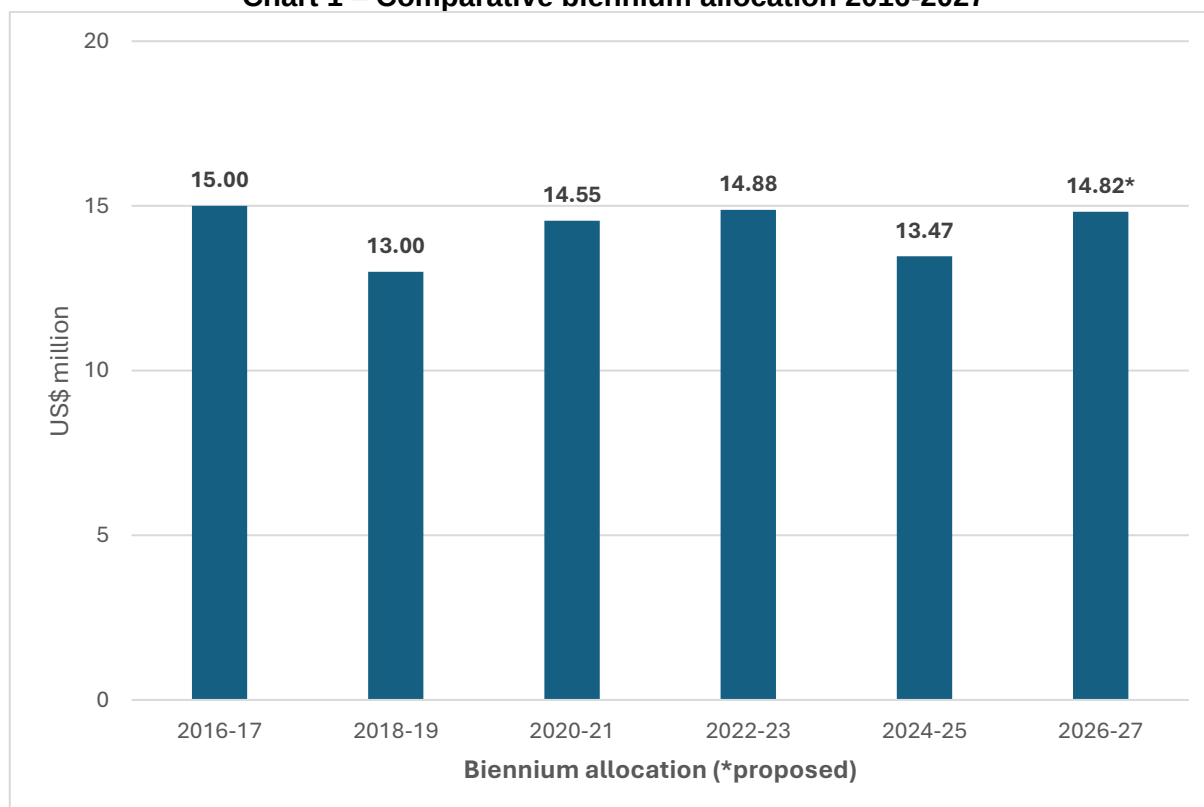
PART 2 – TC FUND BUDGET AND ALLOCATION FOR 2026 AND 2027

TC Fund budget for the 2026-2027 biennium

41 Pending approval by the Committee, at its seventy-fifth session, and by the 134th session of the Council (C 134), the Secretary-General has proposed an allocation of approximately £11.3 million² from the TC Fund to support the core activities of the ITCP for 2026 and 2027 biennium. In this regard, it may be noted that, while the TC Fund is managed in pound sterling within the Organization's budgetary structure, its expenditure against the ITCP is recorded in US dollars, in compliance with technical cooperation budgeting and expenditure practices. Based on the rate of exchange applied, \$1.30 to £1.0, which is the same used in the Council budget document (C 134/6), the TC Fund allocation in US dollars amounts to \$14.8 million for the next biennium. This amounts to a 10% increase compared with the allocation for the current 2024-2025 biennium.

42 Chart 1 shows the evolution of the TC Fund resources available to IMO in past biennia and the proposed TC Fund budget for the 2026-2027 biennium.

Chart 1 – Comparative biennium allocation 2016-2027



TC Fund allocation for the 2026-2027 biennium

43 The TC Fund allocation for the 2026-2027 biennium has been proposed to support the delivery of the TC strategic framework (paragraphs 6 to 16), which is represented in a revised programme structure consisting of 11 thematic programmes, as compared with the structure of the 2024-2025 biennium, which consists of 16 regional and global programmes (TC 73/3(b), paragraph 20).

² Document C 134/6 refers.

44 Table 1 illustrates the proposed TC Fund biennial allocation for the thematic programmes for the 2026-2027 biennium. In compliance with the Financial Regulations and Financial Rules requirements for annual budget allocations, table 1 also illustrates the allocation for each year of the biennium.

45 Chart 2 and table 2 show the TC Fund budget allocation for the 2026-2027 biennium, by region, both in visual and numerical form. For comparison purposes, the regional allocation for the current biennium is also shown. It is important to note that regions and countries also benefit directly from the global allocation shown in the chart, as well as benefiting from expenditure and assistance delivered under IMO's thematic long-term projects, which are funded by donor contributions that are mobilized under the Strategy for resource mobilization for IMO's technical cooperation activities (TC 68/4(a)), separate from the TC Fund.

46 There is a level of flexibility during the biennium to allow for the reallocation of funds based on regular analysis of the execution of the planned programme, as well as Member State needs that emerge during the biennium, and the availability of donor contributions that align with areas of the technical cooperation programme that require funding.

Authority for the use of unprogrammed funds

47 The *Revised Rules of Operation of the Technical Cooperation Fund* (TC.1/Circ.76) recognize that unplanned and emergency needs may arise for which no advance funding provision has been made. In this context, and in accordance with rule 15 of the *Revised Rules of Operation of the TC Fund* and the Organization's Financial Regulations and Financial Rules, the Secretary-General shall seek the Council's approval to draw upon the unprogrammed monies of the TC Fund to meet the funding requirements. Additionally, and as required by rule 16 of the *Revised Rules of Operation of the TC Fund*, any use of the unprogrammed funds based on that approval shall be reported to the Committee and the Council through the customary annual ITCP reports.

Resource mobilization to support the ITCP

48 Owing to IMO's ambitious technical cooperation objectives, the increased demand for IMO services that may be expected during the biennium to address the size and scale of assistance required across all regions, and the continued constraints on public finances that Member States are facing, it is expected that the TC Fund will not be sufficient to address the full extent of Member State needs.

49 In view of the limited resources available to IMO for implementing the ITCP, and recognizing the significant role in the provision of resources (financial and/or in-kind) to support the implementation of the ITCP through the development of effective partnership arrangements with IMO,³ the Secretariat will continue to engage with donors and other technical cooperation partners in accordance with the Strategy for resource mobilization for IMO's technical cooperation activities (TC 68/4(a)) and resolution A.1167(32) on *Revised financing and partnership arrangements for an effective and sustainable Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme*. This urges the Organization's development partners to acknowledge and respond to their obligations as IMO Member States by providing and enhancing financial support to the ITCP through long-term sustainable arrangements through, inter alia:

³ Document TC 75/4 provides details on how effective partnerships were utilized in 2024.

- .1 voluntary cash donations to the TC Fund;
- .2 financial allocations to the IMO multi-donor trust funds;
- .3 multi-bilateral arrangements;
- .4 voluntary donations of interest earnings under the Contributions Incentive Scheme; and
- .5 in-kind support through the provision of no fee technical cooperation consultants, hosting of technical assistance events and donations of equipment.

50 The continuous update and implementation of the Strategy for resource mobilization for IMO's technical cooperation activities (TC 68/4(a)) is a proactive approach to mobilize and secure additional resources, including Official Development Assistance (ODA) from the Member States, UN Development Aid system and Multilateral Development Banks, for the funding of IMO technical cooperation activities, while also enhancing the sustainable financing of the ITCP. The Strategy urges Member States to actively communicate with their development aid agencies to include IMO technical cooperation activities as a priority item in their national development aid plans.

51 Further, cost sharing or the utilization of new and/or established partnership agreements and in-kind support would permit some of the annual TC Fund allocations to be transferred to other ITCP activities, in accordance with rule 13 of the *Revised Rules of Operation of the TC Fund*.

52 In this regard, to ensure the effective and strategic utilization of the TC Fund, where long-term implementation needs are identified, the Secretariat will consider using the TC Fund to support early phases of these longer-term interventions, while efforts are made to mobilize additional resources to transition these interventions into long-term thematic projects for maximum impact within a multi-year approach. This ensures the coherence of IMO's overall technical cooperation programme and supports integration of the ITCP within larger multi-year projects (annex, paragraph 7).

Table 3 – TC strategic framework: TC Fund allocation for 2026-2027, by thematic programme (in US\$)

Thematic Programmes	Annual allocation		Biennial allocation	% of total ⁴
	2026	2027		
1. Enhanced global maritime safety for fewer maritime incidents, casualties and loss of lives	1,120,405	1,166,137	2,286,542	15
2. Enhanced global maritime security resulting in fewer incidents and strengthened protection of ships and seafarers	108,955	113,403	222,358	1
3. Enhanced protection and preservation of the marine environment	759,303	790,296	1,549,599	10
4. Supporting climate action and clean air in shipping	749,560	780,155	1,529,715	10
5. Enhanced efficiency and harmonized procedures to facilitate international maritime traffic and trade	534,413	556,227	1,090,640	7
6. Strengthened legal capability and institutional frameworks for effective maritime governance	394,193	410,284	804,477	5
7. Gender equality and a barrier free environment for women in maritime	363,185	378,010	741,195	5
8. Access to maritime education and training for the whole global maritime community	1,125,873	1,171,828	2,297,701	15
9. Improved compliance with international maritime standards through the IMO Member State Audit Scheme	326,866	340,209	667,075	5
10. TC Outreach : Promoting the maritime sector and achieving global goals through partnerships	145,274	151,204	296,478	2
11. IMO Regional Presence : Member States engaging with IMO and receiving local assistance	1,635,669	1,702,431	3,338,100	23
Total	7,263,696	7,560,184	14,823,880	100

Chart 2 – TC Fund budget allocation by region

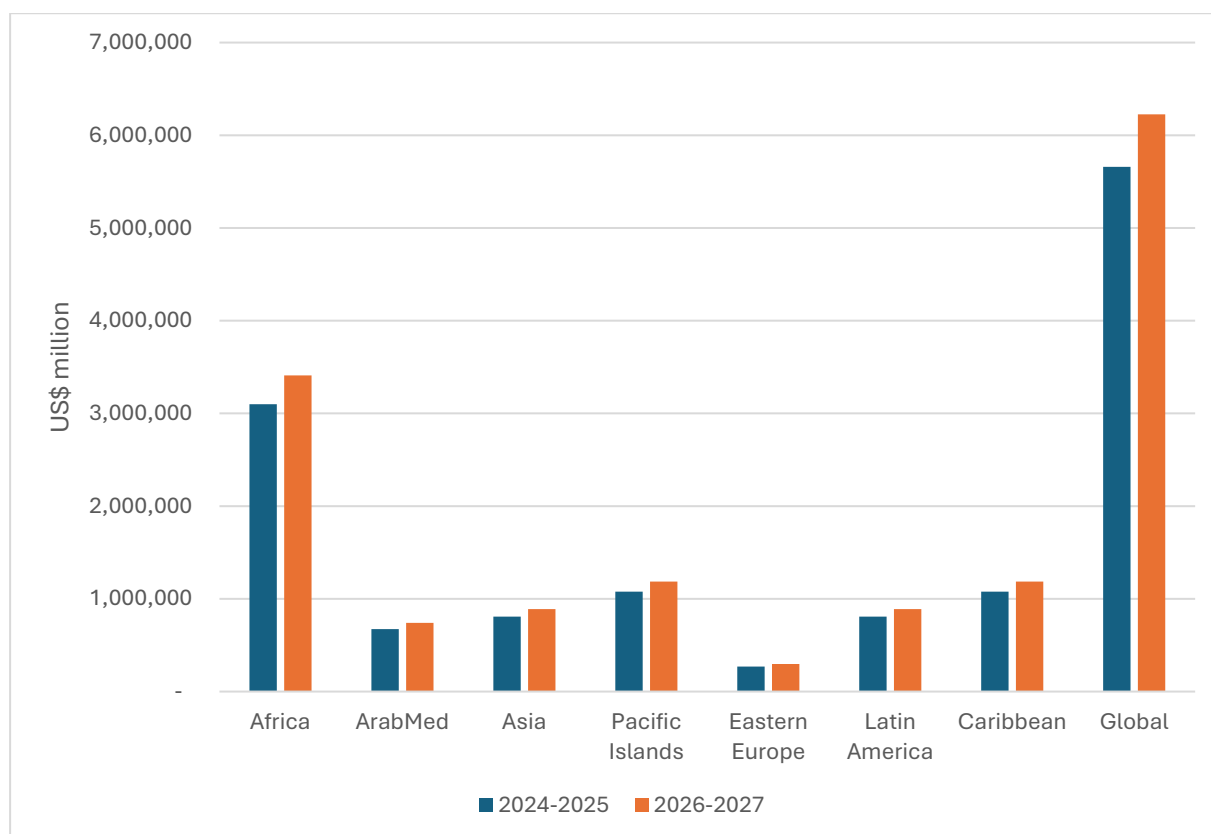


Table 4 – TC Fund budget allocation by region

Region	2024-2025		2026-2027	
	Total (in USD)	% of total	Total (in USD)	% of total
Africa	3,099,538	23	3,409,492	23
Arab States and Mediterranean	673,813	5	741,195	5
Asia	808,575	6	889,432	6
Pacific Islands	1,078,100	8	1,185,910	8
Eastern Europe	269,525	2	296,479	2
Latin America	808,575	6	889,432	6
Caribbean	1,078,100	8	1,185,910	8
Global	5,660,025	42	6,226,030	42
Total	13,476,251	100	14,823,880	100

⁴ The percentages in this column are rounded to the nearest figure.

PART 3 –THEMATIC PROGRAMMES

THEME 1: ENHANCED GLOBAL MARITIME SAFETY FOR FEWER MARITIME INCIDENTS, CASUALTIES AND LOSS OF LIVES

Overall approach

53 Shipping is perhaps the most international of all the world's great industries, and one of the most dangerous. It has always been recognized that the best way of improving safety at sea is by developing international regulations that are followed by all shipping nations. The International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), first adopted in 1914 and subsequently amended, serves as the foundation for international maritime safety. Amendments over the years have introduced critical safety measures, including the International Safety Management (ISM) Code and updated life-saving appliance requirements. IMO has also developed and adopted international collision regulations and global standards for seafarers, as well as international conventions and codes relating to search and rescue, the facilitation of international maritime traffic, load lines, the carriage of dangerous goods and tonnage measurement.

54 This extensive body of maritime safety regulations – covering everything from ship design and construction to crew training and emergency procedures – can be complex and challenging to implement, particularly for developing countries with limited resources. To ensure effective compliance and uniform enforcement, Member States benefit from targeted support through capacity-building initiatives, such as technical assistance, training programmes, institutional development, and the transfer of knowledge and technology. By strengthening the capabilities of maritime administrations, capacity-building plays a critical role in promoting consistent application of safety standards, ultimately contributing to safer seas and the protection of lives, property and the marine environment.

55 In line with the above, every two years, the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) agrees a set of safety related thematic priorities to guide the planning framework of IMO's biennial technical cooperation programme, the ITCP, to ensure that capacity-building efforts address the main issues and objectives in relation to maritime safety. At the upcoming session, MSC 110 will consider for approval, in document MSC 110/20/3, the following thematic priorities:

- .1 safety of fishing vessels, domestic ferries and other non-SOLAS vessels;
- .2 maritime security and anti-piracy measures;
- .3 training of seafarers and fishing vessel personnel and the human element;
- .4 maritime safety in polar waters;
- .5 implementation and enforcement of IMO instruments;
- .6 handling of cargoes, including dangerous goods in packaged form, solid bulk cargoes and containers and identification of alternative fuels and new technologies (GHG);
- .7 safety of navigation, including ships' routing measures and ship reporting systems, and implementation of Electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) S-100 products; and
- .8 search and rescue (SAR) and related services provided as part of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS).

56 These thematic priorities align with the key maritime safety instruments that IMO aims to achieve effective and uniform implementation of IMO instruments. Each thematic priority is reflected as an individual output within this Maritime Safety Thematic Programme, detailing how the objectives of each instrument will be addressed through IMO's capacity-building approach over the next (2026-2027) biennium. Capacity-building efforts delivered through this thematic programme aim to support States with the ratification and effective implementation of safety related instruments, taking into account the latest amendments, notably through their transposition into national legislation, and assisting administrations with the various different flag, port and coastal State responsibilities. Where applicable, follow up to IMO IMSAS audit findings with respect to improving national implementation of safety instruments informs the planning and delivery of capacity-building efforts across the regions.

57 The focus will be to review and build upon the past outcomes from the number of safety-related activities delivered across all regions in order to deliver targeted assistance that addresses previous recommendations and remaining gaps. This will be informed by data-driven analysis to assess the implementation of the 1974 SOLAS Convention, as amended, and other mandatory instruments, identifying those in need of assistance, and developing appropriate interventions in line with emerging safety concerns. Contracting Governments of the SOLAS Convention are also invited to continue making requests for assistance to inform IMO's planning.

58 Assistance will support the implementation of the requirements outlined in SOLAS chapters V and IX, the ISM Code, and other maritime safety measures established by the Organization. These measures include the implementation of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR Convention), and the GMDSS. The goal of IMO's technical cooperation efforts in relation to maritime safety is to help developing countries enhance their capacity to comply with international maritime safety rules and standards for the enhancement of safety in the international maritime transport sector. The ITCP prioritizes technical assistance initiatives that develop human resources and build institutional capacity, and that also aim to promote national, regional and sub-regional cooperation and coordination to strengthen maritime safety.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Safety of fishing vessels, domestic ferries and other non-SOLAS vessels.

Cape Town Agreement 2012

59 The Cape Town Agreement on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993 relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977 (the Agreement), was adopted in 2012, together with a number of resolutions, including resolution 3 on Promotion of technical cooperation and provision of technical assistance, which requested the Organization to intensify its efforts to provide States with the assistance they may need in implementing the Agreement and to make adequate provision for that purpose within the ITCP. In this context, the Organization is cooperating with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to promote safety measures relating to fishing vessels and their personnel, decent working conditions on board fishing vessels and in the fight against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and related matters, while respecting the respective mandates of the three Organizations, as a means to strengthen and harmonize efforts towards the entry-into-force and implementation of relevant IMO, FAO and ILO instruments, as appropriate. This work encompasses support to the implementation of related IMO instruments, e.g. the Agreement, STCW-F and MARPOL.

60 At present, 23 States, with an aggregate number of 2,935 fishing vessels, have consented to be bound by the Agreement, against its entry-into-force provisions of 22 States with a minimum of 3,600 fishing vessels of 24 m in length and over operating on the high seas, thereby fulfilling the first criterion for entry into of the Agreement, with relatively few vessels to be added to the aggregate number. In this context, over the 2026-2027 biennium, capacity-building efforts will focus on obtaining the fulfilment of the second and last entry-into-force criterion for the Agreement, and effective implementation after its expected forthcoming entry into force. Additionally, efforts will focus on related safety matters and IMO instruments in cooperation with UN organizations to enhance maritime safety aspects relating to small fishing vessels.

61 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Promote the entry into force and implementation of the Cape Town Agreement 2012:** Regional and national workshops / seminars will be targeted towards Member States that are yet to ratify the instrument. A regional approach is important owing to the implications of ratification by Member States on vessel movements between neighbouring countries. Assistance will include awareness-raising for enhanced understanding of the benefits and safety provisions for fishing vessels, needs assessments and gap analyses, legislative support, technical training, institutional strengthening, and fostering international cooperation to ensure the Agreement's goals are met.
- .2 **Support the implementation of the recommendations from the FAO/ILO/IMO Joint Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing and Related Matters (JWG):** At its fifth session, the JWG identified recommendations resulting in actions that might need to be taken by the FAO, ILO and IMO Secretariats, as appropriate, within the respective mandates of the three Organizations. Support during the 2026-2027 biennium will depend on the outcome of related discussions during III 11, to be held in July 2025.

Domestic ferry safety

62 Since the adoption of the *Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety* (resolution MSC.518(105)) in April 2022, the Organization, with the support of interested Member States and international organizations, has been actively addressing the need for capacity-building to strengthen a sustainable safety culture for domestic ferry activities, taking into account the road map agreed upon by MSC 101 (MSC 101/24/Add.1, annex 30), the aim being to promote and enhance maritime safety aspects relating to ships not covered by SOLAS chapter I (so called non-Convention ships). Recent and future activities were reported to MSC 109 in document MSC 109/17 (Secretariat), which also included regional seminars in Africa and the Pacific Islands, ongoing projects with the financial and in-kind support of the European Union, World Maritime University (WMU), IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI), Interferry and Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF) towards global progresses in the establishment of a robust and sustainable safety culture in this area of domestic trade.

63 Existing IMO capacity-building initiatives in regard to domestic ferry safety include the SCOPE Ship Safety project (2025-2027), which aims to improve ferry safety in the Asia-Pacific region. The project builds on the successful practices of a previous study conducted by IMO in collaboration with the World Bank Group, WMU and the University of Strathclyde. That earlier study focused on the safety and energy efficiency of domestic passenger ships in the Philippines (FSA-P and ENV-P). The project will deliver:

- .1 a comprehensive assessment of domestic ferry safety and identification of viable improvement options in the target countries;
- .2 commitment to passenger ship safety measures through collaborative multilevel stakeholder engagement and consensus building; and
- .3 strengthened stakeholder capacities for implementing and managing passenger ship safety initiatives.

64 A second existing initiative was launched in 2024 with LRF providing financial support, through the World Maritime University (WMU), towards an IMO-IMLI-WMU partnership on enhancement of domestic ferry safety. The deliverables and activities of the project include:

- .1 awareness-raising on the Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety;
- .2 regional/national multi-stakeholder consultations;
- .3 preparation of an explanatory manual to support the implementation of the domestic ferry safety model regulations;
- .4 establishment of an online best practices information-sharing forum on domestic ferry safety;
- .5 support for drafting national legislation to improve ferry safety, based on the Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety; and
- .6 support for the Pacific Islands Domestic Ship Safety (PIDSS) Programme and on Flag State Implementation (FSI) and domestic ferry safety in the Pacific Islands region.

65 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will deliver additional assistance through the ITCP as follows:

- .1 Regional forums/seminars on domestic ferry safety: To address the root causes of domestic ship accidents by promoting best practices, enhancing the implementation of model regulations, and fostering collaboration between regulatory authorities and the domestic shipping industry. The focus is to provide a platform for decision makers, industry representatives and other stakeholders to share experiences, identify challenges and develop actionable strategies to enhance safety measures and reduce casualties, i.e. by providing training for ferry operators and regulatory bodies on safety regulations and best practices. Technical assistance will cover matters related to design and construction failure, ticketing and overcrowding, loading/stowage, lack of insurance and political will. Seminars may be planned as joint efforts with partners, such as Interferry, WMU, IMLI and LRF, and regional implementing partners.

Output 2: Maritime security and anti-piracy measures

66 Thematic priority MSC 2 is a separate thematic programme titled 'Theme 2: Enhanced global maritime security resulting in fewer security incidents and strengthened protection of ships and seafarers' (paragraph 94).

Output 3: Training of seafarers and fishing vessel personnel and the human element

STCW Convention and Code, and the ISM Code

67 This thematic priorities focuses on the effective implementation of mandatory provisions such as regulation I/8, on quality standards, and article IV and regulation I/7 of the 1978 STCW Convention, on communication of information, to raise Member States' awareness on the need to establish a quality standards system for all training and certification activities conducted under the 1978 STCW Convention and Code and to assist with its establishment (MSC.1/Circ.1449 on *Guidance for reporting on independent evaluation*) (III 7/17, annex 4, appendices 2 and 4).

68 Additionally, the lack of effectiveness in the implementation of regulation VIII/2 of the 1978 STCW Convention, related to watchkeeping arrangements and principles, as shown by six CASRs, propose assistance to Member States to raise awareness on the need to develop and to implement policies through enacting national legislation, guidelines and instructions concerning these provisions (III 10/18, annex 4, appendix 4).

69 Furthermore, a comprehensive review of the 1978 STCW Convention and Code and the development of training provisions for seafarers on ships using alternative fuels and new technologies are ongoing. In this context, assistance for Member States concerning these developments will be essential to support their preparedness. This is connected to the work described in this document under Theme 4: Climate Action and Clean Air (paragraph 157) related to the project entitled "Baseline Training Framework for Seafarers in Decarbonization".

STCW-F Convention and Code

70 MSC 108 adopted resolution MSC.561(108) on *Amendments to the annex to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995* along with resolution MSC.562(108) on *Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) Code*. These updates and new instrument aim at addressing the evolving needs of the fishing industry by introducing harmonized qualification standards and a minimum level of competence for personnel working on fishing vessels covered by the Convention, facilitating in turn the mobility of fishing vessel personnel and the recognition of certificates among countries that have ratified and implement the STCW-F Convention.

71 Amendments to the 1995 STCW-F Convention and the new STCW-F Code are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2026. Support from the ITCP during the 2026-2027 biennium on the effective implementation of these amendments is paramount for the training and certification of fishing vessel personnel.

72 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Support the effective implementation of the 1978 STCW Convention and Code:** Regional and national capacity-building workshops on the implementation of the STCW Convention, including activities that could contribute to the development and or application of model courses, to enhance the understanding, knowledge and skills of responsible personnel in the maritime administration of the Member State, in particular on regulations I/7 and I/8 of the 1978 STCW Convention, to ensure compliance with the Convention.

- .2 **Promote the entry into force and implementation of the 1995 STCW-F Convention and the new STCW-F Code:** Regional and national workshops to support the ratification, implementation and enforcement of the 1995 STCW-F Convention and the new STCW-F Code. These workshops will focus on familiarizing stakeholders, including national authorities and training institutions, with the requirements of the Conventions.
- .3 **Support the development and implementation of training provisions for seafarers on ships using alternative fuels and new technologies:** Regional and national workshops and seminars to support the development and implementation of training provisions to ensure the addressing of the necessary competences required for seafarers on ships using alternative fuels and new technologies, including continued Train-the-trainer programmes across all regions, taking into account the outcomes from "Baseline Training Framework for Seafarers in Decarbonization".
- .4 **Support Member States' engagement in the STCW Comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code:** Regional and national workshops and seminars to assist Member States to build capacity, raise awareness, and promote supporting alignment with emerging training requirements arising from the revised STCW Convention and Code and ensure effective implementation.
- .5 **Support the effective implementation of the ISM Code:** Regional and national workshops to bring together key stakeholders on the implementation of the ISM Code to consider its effectiveness and its effective implementation for improvement based on their respective experience. The outcomes of consideration at MSC 110 on ISM Code related matters should be taken into account.

Output 4: Maritime safety in polar waters

73 The Polar Code entered into force on 1 January 2017 and applies to all SOLAS ships operating in polar waters. MSC 106 approved amendments to SOLAS and the Polar Code, which are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2026. While safety and marine protection of Arctic waters have been addressed through a number of cooperation and development schemes among the Arctic States, Antarctic waters have received less attention from the Organization. The implementation of the Polar Code, as well as associated guidelines for non-SOLAS ships, is equally important for that region. It can be reasonably expected that shipping activities will further increase in all polar waters and the ITCP will assist during the 2026-2027 biennium by promoting and facilitating the implementation of its instruments to preserve the pristine polar environment, in close cooperation with the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting and the Arctic Council.

74 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Support the implementation of safety measures for ships operating in polar waters:** Through training and workshops to share best practices on the implementation of SOLAS chapter XIV (Safety measures for ships operating in polar waters) and the Polar Code. This includes promoting associated guidelines for non-SOLAS ships, such as the recently approved guidelines for fishing vessels and pleasure yachts operating in polar waters.

- .2 **Strategic coordination with international and regional forums:** In close cooperation with the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting and the Arctic Council to promote the safety and environmental requirements of the Polar Code, and to identify trends in Arctic and Antarctic shipping to inform future capacity-building efforts.

Output 5: Implementation and enforcement of IMO instruments

75 The analysis of the six CASRs (III 10/8 and III 10/INF.6) under IMSAS identified the need for additional assistance to Member States in two major recurrent areas of findings/observations regarding the effective implementation and enforcement of the relevant mandatory IMO instruments covered by IMSAS and the III Code, as the audit standard. Implementation and enforcement (flag, coastal and port State) of mandatory IMO instruments were among the identified recurrent areas, with recommendations to assist Member States in developing and implementing policies by enacting and enforcing national legislation, guidelines and instructions in all three areas – flag, coastal and port State activities (III 10/18, annex 4, appendices 1, 2 and 4; and annex to document TC 75/8/1).

76 In connection to this, the focus of this output is on supporting maritime administrations to strengthen their capabilities in the discharge of their rights, duties and responsibilities as flag, port and coastal States, specifically regarding the implementation of relevant maritime safety conventions, including the Casualty Investigation Code and the Code for Recognized Organizations, and the global harmonization of port State control, in cooperation with PSC regimes, taking into account the outcome of the CASRs (III 10/INF.6) from audits conducted under the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS), as appropriate. Additionally, Thematic Programme 9 will focus on supporting implementation of those corrective actions addressing building blocks of the maritime administration processes as stipulated in the III Code (systemic approach).

77 Effective flag State implementation is fundamental to ensuring maritime safety, security, and environmental protection. The Code for Recognized Organizations (RO Code), adopted through resolutions MEPC.237(65) and MSC.349(92) and in force since 1 January 2015, provides a mandatory framework for recognizing, authorizing and monitoring recognized organizations (ROs) in line with international standards. The RO Code consolidates criteria for assessing ROs, monitoring their performance, and ensures that ROs shall comply with the provisions of this Code, to perform, on a flag State behalf, statutory certification and services under mandatory IMO instruments and its national legislation, including SOLAS, MARPOL, Load Lines, TONNAGE, AFS, BWM, the ISM Code, the ISPS Code, and others.

78 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Regional and national flag State implementation workshops:** To enhance the capabilities of administrators and ship surveyors to fulfil their responsibilities under the III Code and RO Code, particularly in flag States' resources in relation to the oversight programme over ROs, including recognizing, authorizing, and monitoring of ROs; improve knowledge and have the sufficient qualified surveyors to carry out relevant work on survey and certification under key IMO instruments, thereby enhancing understanding of the roles and responsibilities of ROs and flag States; and address IMSAS findings and implement corrective actions.

- .2 **Global participation in port State control regime training:** Port State control officers (PSCOs) from developing regions are funded to attend training within the Tokyo MoU and Paris MoU PSC regimes with the aim to improve PSC effectiveness and foster harmonization across developing maritime regions. Regional workshops on PSC matters within developing PSC regimes should be considered in cooperation with the PSC regimes with a view to enhance PSC capacity and harmonization of PSC activities across the regions. Skills development will focus on enhancing communication, cultural awareness, maritime anti-corruption, conflict management, updating knowledge of IMO instruments, specialized training on some ship types (e.g. fishing vessels in cooperation with FAO and ILO to facilitate entry into force of the CTA 2012) for participants who can serve as trainers, enabling sustainable, localized training within regional PSC programmes.

79 In regard to marine casualty investigation, under IMO conventions, the flag State has an obligation to conduct an investigation into a very serious marine casualty or others, as defined by relevant IMO treaties, occurring to any of its ships and to report the findings to the Organization using the Marine Casualties and Incidents (MCI) module in the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS). The objective of such an investigation is to assist in determining what changes in the present regulations may be desirable and what remedial actions should be taken to enhance the safety and the protection of the marine environment. For this reason, IMO encourages the promotion of a common approach to the safety investigation of marine casualties and incidents, in particular, on the basis of the implementation of the Code of the International Standards and Recommended Practices for a Safety Investigation into a Marine Casualty or Marine Incident (Casualty Investigation Code) (resolution MSC.255(84)) and the *Guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident* (resolution A.1056(27)). This also promotes cooperation between Member States in identifying the contributing factors leading to marine casualties.

80 The potential obstacles of countries to carry out and report an investigation are contained within document III 1/18 (paragraph 5.24) as well as those identified in the root causes of relevant findings in IMSAS. As of May 2024 (documents III 10/8; and III 10/INF.6, paragraph 28), the outcome of the analysis of CASRs regarding flag States' investigation highlighted most recurrent findings and observations are related to independence and impartiality of the investigations, decision to open an investigation, powers of the investigators, including to board a ship, to initiate an investigation, reporting to IMO, release of reports to the public, and other requirements of the Casualty Investigation Code and the III Code.

81 To support Member States in this regard, IMO's multiphase approach to capacity-building will assist Member States at a global, regional and national level in the 2026-2027 biennium, as follows:

- .1 **E-learning Foundation Course and Workshop:** Noting the ongoing work of the Committee in regard to the development of an IMO e-Learning Implementation Plan, analysis supports a proposal to develop a new marine casualty e-Learning course as a "phase 1" mandatory requirement prior to attending an in-person training, allowing IMO to scale up the content and enhance the learning outcomes to bridge the capability gaps as identified through the audit analysis. The foundation course would cover important introductory topics such as current legislation and regulations, roles and responsibilities, the international legal framework, types of events, investigation methodology, development of timelines, data collection, evidence gathering including interviewing techniques, risk management, human factors and analysing the impact of fatigue, stress and other human element, training investigators, safety recommendations and reporting and communication of information.

- .2 **Marine casualty attachment programme:** The second phase is a trial on practical training for responsible officers including a five-day attachment or internship programme to gain hands-on experience in conducting investigations from partner Member States with safety investigation bodies/bureaux. Selected participants can then become future trainers for their respective organizations.
- .3 **Supporting Member State implementation:** To support Members States in institutionalizing marine casualty capability, including development of the legal framework; establishing independent, impartial and permanent investigation bodies to investigate marine casualties and incidents; cooperation with other States; and establishment of training courses to train their own investigators.

Output 6: Safe handling of cargoes, including dangerous goods in packaged form, solid bulk cargoes and containers, identification of alternative fuels and new technologies (GHG)

82 The application of mandatory training provisions and the recommended training needs for shore-side personnel involved in the transport of dangerous goods, as contained in the IMDG Code, continue to be a priority for many Member States. In a similar manner, the safe handling of solid bulk cargoes, as regulated in the IMSBC Code, remains another important priority. Likewise, the stowage and securing of cargo transport units and their continuous loss at sea is a growing priority for Member States and stakeholders. Additionally, there is a global interest regarding the safe transport of fuels and dangerous goods and solid bulk cargoes by sea, taking also into account developments on alternative fuels in the connection to the GHG safety agenda.

83 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Capacity-building workshops:** To assist Member States through shore-side personnel in enhancing their procedures on safe management and handling of containers (e.g. port infrastructure, procedures and processes, storage).
- .2 **Capacity-building workshops on the safe handling of dangerous goods in package form and solid bulk cargoes:** To assist Member States through shore-side personnel in enhancing their capacity to effectively implement the provisions of the IMDG and IMSBC Codes, improve enforcement, and promote best practices in managing these mandatory instruments.

Output 7: Safety of navigation, including ships' routing measures and ship reporting systems, and implementation of Electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) S-100 products

84 The implementation of effective routing measures and ship reporting systems is essential for the enhancement of safety of navigation. *General provisions on ships' routing* (resolution A.572(14), as amended) and the associated Guidance (MSC.1/Circ.1060, as amended) outline the criteria for proposals for ships' routing systems. Likewise, the revised Guidelines and criteria for ship reporting systems (resolution MSC.433(98)) provide the criteria for planning, proposing and implementing ship reporting systems. The continuous review and update of existing routing measures and ship reporting systems, as well as the establishment of new ones, are essential for the enhancement of safe navigation, reducing the risk of collisions and grounding, and protecting the marine environment.

85 The adoption of the revised Performance standards for electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS) (resolution MSC.530(106)/Rev.1) introduced a phased-in implementation for the IHO S-100 Universal Hydrographic Data Model used by ECDIS equipment optionally installed on or after 1 January 2026 and for all ECDIS equipment installed on or after 1 January 2029. Electronic navigational data service (ENDS) issued for ECDIS use by or on the authority of a Government, authorized hydrographic office or other relevant Government institution, should conform to the IHO standards in order to meet the provisions in resolution MSC.530(106)/Rev.1. Capacity-building efforts over the 2026-2027 biennium will support the need to ensure that services and products are readily available to provide the necessary data and product in S-100 format by 1 January 2026.

86 Ships' routing measures have been established in most of the major congested shipping areas of the world, reducing the number of collisions and groundings. At the same time, there are areas where maritime traffic is unregulated or where the establishment of, or amendments to, routing measures could enhance the safety of navigation. There is an opportunity to raise awareness across Member States, particularly those experiencing an increasing volume of maritime traffic along their coasts, of the benefits of establishing ships' routing measures to regulate the traffic, or to review the effectiveness of existing measures. The aim is to assist consideration of the establishment, or making amendments to, routing measures and therefore contribute towards safer passage of maritime traffic off their coast.

87 There is one thematic long-term project aligned with this output titled SMART-C Traffic (2023-2026), which aims to develop and pilot a SMART-Maritime Traffic Management System in the Philippines, a pilot developing country. The project's goal is to create and operate a Web-based e-Navigation service designed to efficiently analyse and manage maritime safety information in an Internet-based environment. The project has been laying down groundwork in collaboration with the Philippines, initiating a needs assessment in this area. The lessons learned through this pilot project will help to inform future capacity-building needs.

88 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States through the ITCP as follows:

- .1 **Participation in international and regional forums on safety of navigation:** Allows IMO to engage in strategic and practical forums with other UN international development partners and maritime professionals from across the regional community to progress effective measures that improve navigational safety. Keeping abreast of emerging technologies and best practices, enhancing cooperation, and strengthening capacity is critical. For example, the joint WMO/IMO international symposium that aims to better understand and bridge the gaps between the meteorological and oceanographic (met-ocean) experts and the maritime community.

89 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Regional and sub-regional workshops on the development and implementation of S-100:** To address the gap between current capabilities and the forthcoming requirements by supporting the production, dissemination, and management of navigational data services and products compliant with the S-100 framework, in collaboration with joint initiatives coordinated by IHO under a multi-agency approach.
- .2 **Technical advice on vessel traffic services:** IMO, in collaboration with IALA, will assist Member States with assessments of VTS against the requirements relating to human resources, equipment, maintenance,

infrastructure, communications and all other aspects associated with the proper operation of the VTS to strengthen their services dedicated to safety of navigation and monitoring of maritime traffic. This includes support to the implementation and or upgrade of shore-based infrastructure for radiocommunications (VDES and NAVDAT), which requires multi agency coordination.

- .3 **Train-the-trainer and national/regional training on vessel traffic services:** To equip maritime professionals with the skills and knowledge required to train others in VTS within the country. The training aligns with international standards, ensuring that participants are well-prepared to disseminate their knowledge across the region.
- .4 **Workshops on ships' routing and ship reporting systems:** To provide Member States with the necessary knowledge and ability to plan and design suitable ships' routing and ship reporting systems for international and national use, as well as provide understanding of other safety of navigation measures for coastal States.

Output 8: Search and rescue (SAR) and related services provided as part of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)

90 Although SAR is well developed in some parts of the world, it remains underdeveloped in many other parts. IMO instruments relating to SAR and GMDSS, in particular the SAR and SOLAS Conventions, along with the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual, outline how countries can assist each other to achieve effective coverage of the SAR provisions around their coastlines and in some cases far-reaching SAR regions beyond their territorial seas or exclusive economic zones. In this regard, collaboration with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) through the IMO/ICAO Joint Working Group (JWG) on SAR, and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is important to ensure harmonized standards, efficient use of communication technologies, and coordinated emergency response systems across the maritime and aviation sectors.

91 The analysis of the four CASRs showed a lack of effectiveness in the implementation of SOLAS regulation V/7 (Search and rescue services). Proposed assistance to Member States could focus on raising awareness regarding the development of plans for cooperation between SAR services and passenger ships; encouraging cooperation between Member States in establishing SAR services; and reviewing existing training programmes on the implementation of the SAR Convention to ensure that issues reported in audits are included (III 7/17, annex 4, appendix 4).

92 Furthermore, it is important to ensure that SOLAS Contracting Governments provide adequate radiocommunication services, including shore-based facilities, for the mobile satellite service and maritime mobile services, as required by SOLAS regulation IV/5. The recognition of new mobile satellite services for use in the GMDSS, including the mandatory dissemination of maritime safety information and SAR-related information over those systems, and the implementation of new terrestrial radiocommunication systems (such as NAVDAT) are essential for the safety of navigation and the search and rescue of persons in distress at sea.

93 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Regional and national SAR needs assessment:** To evaluate the legal frameworks, geographic risks, available infrastructure, human resources, communication systems in line with GMDSS requirements and coordination mechanisms of existing maritime SAR operations. The aim is to promote regional collaboration, identify capability gaps, training needs and resource shortfalls while examining inter-agency and regional cooperation, community involvement and funding sustainability. The assessment aligns SAR capacity with international standards to improve operational readiness and inform strategic planning through a prioritized action plan and resource mobilization strategy.
- .2 **Regional Workshops on SAR Mission Coordination (SMC):** To enhance the operational efficiency and strategic coordination capabilities of national SAR services. The workshop aligns with the IAMSAR Manual, Volume II, as well as the requirements of chapter 3 of the SAR Convention and the mandatory minimum requirements of regulation V/7.1 of the SOLAS Convention, 1974.
- .3 **Support the development of National SAR Plans:** Provide recommendations and improvements for national SAR plans to strengthen Member States' ability to respond effectively to maritime emergencies, improving coordination, compliance with international standards, and ultimately saving lives at sea. IMO will facilitate a multi-agency approach to address IMSAS findings related to cooperation, especially with passenger ships and other SAR services.
- .4 **Participation in international and regional SAR forums:** Allows IMO to engage in strategic and operational forums with SAR practitioners from across partner agencies in the regions to facilitate the harmonization of global SAR standards, raise awareness of international developments, deliver technical assistance as part of operational exercises and workshops, and inform ongoing regulatory developments, e.g. the IMO/ICAO Joint Working Group on SAR. Engagement will also be a key mechanism for identifying future capacity-building needs for TC planning purposes.

THEME 2: ENHANCED GLOBAL MARITIME SECURITY RESULTING IN FEWER SECURITY INCIDENTS AND STRENGTHENED PROTECTION OF SHIPS AND SEAFARERS

Overall approach

94 IMO has within its mandate making trade and travel by sea as safe and secure as possible. IMO has developed suitable regulations and guidance to manage and mitigate any threats with the potential to compromise maritime security, including the special measures to enhance maritime security, specifically SOLAS chapter XI-2 and the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS Code). Other maritime security measures established by IMO include the implementation of the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA) and the security provisions of the FAL Convention, Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) systems, as well as IMO's maritime cyber security guidelines and related implementation of cyber risk management in accordance with resolution MSC.428 (98) and MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev 2. The aim of the ISPS Code is to ensure that the applicable ocean going ships and port facilities of IMO Member States are implementing the highest possible standards of security.

95 The United Nations Security Council has also adopted several resolutions concerning counter-terrorism under chapter VII of its Charter, which are relevant to the Organization's work in enhancing maritime security. Additionally, the UN General Assembly has adopted various resolutions, including those outlining a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. In connection to this, several United Nations agencies, bodies, funds, and programmes, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate (CTED) and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT), along with international and regional intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, such as the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), the European Commission and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), have also developed guidance, standards and multilateral instruments targeting security in various transport modes and sectors of the supply chain; and conduct activities and programmes aimed at fostering the implementation of effective security measures (e.g. the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Organization of American States (OAS)). CTED conducts country assessment visits on behalf of the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC), to monitor how States are implementing their counter-terrorism obligations, especially under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001). IMO is one of the specialized UN agencies that participates in these visits as the lead for the port component of the visits, which aim to assess the implementation of all related maritime security measures under IMO instruments.

96 IMO also deals with matters addressing the threat posed by piracy and armed robbery against ships, which have been on IMO's agenda since the early 1980s. In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the focus was on the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. More recently, since 2005, IMO has focused on piracy off the coast of Somalia, in the Gulf of Aden and the wider Indian Ocean, and is currently implementing capacity-building activities for enhancing maritime security in West and Central Africa, in line with the region's maritime security agreements. The Organization, with support and cooperation from the shipping industry, has, through the years, developed and adopted a number of anti-piracy measures, which have contributed towards the mitigation of the negative impact posed by piracy worldwide. This includes resolutions A.1159(32) on *Prevention and Suppression of Piracy, Armed Robbery Against Ships and Illicit Maritime Activity in the Gulf of Guinea* and A.1025(26) on *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships*. This has resulted in initiatives such as the Code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden (Djibouti Code of Conduct), the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct 2017, agreed between countries in and around the western Indian Ocean, and the Code of Conduct concerning the repression of piracy, armed robbery against ships, and illicit maritime activity in West and Central Africa (Yaoundé Code of Conduct).

97 The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) has recognized the importance of capacity-building to support Member States in the implementation of these measures by including a thematic priority for technical cooperation related to maritime security and anti-piracy measures (MSC 110/20/3, paragraphs 4.2 and 9).

98 Taking this into consideration, IMO adopts a proactive and integrated partnership approach to its capacity-building goals in regard to enhancing security in the international maritime transport sector. Through its capacity-building efforts, IMO aims to help developing countries in the effective implementation of the associated IMO regulations and guidance, with a particular focus on developing human resources, building institutional capacity and maritime security governance, through the creation of national maritime security committees and national maritime security strategies. IMO continually monitors evolving geopolitical challenges in order to provide relevant and targeted support to Member States.

99 The TC Fund allocation for this thematic programme has considered the existing IMO maritime security projects (TC 75/3(a), paragraphs 127 to 141) that are supported by generous donor contributions, while recognizing that these projects may have specific geographic or thematic scopes distinct from the broader objective of this thematic programme, and that TC funds remain necessary to support activities outside the scope of the existing initiatives as per below:

- .1 **West and Central Africa Maritime Security Programme:** Provides direct assistance to Member States in the region with a view to developing and enhancing their ability to address security threats and challenges in their maritime domains, it also supports the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCC), and the regional entities under the YCC Architecture.
- .2 **Safe Seas for Africa Project, Western Indian Ocean component (WIO) and Gulf of Guinea (GoG) component:** Contributes to effective and sustainable maritime security in Africa by strengthening maritime security capacity, supporting national and regional authorities and regional coordination. Both components also aim to improve maritime domain awareness and governance.
- .3 **Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC)/Jeddah Amendment:** Supports Member States in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden in building capacity to counter piracy and other threats to maritime security.
- .4 **Regional Programme for Maritime Security in the Red Sea Area:** IMO is engaged in coordinated actions with INTERPOL, UNODC and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in support of participating countries, namely Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen, to develop capacities and promote adequate security and safety standards for maritime, port and land-based law-enforcement authorities, in line with the objectives of the 2050 Africa's Integrated Maritime Strategy.
- .5 **Port Security and Safety of Navigation in Eastern and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean:** Under an agreement with UNODC, IMO is an implementing partner (alongside UNODC, INTERPOL and the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC)) delivering training focusing on the implementation of the ISPS Code, including Port Facility Security Assessments (PFSAs) and the formulation of Port Facility Security Plans (PFSPs).
- .6 **International Maritime Security Trust Fund (IMST):** Member State contributions to the IMST Fund are utilized to enable IMO to fulfil its commitment to provide technical assistance through the ITCP to Member States by implementing maritime and port security measures, including SOLAS chapter XI-2 and the ISPS Code.
- .7 **Boosting African Implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (BAY):** The project is geared towards bolstering maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea. By offering direct support to the three regional bodies, namely the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), the initiative seeks to enhance the current state of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct's application. Additionally, the project offers backing to the Inter-regional Coordination Centre (ICC).

IMO focus in 2026-2027

100 Through the provision of targeted capacity-building to SOLAS Contracting Governments, IMO aims to promote the continued establishment and strengthening of effective ship and port facility security measures (SOLAS chapter XI-2 and ISPS Code), including support for LRIT implementation, and the enhancement of safety and security of ship/port interface, in accordance with the relevant IMO standards and recommendations.

101 This will involve IMO assessing the implementation of the various instruments, identifying those in need of assistance, and developing appropriate programmes in line with emerging needs and threats, including maritime situational awareness, Uncrewed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), cyber security, and passenger and baggage screening at port facilities, inside threats, and the whole-of-government approach to maritime security. Additionally, IMO aims to promote national, regional and sub-regional cooperation and coordination to strengthen maritime security, assist States becoming SOLAS Contracting Governments, and build partnerships designed to combat terrorism and all forms of maritime crime.

102 Utilizing newly revised comprehensive training materials, and taking into account current threats to maritime and port security, IMO will assist Member States to improve the implementation of IMO maritime security measures as follows:

- .1 **Training and workshops to support the development of core institutional maritime security capabilities:** For enhanced maritime security at the ship/port interface, including development of Port and Maritime Security Strategies; Port and National Maritime Security Committees to promote and encourage a multi-agency, whole-of-government approach to maritime security and maritime law enforcement issues; and establishment of National Maritime Security Risk Registers.
- .2 **Review national legislation in relation to ISPS Code requirements:** To ensure that domestic legal frameworks are aligned with international standards, by identifying legal gaps, overlaps or inconsistencies that may hinder effective implementation of security measures at ports and on board ships.
- .3 **Training for maritime security officials:** To conduct effective self-assessments of compliance and maritime security drills and exercises, in accordance with the applicable provisions of the ISPS Code and relevant IMO guidance, thereby strengthening the technical capability of Port Facility Security Officers (PFSOs), representatives of the Designated Authority (DA), port security officials and managers, ship and company security officers, and other personnel with maritime security related duties to perform their duties in accordance with the requirements of the IMO Maritime Security measures.
- .4 **Training on IMO's cyber maritime security regulations and related implementation of cyber risk management:** Currently under development, this training course will aim to improve readiness to prevent, mitigate and address cybersecurity risks, resulting in strengthened maritime security for ships and reduced susceptibility to threats.

- .5 **Support the establishment of maritime situational awareness systems:**
To help Member States enhance their ability to monitor, understand and respond to activities in their maritime domains, e.g. systems that provide real-time data and intelligence on vessel movements, potential threats and maritime incidents, enabling authorities to detect and deter illicit activities.

- .6 **Strategic coordination and engagement with other UN Organizations:**
Cross sector collaboration, including all UN agencies, programmes, funds, offices and bodies; and intergovernmental and regional organizations on matters related to maritime security and in support to the objectives of the UN, including the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

THEME 3: ENHANCED PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT

Overall approach

103 Since IMO assumed responsibility for pollution issues, soon after it began functioning in 1959, it has subsequently adopted a wide range of measures to prevent and control pollution caused by ships and to mitigate the effects of any damage that may occur as a result of maritime operations and accidents. These measures have been shown to be successful in reducing ship-sourced pollution and illustrate the commitment of the Organization and the shipping industry towards protecting the environment. Of the 51 treaty instruments for the regulation of international shipping IMO has adopted so far, 21 are directly related to the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

104 To support Member States with this extensive regulatory framework, IMO's ITCP provides technical assistance, capacity-building and institutional strengthening to developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs, to assist countries in the ratification, implementation and enforcement of the provisions of IMO's environmental conventions and protocols, including MARPOL, the BWM, Hong Kong, AFS and OPRC Conventions, the OPRC-HNS Protocol and the London Convention and Protocol, as well as the relevant liability conventions, such as CLC, the Fund, Bunker and HNS Conventions. The overall goal is to protect the marine environment as intended by the purpose underlying each instrument, as well as to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

105 IMO's ITCP provides an effective response to Member States' technical assistance needs and can be adapted to address new challenges and emerging issues, such as the reduction of marine plastic litter from ships and addressing underwater radiated noise from shipping. The wide range of technical assistance delivered by the Organization underlines the important role that technical cooperation plays in our work to promote the implementation of IMO regulatory instruments. It promotes the development of sustainable maritime infrastructure and human resource capacity, fosters regional and global partnerships, and contributes to the reduction of the environmental impact of international shipping. Assisting countries in working towards sustainable socio-economic development and enhanced marine environmental protection brings multiple benefits, including cleaner waters and coastlines, increased tourism, improved access to uncontaminated fish stocks and more effective integrated coastal zone management.

106 To focus IMO's capacity-building efforts, the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), at its eighty-third session, approved six thematic priorities related to the marine environment for the ITCP for the 2026-2027 biennium (MEPC 83/17, paragraph 16.3; and MEPC 83/17/Add.1, annex 21), and referred them to TC 75 for consideration, with a view to approval. Each priority is outlined as a specific output below, along with a detailed explanation of how IMO will address them during the 2026-2027 biennium.

107 This approach underpins the Organization's commitment to environmental stewardship and supports Member States in achieving the relevant targets of the UN SDGs, particularly SDG 14: Life Below Water. Most of IMO's capacity-building efforts are organized in partnership with regional organizations around the world, contributing to the successful implementation of technical cooperation activities.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Assisting countries with the implementation of MARPOL Annexes I to V, also taking into consideration relevant IMSAS audit outcomes, the IMO Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, the environmental requirements of the Polar Code, as well as requirements for Special Areas and Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs)

108 This output is aimed at assisting Member States to fulfil their obligations to prevent pollution of the marine environment by ship-sourced pollution, as covered by MARPOL Annexes I to V, namely oil from operational discharges and accidental spills (Annex I), noxious liquid substances (Annex II), harmful substances (Annex III), sewage from ships (Annex IV), and garbage from ships (Annex V). To support the effective implementation of these annexes, the IMSAS audits play a critical role.

109 With MARPOL being one of the mandatory IMO instruments assessed for its effective implementation and enforcement under IMSAS, the analysis of six CASRs (III 10/INF.6) offers essential information that guides IMO's approach to capacity-building in this regard. Specifically, 26% of the overall audit findings were in relation to the lack of implementation of the requirements of MARPOL (III 10/INF.6, paragraph 49). The major areas identified under MARPOL were general obligations in accordance with article I, which require the Parties to give full and complete effect to the Convention and the annexes thereto by implementing national provisions; communication of information in accordance with article 11; provisions for oil filtering equipment under regulation 14 of Annex I; lack of provision of reception facilities under Annexes I, II, IV, V and VI; and casualties to ships under article 12 (obligation of investigating casualties affecting the marine environment) (III 10/INF.6, paragraph 54).

110 Further, from 1,200 root causes associated with reported IMSAS findings concerning MARPOL, 433 difficulties were related to the area of management and 357 to the area of legislation for various processes of a maritime administration, and these were the main contributing factors for non-effective implementation of the most recurrent references to MARPOL. These two areas of root causes were reported as underlying factors with the rate of 65.8% (III 10/INF.6, paragraphs 81 to 85).

111 This output also covers the *2025 Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships* (2025 Action Plan), aimed at contributing to the global solution for preventing marine plastic litter from entering the oceans through ship-based activities. The 2025 Action Plan builds on existing policy and regulatory frameworks, and identifies opportunities to enhance these frameworks and introduce new supporting measures to address the issue of marine plastic litter from ships. This complements the goals of MARPOL Annex V, which restricts the disposal of garbage at sea. In this context, IMO has established an existing dedicated

OceanLitter Programme to address sea-based marine plastic litter from the shipping and fisheries industries through support to implementation of national priorities, delivered in collaboration with FAO. This consists of three projects: the GloLitter Partnerships Project (GloLitter) which has recently mobilized additional resources to include support to the Africa and Latin America regions, the Regional Litter Project (RegLitter) supporting the Asia region, and a new project entitled Plastic Reduction in the Oceans: Sustaining and Enhancing Actions on Sea-based Sources (PRO-SEAS) (TC 75/4, paragraph 2.6).

112 The TC Fund allocation for the 2026-2027 biennium takes into consideration technical assistance delivered under IMO's related long-term thematic projects, which includes the development of a new e-learning course on MARPOL Annex V.

113 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Maintenance and update of existing e-learning courses:** Any necessary revisions to existing e-learning courses on MARPOL Annexes II, III, V and PSSAs (programmed in existing biennium) will be undertaken during the biennium to ensure relevant and up-to-date courses are available for all Member States.

114 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Identification of obstacles to the effective implementation of the MARPOL Convention:** Support Member States in implementing aspects of their IMSAS corrective action plans to address "root causes" related to MARPOL implementation (Annexes I to V), focusing on management and legislation areas.
- .2 **Incorporation of the MARPOL Annexes I-V into national legislation:** Support Member States with the drafting of legislation to incorporate MARPOL into national law.
- .3 **Development of proposals for designating Special Areas and PSSAs:** Support Member States in identifying and developing the necessary requirements for submitting proposals to MEPC for the designation of Special Areas and Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSAs).
- .4 **Training workshops on 2025 Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships:** Support the implementation of the 2025 Action Plan for countries not covered under the OceanLitter Programme by assisting countries with the development of national action plans.

Output 2: Assisting countries with the implementation of the 2023 IMO Strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships, notably the short and mid-term GHG reduction measures and resolution MEPC.367(79) on National Action Plans (NAPs); and MARPOL Annex VI and related instruments, in particular the NO_x Technical Code, the consistent implementation of the global limit on the sulphur content of ships' fuel oil (IMO 2020) and Emission Control Areas (ECAs)

115 Thematic priority MEPC 2 is a separate thematic programme titled "Theme 4: Supporting climate action and clean air in shipping" (paragraph 148).

Output 3: Strengthening national and regional capacity and fostering regional cooperation for effective and consistent implementation of the BWM Convention, taking into account the comprehensive review of the Convention under the experience-building phase, the recently amended AFS Convention and the revised Biofouling Guidelines. In addition, assisting countries to raise awareness, build capacity and support the implementation of the Revised guidelines for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life (MEPC.1/Circ.906/Rev.1)

116 This output is aimed at assisting Member States to fulfil their obligations to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species and protect marine ecosystems. There are a number of related instruments that Member States may require technical assistance from IMO, notably, the:

- .1 International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004 (BWM Convention) and associated mandatory Code, i.e. Code for Approval of Ballast Water Management Systems (BWMS Code);
- .2 International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-Fouling Systems on Ships, 2001 (AFS Convention); and
- .3 2023 Guidelines for the control and management of ships' biofouling to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species (2023 Biofouling Guidelines).

117 The BWM Convention, adopted in 2004 and in force since 2017, is a critical global treaty that addresses the transfer of invasive aquatic species through ships' ballast water, thereby safeguarding marine biodiversity. It currently has 97 Contracting States, representing 93.73% of world tonnage. This broad participation underscores the global commitment to managing ballast water to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species. Recent activities have focused on enhancing implementation and compliance of the Convention, as well as providing support for the harmonization of procedures pursuant to the BWM Convention in the Mediterranean Sea (2022), the wider Caribbean region (2023), and the Pacific (2025).

118 The AFS Convention entered into force on 17 September 2008 and currently has 99 Contracting States, representing 96.05% of world tonnage. Capacity-building delivered in response to requests for technical assistance on primarily focused on ratification, implementation and enforcement of the AFS Convention.

119 Following the adoption of the *2023 Guidelines for the control and management of ships' biofouling to minimize the transfer of invasive aquatic species* (2023 Biofouling Guidelines) (resolution MEPC.378(80)) by MEPC 80, there has been increasing support for the development of mandatory requirements for biofouling management, likely in the form of a new convention. In this context, a proposal for a new output to develop such mandatory requirements was submitted to MEPC 83 and approved. MEPC 83 also approved, in principle, the draft terms of reference for this output, and instructed the PPR Sub-Committee to refine them.

120 Existing IMO capacity-building initiatives in regard to biofouling management include the TEST Biofouling project (2022-2026), which complements and builds upon the achievements of the GloFouling Partnerships by providing hands-on training and technology demonstration pilot projects for biofouling management, prevention and control at the national

and regional levels. This approach prioritizes SIDS and LDCs, including the needs of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific regions working closely with the project's implementing partners.

121 With the purpose of increasing the capacity of Member States to effectively implement IMO instruments related to BWM and Biofouling, it will be mandatory for participants to complete the relevant IMO e-learning courses prior to in-person training.

122 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Maintenance and update of existing e-learning courses:** Any necessary revisions/updating to existing e-learning courses on BWM and Biofouling management will be undertaken during the biennium to ensure relevant and up-to-date courses are available for all Member States. This will ensure participants have a base foundational knowledge of the subjects, allowing IMO to scale-up in-person training content, resulting in enhanced learning outcomes.

123 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Technical advice to harmonize procedures on the BWM Convention:** Further development of draft harmonized procedures of the BWM Convention, aimed at aligning regional implementation, sharing lessons learned, streamlining compliance, and addressing shared environmental challenges.
- .2 **Training workshops on the ratification and implementation of the BWM Convention:** Support Member States in developing regional and national capacity by raising awareness and promoting ratification, effective implementation and enforcement of the BWM Convention, taking into consideration the experience-building phase, notably the obligations of Parties under the Convention; compliance monitoring and enforcement for port State control; risk mitigation; and creating an increased network of experts in ballast water management and control.
- .3 **Incorporation of the BWM Convention into national legislation:** Support Member States with the drafting of legislation to incorporate the BWM Convention into national law.
- .4 **Capacity-building workshops on the AFS Convention:** Promote the ratification, effective implementation and enforcement of the AFS Convention and its transposition into national law.
- .5 **Training workshops on the 2023 Biofouling Guidelines:** Enhance Member States' understanding and awareness of the Guidelines, to strengthen knowledge on effective approaches to biofouling management built under the GloFouling Partnerships project.

124 Under this thematic priority, underwater radiated noise from shipping is also addressed. In this regard, MEPC 80 approved the *Revised guidelines for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping to address adverse impacts on marine life* (MEPC.1/Circ.906) (Revised URN Guidelines), which contain an updated set of non-mandatory recommendations to help reduce the impact of ship-generated noise on marine mammals and ecosystems. In 2024, an update to the Guidelines was approved by MEPC 82

and a revision was issued as MEPC.1/Circ.906/Rev.1. To address barriers to the uptake of the Revised URN Guidelines, MEPC 82 also approved the *Action plan for the reduction of underwater noise from commercial shipping* (MEPC 82/17/Add.1, annex 8) (URN Action Plan), as a dynamic document to be reviewed and revised as necessary, depending on the progress made.

125 IMO, in cooperation with UNDP, established the Global Partnership for Mitigation of Underwater Noise from Shipping (GloNoise Partnership) project aimed at assisting developing countries and regions to raise awareness, build capacity and collect information to assist the policy dialogue on mitigating URN from shipping. During the 2026-2027 biennium, IMO's ITCP will complement these capacity development efforts with TC-funded interventions by conducting activities identified in the URN Action Plan and developing learning tools to build technical cooperation and improve implementation of the revised URN Guidelines.

Output 4: Enhancing countries' capacities and promoting national and regional cooperation for the ratification, and effective implementation and enforcement of the Hong Kong International Convention on Ship Recycling for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, in particular during the experience-building phase.

126 Ship recycling is one of the best examples of the circular economy: approximately 96% of a ship can be fully recycled; however, if not conducted in an environmentally sound manner, it can be a pollution-heavy industry and one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. There is a need to ensure that countries, in particular developing countries, have adequate regulatory systems and oversight mechanisms to avoid workplace accidents and the release of hazardous waste into the environment.

127 The Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (Hong Kong Convention), adopted in 2009 and set to enter into force on 26 June 2025, is designed to ensure that ships, at the end of their operational lives, are recycled in a manner that safeguards human health, safety and the environment. It is envisaged that, in turn, this will result in an increasing number of Member States requesting technical assistance from IMO on how to accede to, implement and enforce the Convention.

128 IMO currently has one related donor funded project, Safe and Environmentally Sound Ship Recycling (SENSREC). This project initially supported Bangladesh to accede to the Convention in 2023 by building the national capacities to develop and implement a legal, policy and institutional reform road map to better facilitate the accession to the Convention. It has since been extended for another two years, in Pakistan, commencing in 2025, and is estimated to run until 2026, also supported by donor funds (see TC 75/4, paragraph 2.2).

129 Over the next biennium, IMO will complement these previous capacity-building efforts with TC-Funded initiatives, focusing on other ship-recycling countries and major flag and port States. In line with the new output agreed at MEPC 83, any required capacity-building needs identified during the experience-building phase will be taken into consideration as part of ITCP planning.

130 Capacity-building efforts will utilize the *How-to-Do-it Manual* on the Hong Kong Convention, due for completion in 2025, which aims to provide useful, practical information and guidance to Governments and stakeholders in international shipping and ship recycling sectors, particularly those of developing countries, on the technical, economic and legal implications of ratifying, implementing and enforcing the Convention. Additionally, the *Gender Sensitization Manual*, developed under the SENSREC project in 2024, will be used as a key tool to demonstrate how integrating women into ship recycling operations enhances team dynamics, stimulates innovation, and reflects positively on industry commitments to equality and sustainability.

131 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Capacity-building workshops on the Hong Kong Convention:** Focusing on the development of road maps to support Member States through the process of ratification, effective implementation and enforcement of the HKC. Concurrently, IMO will support the improvement of Member States' understanding of the provisions of the HKC, including matters related to the establishment of recycling yards and specific safety and environmental requirements. During the experience-building phase, the focus will also be on exchanging experiences, best practices, and identifying the gaps and development of recommendations.
- .2 **Training for PSC/FSC officers:** Development of training materials and guidance documents to enhance the capacity of Parties to implement and enforce the Convention, with particular emphasis on training PSC/FSC officers on HKC-related inspections.

Output 5: Assisting countries with the implementation of the OPRC Convention and the OPRC-HNS Protocol and enhancing regional cooperation in the field of marine pollution preparedness, response and coordination, as well as addressing aspects of the implementation of the relevant international regimes on liability and compensation for marine spills of oil and hazardous and noxious substances (HNS) pollution

132 The OPRC Convention and OPRC/HNS Protocol, notably articles 12 (OPRC) and 10 (OPRC-HNS), designate IMO to perform a number of functions in respect of oil and HNS Pollution preparedness and response. These include information services: to receive, collate and disseminate information on oil/HNS pollution incidents; education and training: to promote training and international symposiums; technical services: to facilitate cooperation and support R&D, to provide technical advice on establishing national capacity; technical assistance: to facilitate the provision of technical assistance and advice, upon the request of States faced with major oil pollution incidents. Ultimately, with the aim of further reducing oil pollution incidents.

133 Further to requests for assistance by Member States, IMO may provide an array of services in the event of a major pollution incident, such as providing remote technical advice, facilitating access to expertise on technical subject experts (salvage, compensation) or bilaterally with other State Parties, or occasionally deploying specialized experts on-site to support countries facing major pollution incidents. Despite IMO's best efforts to prevent the risk of pollution from ships, spills will inevitably occur. The risk of major oil spills continues to be a significant threat to the fragile ecosystems and coastlines of littoral States around the world resulting from accidental oil pollution from vessels, oil exploration/production and the bulk transportation and handling of crude oil and related products. Incidents leading to oil pollution can result in serious ecological and socio-economic damage and disruption. Time and experience have demonstrated the success in tackling a major spill is in ensuring a good level of preparedness for a timely, efficient and coordinated response to limit the adverse consequences of pollution incidents involving oil and HNS.

134 It is on this basis that IMO's ITCP provides assistance to the 64% of IMO Member States who are Parties / Contracting Governments to the two international instruments that provide the framework to facilitate international cooperation and mutual assistance in preparing for and responding to major oil pollution incidents, the International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Cooperation 1990 (OPRC 90) and the Protocol on Preparedness, Response and Cooperation to Pollution Incidents by Hazardous and Noxious Substances, 2000 (OPRC-HNS Protocol), which extends this regulatory framework to address pollution incidents involving hazardous and noxious substances, i.e. chemicals.

135 Capacity-building efforts specifically focus on supporting Member States to strengthen their national response capacity through implementation of the requirements of these instruments, which include the establishment of a national system for responding to oil and HNS pollution incidents, including a designated national authority, a national operational contact point and a national contingency plan. This needs to be backstopped by a minimum level of response equipment, communications plans, regular training and exercises. In addition to the requirement for implementing national response systems, the two instruments also promote cooperation amongst Parties / Contracting Governments through the establishment of bilateral and multilateral agreements to augment national-level response capacity, when needed. They also have a number of reporting requirements that Member States must provide to IMO.

136 While both SIDS and LDCs share vulnerabilities to environmental oil spills, they have distinct characteristics that influence their susceptibility. LDCs, owing to their limited economic and infrastructural capacity, often lack the resources to effectively respond to spills. SIDS, on the other hand, are particularly vulnerable owing to their reliance on coastal resources and ecosystems, which are more susceptible to oil spill damage. As such, with a particular focus on the needs of SIDS and LDCs, IMO will focus its efforts during the 2026-2027 biennium on providing access to training and support for developing the essential preparedness and response structures and legislation, including technical support to develop and implement national oil spill contingency plans; training on dispersant use, spill response techniques and regulatory standards; and regional workshops to build cooperation and proficiency in marine pollution response.

137 As a pre-requisite to OPRC-related ITCP activities, it will be mandatory for participants to complete the related e-learning course. This will ensure that participants have a base foundational knowledge on oil spill preparedness and liability regimes, allowing IMO to scale up the training content, resulting in enhanced learning outcomes.

138 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Financial support to participate in international oil spill conferences:** To enhance knowledge and awareness of international developments and capacity-building related to oil pollution and preparedness and response, with a view to improving technical capabilities.
- .2 **Research and development forum on pollution developments:** A global R&D forum on technical advances on pollution response involving conventional and alternative fuels and strengthening regional capacity, to enhance capacity and promote knowledge transfer through the sharing of best practices and lessons learned on pollution preparedness, response and cooperation.
- .3 **Maintenance and update of existing e-learning courses:** Any necessary revisions/updating to the existing e-learning course on the OPRC Convention will be undertaken during the biennium to ensure relevant and up-to-date courses are available for all Member States.

139 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Training, educational workshops and exercises to promote ratification and implementation of relevant IMO instruments:** Through the Global Initiative (GI) Project, a successful cooperation project between IMO and IPIECA, the global oil and gas industry association for advancing

environmental and social performance, to assist countries in west and central Africa (GI WACAF), south-east Asia (GI SEA), and the Black Sea, Caspian Sea and Central Eurasia (OSPRI) with developing national structures and capability for oil spill preparedness and response. This support covers promoting the ratification and enhancing the effective implementation of the OPRC Convention, the OPRC-HNS Protocol, CLC 92, Fund 92, the Bunker Convention (BUNKERS 2001) and the HNS Convention, including legislative support.

- .2 **Support the improvement/development of national response systems and updating national oil spill contingency plans:** Development, review and updating of regional, subregional and national oil spill contingency plans (NOSCPs) and training on use of chemical dispersants, to enhance capacity for an effective and sustainable response in the event of an oil spill incident. This support includes identification of the way forward for effective implementation, developing guidelines, practical guides and checklists to help with updating the national plans; and strengthening cooperation between Government and industry within countries and between neighbouring countries.
- .3 **Support to establish national coordination structures:** Facilitating collaboration with key national government agencies and stakeholders involved in responding to oil pollution incidents, to clarify the roles, responsibilities and requirements for establishing an adequate and scalable command structure for effective management of a response to an oil spill.
- .4 **Training on the use of the Readiness Evaluation Tool for Oil Spills (RETOS):** To enable Member States to effectively conduct their own assessment and identify gaps for further action, in order to improve national oil spill preparedness, including the development of a self-paced e-learning course on RETOS for evaluating preparedness to address oil spill incidents.
- .5 **Training workshops on incident management:** Member States will be trained in the application of contingency planning and response techniques, focusing on tools, practices and procedures that can assist and effectively manage an escalating incident.
- .6 **Immediate technical advisory services to urgent emergencies:** Member States are also able to request technical assistance to meet urgent requests by Governments following marine pollution and safety incidents, notably related to supporting marine casualty investigations and preparedness and response efforts in the event of a possible oil spill. This support was previously captured under the global programme on Technical Advisory Services.

Output 6: Assisting countries in building capacity for the ratification and implementation of the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Protocol), as well as supporting countries in implementing measures aimed at conservation and sustainable governance of the ocean

140 The Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972 (London Convention) is one of the first global conventions to protect the marine environment from human activities and has been in force since 1975. In 1996, the London Protocol was agreed to further modernize the Convention and, eventually, replace it. The Protocol entered into force on 24 March 2006 and there are currently 54 Parties to the Protocol, and 101 Parties in total to the two treaties. Their objectives are to promote the effective control of all sources of marine pollution and to take all practicable steps to prevent pollution of the sea by dumping of wastes and other matter.

141 IMO is the dedicated Secretariat for the LC/LP and as such has a responsibility to facilitate technical cooperation and assistance (LP article 13). To achieve this, IMO focuses on three key areas of technical cooperation that support the implementation of measures for the conservation and sustainable governance of the ocean. The primary funding is provided through the TC Fund, supplemented by limited contributions from the donor-funded London Convention/Protocol Technical Cooperation Trust Fund, administered by the LC/LP Secretariat.

142 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Maintenance and update of existing e-learning courses:** To ensure relevant and up-to-date courses are available for all Member States, updates will occur as required during the biennium. This will also allow participants attending in-person LP training to have a base foundational knowledge of the LP, and its implementation, allowing IMO to scale-up the in-person training content, resulting in enhanced learning outcomes.

143 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Capacity-building workshops:** To promote membership of the LP, i.e. increasing the number of Parties to the LP as set out in the target to strategic direction 1 of the 2016 LP/LC Strategic Plan; and strengthen national and regional marine pollution prevention and management capacities to achieve compliance with the Protocol through its effective implementation.
- .2 **Facilitate strategic cooperation opportunities with organizations and agencies:** To ensure a coordinated approach to technical cooperation and assistance, thereby enhancing the conservation and sustainable governance of the ocean.
- .3 **Support implementation of ocean governance measures:** To raise awareness of IMO's role with respect to ocean governance and promote the implementation of relevant measures aimed at conservation and sustainable governance of the ocean.

144 Additional objectives are the promotion of marine pollution management more broadly, and, more specifically, the promotion of alternatives to dumping, including alternative disposal mechanisms, recycling and the use of cleaner production technologies.

145 During the 2026-2027 biennium, capacity-building efforts will be significantly strengthened by the Capacity-Building for Sustainable Seas - Supporting the Implementation of the London Protocol through Education and Collaborative Research (SMART-C LC/LP) project (2025-2029).

146 Work will include technical cooperation activities in support of the implementation of the LC/LP long-term strategy for technical cooperation and assistance and the 2016 Strategic Plan, and will draw on efforts under the subsidiary bodies and intersessional groups established under the treaties, e.g. the Barriers to Compliance B2C) Project and the B2C Steering Group, the LC/LP Scientific Groups and the London Protocol Compliance Group.

147 As a pre-requisite to LP-related ITCP activities, it will be mandatory for participants to complete the IMO e-learning course: e-learning course on the London Protocol and its implementation, due to be launched in late 2025. This will ensure participants have a base foundational knowledge of the subject, allowing IMO to scale up the training content, resulting in enhanced learning outcomes.

THEME 4: SUPPORTING CLIMATE ACTION AND CLEAN AIR IN SHIPPING

Overall approach

148 Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from ships reflects a global consensus on a key issue which affects both developing and developed countries. Giving priority to technical assistance that focuses on human resources development and institutional capacity-building to help developing countries improve their ability to comply with international rules and standards, and to improve the energy efficiency of ships, can make a significant contribution to limiting GHG emissions from international shipping.

149 Developing countries account for the largest portion of the world's fleet by tonnage, and some of the largest shipyards and busiest ports. Although significant progress has been achieved at the international level, there is more work to be done in regard the knowledge base, legal, policy and regulatory frameworks, and the technical and institutional capacity required to give effect to any international regime for GHG emissions from shipping. If not addressed, the lack of institutional capacities, legal arrangements, coordinated stakeholder actions and technology solutions will remain major barriers to the effective implementation of air pollution and energy efficiency standards for shipping in the developing regions.

150 In July 2023, the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), at its eightieth session (MEPC 80), unanimously adopted resolution MEPC.377(80) on *2023 IMO Strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships* (2023 IMO GHG Strategy), setting out a vision which confirms IMO's commitment to reducing GHG emissions from international shipping and to phasing them out as soon as possible, while promoting, in the context of the Strategy, a just and equitable transition. The 2023 IMO GHG Strategy provides the Organization's strategic framework setting in terms of climate ambition and action. In addition to GHG emission reduction commitments, the Strategy also outlines the barriers and supportive actions, capacity-building and technical cooperation, and research and development actions aimed at supporting Member States with the implementation of the Strategy, paying special attention to the needs of developing countries, in particular SIDS and LDCs.

151 Where the 2023 Strategy provides the Organization's overall policy direction on climate action, MARPOL Annex VI provides the legally binding framework containing mandatory requirements on the reduction of air pollution, energy efficiency and GHG emissions. MEPC regularly adopts new amendments to MARPOL Annex VI. Thus, continued support to those Member States that have ratified with the implementation of the recent and future amendments to MARPOL Annex VI remains equally important.

152 MARPOL Annex VI contains a specific regulation on "Promotion of Technical Cooperation and Transfer of Technology relating to the Improvement of Energy Efficiency of Ships", which requires Administrations, in cooperation with the Organization and other international bodies, to promote and provide, as appropriate, support directly or through IMO Member States, especially developing States that request technical assistance, thereby providing a regulatory basis for such support.

153 Other voluntary IMO instruments, such as resolution MEPC.327(75), invite Member States to develop and update voluntary National Action Plans (NAPs) with a view to contributing to reducing GHG emissions from international shipping by supporting actions at the national level, thereby also actively involving the port and energy sectors in the energy transition of shipping.

154 In line with the above, IMO provides support to Member States, especially developing States, with the implementation of the 2023 IMO Strategy and MARPOL Annex VI. This is reflected in the marine environment-related thematic priorities for the ITCP of the Organization for the 2026-2027 biennium, which were approved by MEPC 83 (MEPC 83/17, paragraph 16.3; and MEPC 83/17/Add.1, annex 21), specifically:

MEPC 2: Assisting countries with the implementation of the 2023 IMO Strategy on reduction of GHG emissions from ships, notably the short and mid-term GHG reduction measures and resolution MEPC.367(79) on National Action Plans (NAPs); and MARPOL Annex VI and related instruments, in particular the NO_x Technical Code, the consistent implementation of the global limit on the sulphur content of ships' fuel oil (IMO 2020) and Emission Control Areas (ECAs).

155 Capacity-building efforts delivered through this thematic programme aim to support States with the ratification of MARPOL Annex VI and with the implementation of the latest amendments to MARPOL Annex VI, notably through their transposition into national legislation, assisting administrations with the various different flag and port State responsibilities, such as in relation to the enforcement of the sulphur limits, the use of exhaust gas cleaning systems (EGCS), fuel consumption reporting, as well as other energy efficiency and GHG reduction requirements set out in MARPOL Annex VI. Where applicable, follow up to IMO IMSAS audit findings with respect to improving national implementation of MARPOL Annex VI, will be taken into consideration.

156 In addition, the activities will focus on further supporting the implementation of the 2023 GHG Strategy, in particular by enhancing opportunities in adopting energy-efficient technologies in ports and vessels, electrifying ferries and short-sea vessels, and preparing countries for the long-term transition by means of NAPs development, as well as unlocking finance opportunities.

157 In accordance with the 2023 Strategy, activities will focus on ensuring a safe working environment for seafarers in handling alternative fuels, as well as the effective management and use of future technologies on board ships. The need for dedicated training has been identified by IMO, which is, concurrently, comprehensively reviewing and revising its key treaty for seafarers training, the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). In this respect, collaborative efforts with stakeholders will be intensified on the implementation of training provisions to ensure the addressing of the necessary competences required for seafarers on ships using alternative fuels and new technologies, including continued Train-the-trainer programmes across all regions, taking into account the outcomes from the "Baseline Training Framework for Seafarers in Decarbonization", which has developed a training framework to help Member States and Maritime Education and Training (MET) institutions prepare seafarers for zero or near-zero emissions from ships for the global shipping industry decarbonization.

158 To ensure a just and equitable transition for all countries in the implementation of IMO's measures and the energy transition of shipping, it is necessary to look into how each region's interests and efforts can be best covered and identify what kind of cooperation and support that requires. Each activity and workshop will build on relevant discussions during IMO's fourth Innovation Forum held in October 2024, which looked into maritime project financing, cooperation amongst UN bodies, reinforcing cooperation with IMO's existing technical cooperation initiatives and projects. Moreover, the activities and workshops will address and ensure synergies with relevant IMO regional offices and IMO projects.

159 As such, the TC Fund allocation for this thematic programme will be planned in cohesion with IMO's existing portfolio of GHG projects (TC 75/3(a), paragraphs 86 to 96) and other GHG related capacity-building efforts, which include:

- .1 **GreenVoyage2050:** The development of legal and policy frameworks, NAP development (currently in Bangladesh, Belize, Cook Islands, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria and Solomon Islands) for green shipping, pilot project feasibility studies (currently on the establishment of a green fuel supply corridor between India and Singapore; modification of an inter-island ferry from conventional to hybrid propulsion in Indonesia; optimization of port operations including tugs and pilot vessels in Malaysia; electrification of ferry and terminal services in Türkiye; green shipping corridor options in Viet Nam; JIT implementation in Ghana – with support from the Global Industry Alliance to Support Low Carbon Shipping (Low Carbon GIA), and delivery of future technology demonstrations with the establishment of a financial mechanism to support developing countries to access financing for technology uptake under the Programme, and promoting industry coalition through the Low Carbon GIA.
- .2 **Global Maritime Technology Cooperation Centres (MTCC) Network (GMN):** Building upon the foundations of GMN Phase I, GMN Phase II aims to upscale the work of the regional Maritime Technology Cooperation Centres (MTCCs) located in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific. The project is supported at the regional level by the MTCCs, which provide capacity-building on specific technical and implementation needs. The primary focus in this phase is to support the adoption of energy efficiency measures and technologies through technology demonstration pilots (currently planned wind turbine for port operations in Saint Kitts and Nevis; hull cleaning solutions for target vessels in Trinidad and Tobago; waste to energy hydrogen system for port operations in Mauritius; port call data sharing in Namibia) and achieve quantifiable reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions for vessels and ports. The project also aims to establish Regional Industry Alliances (RIAs) to be linked to the Low Carbon GIA.
- .3 **GHG-SMART:** Builds global capacity for SIDS and LDCs (38 participating Member States to date) in maritime decarbonization through needs-based annual training cycles, individual development plans, professional engagement platforms, academic opportunities and international collaboration, including practical training provided to trainees.
- .4 **SMART-C GHG:** Provides capacity-building to Viet Nam and the Philippines to develop NAPs and strengthen their baseline data emission collection and analysis systems, support them in their efforts to implement the 2023 IMO GHG Strategy in a country-specific manner.

- .5 **Voluntary Multi-Donor Trust Fund (VMDTF):** Provides financial assistance to developing countries, especially SIDS and LDCs which are IMO Member States, in attending GHG related meetings at IMO Headquarters.
- .6 **Future Fuels and Technology project:** Supports regulatory decision-making at MEPC and its subsidiary bodies, notably on GHG relevant issues, by providing technical analysis and up-to-date information. Under the project, the IMO Future Fuels Online Portal also provides user-friendly access to up-to-date data on shipping decarbonization, fuel availability, technology use and fuel pricing.

160 While IMO supports the implementation of the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda, its SDGs Strategy (C 122/3(a)/1), highlights key areas where the Organization's work has the greatest impact, particularly in promoting climate action and reducing GHG emissions in shipping. These include: SDG 14 (life below water), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and SDG 5 (gender equality), next to the overarching SDG 17 (partnerships and resource mobilization). Through this thematic programme for 2026-2027, the IMO will continue to support Member States in advancing the 2030 Agenda and its related SDGs.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

161 The overall aim is for IMO to increase its training and capacity-building efforts through its ITCP and the wide portfolio of projects and partnerships dedicated to climate action and clean air, with a view to supporting Member States with implementation of the 2023 IMO GHG Strategy and MARPOL Annex VI, to promote ship energy efficiency; support energy transition of shipping, and promote a better understanding of IMO's data collection system for fuel consumption of ships.

162 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States through the delivery of training, workshops, forums and roundtable dialogues, as follows:

- .1 **Regional and national workshops on ratification and effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI:** Designed to strengthen Member States' capacity for effective implementation of MARPOL Annex VI and to assist efforts in ultimately ratifying MARPOL Annex VI. Workshops include aspects related to approaches and strategies for regulatory compliance; emissions reduction techniques; tools to monitor and control emissions from ships and inspection and certification procedures; case studies on successful Annex VI implementation in other countries; and practical exercises and simulations of inspections on board a ship, including demonstrations of emissions reduction technologies/use of alternative fuels.
- .2 **Regional and national workshops on implementation of the 2023 IMO GHG Strategy:** To provide a platform for interactive discussions that identify specific transition needs, and enhance awareness and knowledge of the GHG reduction measures in relation to the 2023 IMO GHG Strategy and ensure IMO Member States are familiar with ongoing discussions on the implementation of the Strategy, including the challenges and opportunities surrounding the decarbonization of the maritime transport sector, in particular, for SIDS and LDCs.

- .3 **Regional and national workshops on development of National Action Plans:** Enhance awareness and knowledge of the drivers, benefits and processes in developing NAPs, as well as enhancing skills to develop plans that address GHG emissions from ships, including how to identify investment needs and develop bankable project proposals; and increasing synergies with the ports and energy sectors to promote availability, affordability and uptake of future marine fuels.
- .4 **Training, workshops and studies on alternative fuels and green technologies:** To empower maritime professionals with the skills to train others on key fuels for shipping decarbonization and to enhance understanding of current progress and opportunities for adopting alternative fuels, renewable energies, and green technologies in the shipping industry, notably through supporting green and smart ports, and sharing experiences with the testing and use of new sustainable technologies.
- .5 **Participate in UN system meetings:** Increase IMO's participation in relevant UN system meetings and activities on implementation of the UN SDGs, notably SDGs 13 (Climate Action) and 14 (Life Below Water) to strengthen alignment between IMO's GHG related capacity-building work and the broader UN climate and ocean agendas, ensuring that maritime decarbonization efforts are fully recognized as part of global climate action. Active participation also enhances collaboration with other UN bodies, facilitates knowledge exchange, and opens pathways for joint initiatives, funding opportunities, and integrated solutions. It further helps amplify the maritime sector's role in delivering on the SDGs, raises the visibility of IMO's contributions, and reinforces the need for a just and equitable transition within the global sustainability framework.
- .6 **Promote the benefits and impact of marine environment capacity-building initiatives:** To increase outreach and visibility of IMO's activities related to protection of the marine environment for Member States. In particular, awareness-raising and increased visibility on the importance of gender mainstreaming, youth leadership and engagement in climate decision-making and how to ensure that it is meaningful, intersectional and inclusive.
- .7 **Conduct research on the gendered impacts of climate change:** In low-income contexts to better understand how climate-related challenges uniquely affect women and marginalized groups in the maritime sector, particularly in developing and coastal communities. This insight is crucial for designing inclusive, equitable policies and capacity-building initiatives that do not unintentionally reinforce existing inequalities.

THEME 5: ENHANCED EFFICIENCY AND HARMONIZED PROCEDURES TO FACILITATE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME TRAFFIC AND TRADE

Overall approach

163 The International Convention on the Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) is a critical IMO instrument to standardize and harmonize the movement of ships, cargo, crewmembers and passengers across borders. The controls and procedures, be they local, national or international, regulatory or commercial, all require provision of information to a range of different agencies and entities, and they require action to be taken by ships, crews and ports. For international shipping to thrive, a unified, global approach to Facilitation is vital.

164 The FAL Convention has been in force since 1967 and is kept continually amended and updated. Since April 2019, in accordance with the amendments adopted in resolution FAL.12(40), the FAL Convention makes it mandatory for ships and ports to exchange electronically the declarations identified by the Convention, and as from January 2024, with the amendments adopted in resolution FAL.14(46), the Maritime Single Window (MSW) is mandatory in all ports. Therefore, there are no longer paper documents in ports worldwide to fulfil the reporting obligations of the FAL Convention.

165 The implementation of electronic data exchange systems and MSW platforms plays a crucial role in streamlining processes, reducing administrative burdens and enhancing port operational efficiency. Despite the progress made under the FAL Convention, challenges persist in the widespread adoption and effective utilization of these tools, including gaps in understanding the processes and a lack of technical capacity. The aim is to enhance trade facilitation and promote the digitalization of port operations to boost maritime governance and operational efficiency.

166 The FAL Committee has agreed four thematic priorities for technical cooperation (FAL 49/22/Add.1, annex 9) to address the main issues and objectives emanating from the Committee, including matters related to the FAL Convention; MSW; stowaways on board and the disembarkation of migrants and refugees rescued at sea; and illegal wildlife trade (IWT).

167 Each thematic priority is reflected as an individual output below, detailing how the outputs will be addressed through IMO's capacity-building approach over the next (2026-2027) biennium. The focus will be to review and build upon the outcomes from the number of facilitation-related activities delivered across all regions in the past 10 years. This has predominantly included national seminars and national needs assessments on the implementation of measures to facilitate international maritime traffic, as well as ongoing multiphase regional projects in the Latin America and Caribbean regions on the development of MSW, which will continue into the next biennium.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Enhance the facilitation of international maritime traffic in the context of trade facilitation, through capacity development, to promote wider acceptance, understanding and effective implementation of the FAL Convention, also in the context of a pandemic crisis, taking into account the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and the provisions in section 6 of the FAL Convention, on public health and quarantine

168 With 130 countries having adopted the FAL Convention, efforts are still required to promote ratification of the FAL Convention among the 48 Member States that are not Party to the FAL Convention yet, by raising awareness and understanding of the potential institutional and economic advantages and benefits from the acceptance and implementation of the FAL Convention, including the use of electronic data interchange and the enhancement of efficient exchange of information between trade and Government.

169 For those Member States that have already ratified the FAL Convention, the focus is on promoting the efficient implementation of the FAL Convention, including responsibilities and quality standards, electronic exchange of information and the development of the single window concept. This includes raising awareness of the provisions of the FAL Convention, assisting with the interpretation of the legal text of the provisions, and providing a greater understanding of the Convention including best practices for implementing standards and recommended practices.

170 In this regard, the revised Explanatory Manual to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, which was approved by the FAL Committee at its forty-eighth session, will be utilized as an important resource which now includes guidance on the new global standards on illicit activities, maritime corruption and the response to a public health emergency of international concern, amongst others. It also includes guidance on major updates of the last amendments to the FAL Convention on standards as well as recommended practices related to issues such as stowaways, electronic exchange of data between ports and ships, and various procedures for arrival and departure of ships and passengers.

171 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Development of road maps to adopt the FAL Convention:** identify specific Member States with a commitment to adopt the FAL Convention and conduct workshops to enhance understanding of the requirements, develop national road maps to lead to the accession and full and effective implementation, and conduct at least one follow-up advisory mission per year to support and monitor the implementation of the road map.
- .2 **Identification of obstacles to the effective implementation of the FAL Convention:** working with Member States that are already a signatory to the FAL Convention, review the current situation with stakeholders involved in port activities with respect to the maritime clearance processes for ships, cargo, passengers and crew, in order to identify and address legal and organizational obstacles to improve facilitation. Member States will be supported to develop a national road map to address the obstacles, and IMO will conduct at least one follow-up advisory mission per year to support and monitor the implementation of the road map.
- .3 **Incorporation of the FAL Convention into national legislation:** support Member States with the drafting of legislation to incorporate the FAL Convention into national law and port regulations, ensuring that national legislation contains up-to-date and current ship reporting procedures that align with FAL standards.

Output 2: Support Member States to establish systems for the electronic exchange of information and single window systems that allow information to be submitted once and reused to the maximum extent possible, to comply with Standards and text of the FAL Convention, respectively, and to promote the use of international standards in electronic data exchange systems in alignment with the IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business, to ensure their interoperability and to contribute both to the facilitation of maritime traffic and to the decarbonization of shipping and ports

172 To implement successful MSW systems, efforts require the involvement and participation of relevant ministries, public agencies, including customs and border agencies (e.g. port health, immigration), as well as any other public or private stakeholder involved in the clearance of ships in ports. To put in context the complexities of the implementation of a MSW system, two main surveys of the industry have been presented to the FAL Committee:

- .1 document FAL 45/5 (IAPH), providing information on the outcome of the IAPH survey to assess the current conformity level with the FAL requirement for national Governments to introduce electronic information exchange between ships and ports and to highlight any respective challenges that ports were facing:

- .1 the survey took place during the month of October 2020, it was confidential and open to all ports, and received 111 valid responses from port authorities and port operators worldwide;
 - .2 approximately a third of the global sample of ports had not commenced the process of implementing respective electronic data exchange systems. Of those that had, another third were either designing or implementing their system with only the final third being operationally active; and
 - .3 the survey confirmed the complexity of clearance processes in ports due to the number of different authorities involved, each with their roles and responsibilities, data needs, established cultures and practices;
- .2 document FAL 48/5/3 (BIMCO et al.), providing information about the outcome of an industry survey on the current state of digitalization within ports and the six recommendations outlined in the document, based on the outcome of the survey. In particular, the survey highlighted:
- .1 40% of respondents were unaware of the IMO resolution mandating national port authorities to establish a single window reporting system for data exchange in ports worldwide;
 - .2 in 64% of the port calls made by the respondents, the port authorities were still requiring either paper submissions or a mix of paper and digital submissions; and
 - .3 the survey also revealed that the process of collecting and submitting port call documentation was laborious and time-consuming. On average, respondents spent more than three hours (191 minutes) preparing and submitting the necessary documents required at every single port call.

173 Analysis indicates that customs/cargo single windows are in place in most countries around the world. However, IMO does not yet have a full picture of the level of implementation of MSW. To address this, IMO has significantly increased its capacity-building efforts in regard to national needs assessments, with six conducted in the Africa region during 2023 and 2024, as well as a multi-country needs assessment project for six independent Member States of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). The focus for 2026-2027 will be to continue these needs assessments across other regions and conduct follow-up reviews to support implementation. The e-learning course on the implementation of MSW will be a mandatory component of all associated capacity-building initiatives to ensure participants have foundational knowledge that allows IMO to scale up the content delivered.

174 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Maintenance of the IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business (IMO Compendium):** Maintain the IMO Compendium reference model, which aims to harmonize the semantics and format for all information in the maritime domain relevant to IMO. As a reference model, the Compendium is key for the harmonization of the data collected by Member States and ports; providing standard definitions of each data element and context on the usage of each data element for the harmonization of ship/port interface to facilitate maritime clearance processes.

- .2 **Maintenance and update of the MSW e-learning course:** Any necessary revisions to the e-Learning course on the implementation of MSW will be undertaken during the biennium to ensure a relevant and up-to-date course is available for all Member States.

175 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Needs assessment missions:** To assess Member States' degree of readiness for implementing digital solutions and harmonization for ship/port interface to facilitate maritime clearance processes through MSW. A gap analysis report will be produced on the current clearance system, identification of needs, recommendations on system architecture, and cost analysis to establish an MSW system.
- .2 **Support the development of MSW Systems:** Follow-up missions will be conducted subsequent to the completion of a needs assessment to support progress and assist the Member State in meeting the requirements of the MSW system, including identification of obstacles to effective implementation, evaluating the compatibility of current systems with the requirements, and advice on implementation of technical solutions.
- .3 **Regional and national workshops for institutional strengthening:** To enhance the capacity of port communities to develop a widely accepted vision for port and maritime digitalization, providing an in-depth understanding of MSW frameworks, their implementation procedures, and the strategic benefits they offer to ports and maritime trade.

Output 3: Assisting Member States in preventing and addressing the severe problems caused for international maritime traffic by stowaways, migrants and refugees rescued at sea

176 The FAL Convention sets out measures to prevent stowaway incidents, as well as provisions on the treatment of stowaways while on board, and on the disembarkation and return of a stowaway. The aim is to reduce the consequences for shipping and preserve the lives of stowaways, which could be endangered as they may spend several days hidden, with the risk of suffocation, and without any water or provisions. For ships and, by extension, to the shipping industry as a whole; ships being delayed in port and the repatriation of stowaways can be a very complex and costly procedure. Incidents cause considerable difficulties for shipmasters, shipping companies, shipowners, ship operators, port authorities and agents in disembarking stowaways from ships into the care of appropriate authorities. The estimated cost of stowaways to the shipping community is over \$7 million per year. The figures relating to stowaways incidents can be found in document FAL 49/J/5 (P&I Clubs).

177 Proper application of security measures and access controls on board ships and within port facilities can reduce the number of stowaway incidents. As such, focusing on regions and Member States that report higher numbers of stowaway incidents as outlined in document FAL 43/13 (P&I Clubs), IMO commits capacity-building efforts to support Member States in implementing appropriate measures to reduce risks of unauthorized persons boarding ships, in line with the relevant Recommended Practices of the FAL Convention and SOLAS, chapter XI-2 on measures to enhance maritime security, and the ISPS Code, which also contains clear specifications on access control and security measures for port facilities and ships. The IMO Secretariat maintains close contact with the International Group of P&I Clubs to maintain information on the ports with the highest number of stowaway incidents, to organize activities as advisable. For those Member States which find it impracticable to comply

with these practices, or those that are not Contracting Governments of the FAL Convention, the FAL Committee adopted the *Revised guidelines on the prevention of access by stowaways and the allocation of responsibilities to seek the successful resolution of stowaway cases* (resolutions FAL.13(42) and MSC.448(99)), currently under revision.

178 Collaboration with regional and international partners is important to ensure effective planning and implementation of associated measures, particularly other UN agencies, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), INTERPOL, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as the International Group of P&I Clubs, ICS and BIMCO.

179 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Regional and national seminars to reduce stowaway incidents:**
Focusing on ports with the highest number of stowaway incidents, gather ports representatives, security and immigration officials, and other respective government authorities to analyse the current situation, share actions, identify best practices and conduct table-top exercises to facilitate discussions and further strengthen capacities for surveillance and access control, in order to reduce the incidence of stowaways in line with the recommended practices and guidelines.

Output 4: Support Member States in the implementation of the Revised guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of wildlife on ships engaged in international maritime traffic (resolution FAL.17(48))

180 The COVID-19 crisis drew increased attention to wildlife trade and to the work that many organizations do to prevent the Illicit Wildlife Trade (IWT). Wildlife trafficking is estimated to generate more than \$200 billion per year, making it the fourth largest illegal trade, after trafficking in counterfeit products, drugs and humans. Shipping is a popular method of illegally transporting wildlife, since it provides cost-effective opportunities for perpetrators to smuggle large volumes of animals and plants undetected.

181 While recognizing that IMO is not the lead agency for the prevention and suppression of IWT or the smuggling of drugs or animal products, and that these matters are for customs and border control authorities that are addressed through the World Customs Organization (WCO)'s SAFE Framework of Standards (as recognized by both MSC and the FAL Committee (MSC-FAL.1/Circ.1)), the FAL Committee agreed that failure to take appropriate measures to prevent the carriage of such products on board ships might lead to seafarers or ships being delayed, including for legal proceedings.

182 FAL 40 noted that IWT had many parallels with the illicit drug trade, an issue that had been addressed by the Committee in the past through the adoption of the *Revised guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals on ships engaged in international maritime traffic* (resolution MSC.228(82) and FAL.9(34)). In 2024, IMO adopted the *Revised guidelines for the prevention and suppression of the smuggling of wildlife on ships engaged in international maritime traffic* (resolution FAL.17(48)) and also launched an e-learning course titled "Introduction to counter wildlife trafficking in the maritime supply chains", developed jointly by IMO, the World Maritime University (WMU) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), which equips government agencies and maritime supply chain operators with actionable insights to effectively combat wildlife trafficking at sea, empowering them to proactively prevent and suppress such illicit activities.

183 The UNODC World Wildlife Crime Report,⁵ 2024, presents trends in the illicit wildlife trade, analyses harms and impacts, probes driving factors, and takes stock of responses, which may be used to inform future capacity-building needs, in addition to requests for assistance by Member States based on regional and national developments.

184 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Maintenance and update of the IWT e-learning course:** Any necessary revisions to the e-learning course to counter wildlife trafficking in the maritime supply chains will be undertaken during the biennium to ensure a relevant and up-to-date course is available on demand for all Member States.
- .2 **Conduct regional and national training and workshops:** To promote the revised guidelines highlighting the dangers of illicit activities in the maritime sector and train seafarers and onshore personnel to raise awareness of the dangers of organized crime and how they can protect themselves.

THEME 6: STRENGTHENED LEGAL CAPABILITY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR EFFECTIVE MARITIME GOVERNANCE

Overall approach

185 IMO has a comprehensive portfolio of IMO treaty instruments defining the rights and privileges and, at the same time, the duties, obligations and responsibilities of nations in their use of the world's seas and oceans. However, in order for these legal instruments to be truly effective, States, in their turn, need to enact appropriate domestic legislation to reflect their provisions and provide, thereby, a mechanism for implementation and enforcement. Many IMO developing countries need assistance with maritime legislation to implement IMO instruments and manage ongoing amendments to these conventions, brought into force through the tacit amendment procedure. As the findings of IMSAS show, the biggest deficiencies are in the national legislation. The gaps in implementing national legislation are directly connected to the need for sufficient training of lawyers who draft the legislation.

186 According to the analysis of six CASRs under IMSAS, the main difficulties in regard to legislation relate to the transposition of amendments to international instruments into national legislation and, in particular, late promulgation of amendments, which takes effect by the tacit acceptance procedure, lengthy time or capacity to promulgate new/amended mandatory IMO instruments and publishing of national laws in official journals. Apparent unavailability of qualified personnel to assist in the promulgation of the necessary national laws and to discharge all the responsibilities of the State, including reporting as required by the applicable mandatory IMO instruments, also accounts for a measurable number of findings (III 10/INF.6, paragraph 21).

187 While legal related assistance is essential to support the accession, implementation and enforcement of all IMO instruments across maritime safety, security, marine environment and facilitation, this legal theme specifically addresses the legislation related gaps identified through IMSAS and other instruments. In connection to this, the three thematic priorities agreed for the ITCP for the 2026-27 biennium (LEG 112/WP.1/Rev.1, paragraphs 11.2 to 11.5) are reflected as the following outputs to guide the planning and implementation of legal related capacity-building over the next biennium. Additionally, other instruments also include those related to the full IMO liability and compensation regime, fair treatment of seafarers, and measures to prevent practices associated with the fraudulent registration and fraudulent registries of ships.

⁵ https://www.unodc.org/cofrb/uploads/documents/ECOS/World_Wildlife_Crime_Report_2024.pdf

188 Experience from the current biennium, as reported to the Legal Committee (LEG 112/11/1, paragraph 6) has indicated that Member States continue to face difficulties in the effective implementation of IMO conventions into domestic legislation, and their enforcement. Some of the recurring observations are the following, which will be taken into account during the 2026-2027 biennium:

- .1 the language used in national legislation is legally ambiguous;
- .2 there are implementation gaps if the national legislation is outdated and does not take into account the many amendments to IMO instruments adopted through the tacit acceptance procedure;
- .3 while it is possible to get inspiration from the legislation of other countries, there is a risk in relying on old legislation or not understanding the policy decisions leading to a certain drafting. In this context, a strong understanding of the convention text and what it is trying to achieve is essential in order to be able to benefit from legislation developed by other States and adapt it appropriately;
- .4 there is a lack of understanding of the terms "to the satisfaction of the Administration", "acceptable to Administration" and "to be determined by the Administration" used in several IMO conventions and in the IMO Instruments Implementation (III) Code and how to implement them;
- .5 there is a need to consider drafting techniques to allow cross-references to conventions in implementing regulations to be made dynamic and therefore automatically update when future amendments are made without the need to legislate each time; and
- .6 in terms of enforcement, it is critical to make the offences provisions more certain – making it clear who is liable for what and which penalty attaches in each case.

189 IMO continues to enhance its partnerships with WMU and IMLI in regard to the delivery of legal related training, especially in enhancing the capacity of developing countries, including SIDS and LDCs, to meet their international maritime obligations. Over the next biennium, IMO is seeking to support the expansion of short courses being delivered in-country to maximize the reach and impact of maritime and legal professionals in developing countries. Operating under the auspices of IMO and through close collaboration, both institutions ensure their academic programmes are aligned with the evolving legal and regulatory needs of the maritime industry. IMLI, dedicated solely to maritime law and the education of legal professionals and government officials in drafting and implementing maritime legislation that aligns with IMO conventions, is increasingly being used as a platform to deliver training initiatives to the IMLI student base in collaboration with WMU faculty staff. Likewise, WMU, trains maritime administrators and policy leaders with legal knowledge to implement IMO instruments. This delivery method offers a much more economical approach to target a higher number of participants than delivering individual global workshops, and also ensures that the people receiving the training are recognized future maritime leaders (both legal and policy experts) from developing countries, who return to their home countries equipped to implement IMO instruments effectively.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Providing means to strengthen the legal capacity, maritime policy and infrastructure of national maritime authorities, with particular emphasis on SIDS and LDCs

190 Recognizing the importance of structured, sustainable maritime policies, IMO seeks to assist Member States in developing a National Maritime Transport Policy (NMTP) to fully meet its obligations and responsibilities under the applicable mandatory IMO instruments and promote sustainable maritime sector growth in line with the countries' national interests. By prioritizing NMTPs, IMO aims to ensure that Member States have actionable frameworks that not only guide regulatory compliance but also support the sustainable development of their maritime sectors and offer a national guideline for the areas in which capacity-building efforts should be targeted by IMO. This approach is intended to enable States to be responsible flag, port, and coastal States, thereby strengthening the overall global maritime governance framework.

191 Supporting IMO Member States, especially developing countries and SIDS and LDCs, in the development of NMTPs provides a guiding framework for IMO to plan targeted national capacity-building initiatives that have received political commitment, providing confidence that the maritime capability implemented will have a long lasting, sustainable impact.

192 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Annual global maritime transport policy seminar:** A maritime transport policy seminar for the students of IMLI, which offers a valuable global platform of legal experts from national maritime administrations around the world. The students shall receive training and practical experience in the development of NMTPs which they can put into practice when they return to their normal duties in their home countries. The seminar will be delivered by WMU to leverage their respective areas of expertise and foster collaboration between the two institutions.

193 At the national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **National Maritime Transport Policy Workshops:** Support Member States, in collaboration with WMU and IMLI, in the development and adoption of a NMTP for the sustainable development, management and strengthening of the maritime sector, inter alia, ensure the effective implementation of developing countries' international obligations and responsibilities as flag, port and coastal; and
- .2 **Legal capacity status review and needs assessment:** Comprehensive review of a Member State's maritime legislation against IMO instruments to identify gaps and make recommendations on strengthening legal capacity in line with the national maritime transport policy.

Output 2: With particular emphasis on the results and needs identified by the IMO Member State Audit Scheme, training national expert personnel to undertake the tasks of developing, reviewing and updating maritime legislation to assist Member Governments in the implementation of their rights and duties as flag, port and coastal States Parties to IMO instruments, including the enforcement of compliance with maritime safety and environmental standards by national and foreign ships

194 This output follows on from the first output, focused on delivering support to government officials and legal drafters in transforming their treaty commitments into enforceable national legislation, ensuring compliance with IMO instruments and strengthening legal frameworks for maritime safety, security, and environmental protection. Thus meeting their international obligations as flag, port, and coastal States and achieving uniform implementation of IMO regulations globally.

195 In addition to the allocation of fellowships to IMLI and WMU to train maritime and legal professionals, as well as IMO's contribution to their academic programmes and delivery of presentations on various subjects related to maritime legislation and legal matters (presented under theme 8), IMO also delivers dedicated training initiatives to support the implementation of IMO instruments into national legislation.

196 At the global level, IMO will assist as follows:

- .1 **Annual workshop on the general principles of drafting national legislation to implement IMO conventions:** Training national lawyers and legislative drafters (the students of IMLI), responsible for the implementation of the conventions into domestic legislation, on legislative drafting techniques and mechanisms that should be applied when developing national law.

197 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Regional and national workshops on the implementation of IMO instruments into national legislation:** Workshops to offer support in drafting of national legislation, focusing on the implementation of specific instruments based on regional needs, including the identification of challenges of each of the participating countries. The benefit of a regional intervention is the opportunity to establish technical and legal networks of the maritime authorities to promote cooperation, exchange best practices, and strengthen relations between maritime authorities across the region.
- .2 **National training and mentoring programmes for legal officers:** Dedicated training and assistance for legal drafters and policymakers on domesticating international maritime conventions into national regulations and legislation. The type of support is tailored to the specific needs of Member States and can include reviewing a country's legal framework, training legal personnel, developing model legislation, facilitating national coordination across the maritime sector.
- .3 **Legal experts to attend workshops on IMO instruments:** to facilitate the effective integration of legal expertise with capacity-building initiatives related to the technical content of IMO instruments e.g. SOLAS, MARPOL, legal officials from the respective national authorities will be invited to participate in technical activities on IMO instruments to get a better understanding of these instruments in view of their domestication into national legislation.

Output 3: Providing advice on the legal (national and international) implications of acceptance of IMO conventions and the enactment of IMO codes and guidelines

198 This output is dedicated to achieving a better understanding of the IMO liability and compensation conventions, to promote ratification, implementation and enforcement of the full liability regime. This includes the CLC/Fund Convention regime, the 1996/2010 HNS Convention, the 2001 Bunkers Convention, the 1976/1996 LLMC Convention, the 2007 Nairobi Wreck Removal Convention and the 1974/2002 Athens Convention, as well as the 1989 Salvage Convention.

199 The aim is to provide policymakers, drafters and maritime administrators, including port State control officers, from respective agencies across Member States' government sector, with a deeper understanding of the underlying principles and objectives of the Conventions, as well as guiding them on the legislative mechanisms that ought to be applied when developing and updating appropriate national legislation.

200 At the regional and national level, IMO will assist as follows:

- .1 **Workshops on the IMO liability and compensation regime:** to provide Member States with a complete overview of the liability and compensation conventions to enhance awareness and knowledge of the principles of liability and compensation necessary for the treaties to be enacted fully and completely into national law. Workshops focus on bringing together all relevant national authorities to facilitate multi-agency coordination.

THEME 7: GENDER EQUALITY AND A BARRIER FREE ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMEN IN MARITIME

Overall approach

201 Gender equality is recognized as one of the key platforms on which people can build a sustainable future. It is one of the 17 SDGs that underpin the United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda, which countries all over the world have pledged to implement. SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. In the context of the global maritime sector, women remain largely underrepresented not only in seafaring and operational roles, but also across all levels of maritime administrations, particularly in mid- to senior-level management roles.

202 The maritime sector has experienced persistently low levels of women represented in both land- and sea-based positions, with sluggish progress towards greater parity. This is despite an overall labour shortage within the sector and more specifically a pending shortage of labour with the skills needed for the shift to digitalization and decarbonization across the sector. Women currently comprise less than 2% of the 1.2 million strong global workforce of seafarers, and only 19% of the workforce employed in the public maritime sector globally. This has flow-on ramifications for other SDGs in regard to quality education (SDG 4), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), climate action (SDG 13) and life below water (SDG 14). When the labour force participation of women remains low, a sustainable future cannot be achieved.

203 IMO has continued to entrench gender quality into its strategic approach to ensure it remains a high priority on the global maritime agenda, including in the IMO Strategic Plan. The IMO Assembly, at its thirty-first session, adopted resolution A.1147(31) on *Preserving the legacy of the World Maritime Theme for 2019 and achieving a barrier-free working environment for women in the maritime sector*. The resolution urges Governments, maritime administrations and the industry to endeavour to reach a barrier-free environment for women, so that all women

can participate fully, safely and without hindrance in the activities of the maritime community, including seafaring and shipbuilding activities. The resolution also encourages sharing of best practices in achieving gender equality; the collection, consolidation and analysis of data regarding the participation of women in the maritime sector; and the identification of baselines, and gaps to inform policies that remove barriers and increase.

204 Further impetus was added by the Assembly's adoption, at its thirty-second session, of resolution A.1170(32), establishing the *International Day for Women in Maritime*, which, inter alia, reaffirmed the commitments made in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which are also reflected in the Organization's strategic framework, and its support to the eight regional Women in Maritime Associations (WIMAs) established under the auspices of IMO, which provide a forum for women to network, access knowledge and share best practices.

205 Most recently, the IMO Assembly adopted resolution A.1166(32) on *Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy* reinforced the need for robust national maritime policies and strategies that include an emphasis on women in the maritime industry, as part of Member States' efforts to achieve the maritime aspects of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.

206 Although the profile of gender equality has increased in recent years, commitments in the form of financial allocation and effective policies are still lagging behind. There is significant under investment in addressing gender equality within the maritime sector in relation to the scale of the issues, which needs to be rectified to see real change towards equality – considered an essential component for overall progress within the sector. As a result, the ability to achieve meaningful progress towards gender equality has been hindered. In fact, a growing body of evidence demonstrates that low resourcing for gender equality issues is limiting efforts to accelerate progress across all SDGs.

207 In placing the human element and capacity-building at the very top of its agenda, and in recognizing that the shipping industry must reach out to every sector of the community to attract the very best people into a maritime career, IMO aims to promote the increased participation of women in the maritime sector. Dedicated training opportunities for women provide a practical way of breaking the existing cycle of constraints hampering their nomination for technical training and, in the long run, will help to establish a cadre of highly qualified women professionals.

208 The three pillars that underpin IMO's approach to achieving gender equality to ensure that the maritime sector is contributing to the achievement of UN SDG 5 are visibility, training and recognition.

209 IMO's primary capacity-building efforts to address gender related matters has been through the IMO Women in Maritime Programme. More recently, IMO's gender efforts include the SMART-C Women project (2023-2026) (TC 75/4, paragraph 5; TC 75/3(a), paragraph 120), which aims to increase gender equality and employment opportunities for women in the maritime sector, particularly in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The project works in parallel with the IMO Women in Maritime Programme to provide training on maritime digitalization and marine environmental protection to enhance women's competencies, preparing them for emerging maritime opportunities. The project also offers fellowships at WMU for further educational qualifications

210 Additionally, one of the key past successes of the Women in Maritime Programme has been the establishment of eight IMO Women in Maritime Associations (WIMAs). These regional networks are an important mechanism to support IMO's technical cooperation gender equality objectives, assisting with the implementation and rollout of gender equality initiatives and contributing to the gender mainstreaming efforts across all regions.

211 The allocation of the TC Fund for the 2026-2027 biennium will continue to support the strengthening of regional linkages for women managers in the maritime and port sectors, as well as contribute to regional capacity-building through the specialized training of women in leadership, partnership building and resource mobilization, among others. Furthermore, the programme will seek to enhance gender mainstreaming across the sector, including in the delivery of all IMO technical cooperation programmes and projects.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Visibility – Raising the profile of women in the maritime sector to achieve gender equality

212 To achieve gender equality in the maritime industry, it is essential to enhance the visibility of women's contributions and potential across all levels. This includes increasing public and stakeholder awareness of the roles women can play in sustainable maritime livelihoods and advocating for the inclusion of women in maritime policy discussions. Awareness campaigns, engagement with communities, and spotlighting female maritime professionals help challenge existing stereotypes and promote inclusive narratives.

213 This visibility also depends on collaborative efforts at the regional level, where consistent application of SDG 5 targets across IMO Member States and organizations can reinforce global standards. Strengthening and supporting regional WIMAs ensures women have platforms to share experiences, influence policies and access resources. These networks also help embed gender equality principles within broader maritime development frameworks, amplifying the voices of women professionals and aligning with IMO's strategic goals.

214 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **International Day for Women in Maritime and Gender Equality Award Ceremony:** A key annual celebration that honours women's achievements, builds awareness, and inspires change through public recognition and celebration of milestones.
- .2 **Third IMO/WISTA Women in Maritime Survey:** By collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data, this survey informs policy, monitors progress, and helps bring attention to where women are – and are not – represented in the industry.

Output 2: Training – Develop and support training opportunities for women

215 Access to training is critical in ensuring women's full participation in the maritime industry. Increasing the number of women from developing regions participating in fellowships and advanced training opportunities helps close the gender gap in high-level maritime roles. Furthermore, sensitizing national administrations and maritime institutions to the value women bring as a resource can lead to more inclusive recruitment and development practices. Capacity-building programmes that are both inclusive and effective can empower women with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive in a traditionally male-dominated industry, building a pipeline of qualified female professionals who can lead future maritime innovation.

216 Supporting this effort, the IMO-established WIMAs play a vital role in regional training development. These associations serve as crucial platforms for women in developing countries to connect, facilitating the exchange of information and best practices. The eight regional WIMAs (AWIMA, MAMLa, NPWMP-WCA, PacWIMA, WIMA Asia, WiMAC, WIMOWCA, and WOMESA) also help shape training initiatives tailored to the specific sociocultural and professional needs of women in their regions. By doing so, they ensure that trainings and workshops are not only accessible but also contextually relevant and impactful.

217 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **IMO/WMU/WISTA Women's Leadership and Empowerment Training course:** Directly supports the development of women's leadership in the sector, building capacity and empowering future female leaders through targeted training.
- .2 **Fellowships for technical short-term courses at WMU:** Offers women from developing countries opportunities to gain advanced technical skills in maritime disciplines, helping to bridge gender gaps in specialized areas of the industry.

218 At a regional level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Regional WIMA capacity-building workshops:** Focused on strengthening the institutional and operational capacities of WIMAs, these workshops aim to enhance their ability to implement IMO's Global Strategy for Women in Maritime effectively and sustainably.

Output 3: Recognition – Mainstream gender within the maritime sector

219 Mainstreaming gender in maritime governance involves embedding gender-equal policies in national maritime administrations and aligning maritime strategies with the global SDGs. This requires not only policy changes but also institutional reform to support a more equitable working environment. When gender considerations are systematically included in governance frameworks, organizations can ensure that women's rights and opportunities are not an afterthought but are recognized as a central element of maritime development.

220 This recognition also extends to the internal mechanisms of the Organization, where the effective integration of tools such as the gender equality markers is critical to ensure effective programming, monitoring and evaluation systems.

221 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Development of internal and external tools to support gender mainstreaming within the maritime sector:** Creating a variety of internal and external tools to support effective gender mainstreaming within the maritime sector ensures that gender equality becomes an integral part of the organizational structure and programming, promoting long-term institutional recognition of women's roles.

222 At a regional level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Gender mainstreaming and DEI Workshops for maritime administrations:** These workshops provide maritime administrations with the knowledge and tools to integrate gender equality and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles into their policies and operations. By fostering an inclusive culture, these trainings aim to create a more equitable maritime sector.

THEME 8: ACCESS TO MARITIME EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR THE WHOLE GLOBAL MARITIME COMMUNITY

Overall approach

223 Maritime education and training represents a cornerstone of IMO's technical cooperation strategy as identified in the *Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy* (resolution A.1166(32)) (work stream 4) and the *Strategic Plan for the Organization for the six-year period 2024 to 2029* (resolution A.1173(33)), as well as achieving key aspects of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

224 It is widely recognized that educated and trained people are essential for IMO Member States to effectively implement their international maritime obligations as flag, port and coastal States, but that varying degrees of capacity and unique maritime challenges impact the extent to which Member States can achieve this, especially for small island developing States (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs). SIDS and LDCs face common challenges related to the size of their administration, ability to attract and retain qualified staff, gender equal opportunities, and access to specialized maritime training due to remoteness and availability of funding. Among other things, this creates challenges to maintain stable institutional policies and frameworks that are required for continuous maritime development.

225 With training being such a critical component of IMO's technical cooperation programme, the issue of access to training is one of the biggest challenges to address because traditional methods of in-person training are expensive to implement owing to the costs associated with hosting, and travel for participants from remote countries to attend, as well as time-consuming for officers of IMO Member States to be away from their maritime administration while participating in training.

226 While the provision of fellowships to IMO's global maritime training institutions (WMU and IMLI) and the delivery of regional and national trainings to address specific maritime needs will continue to form a core component of IMO's approach to reduce barriers for accessing maritime education and training, the traditional in-person approach immediately limits the reach and impact that IMO can achieve across the global maritime sector. Remote learning has evolved worldwide as an effective tool to address these challenges, with IMO demonstrating success since the initiation of the IMO e-learning pilot project in cooperation with WMU in 2020.

227 Thus, IMO's long-term approach is to transform IMO's training delivery model at a global level through e-learning developments, thereby making delivery more efficient and expanding access to high-quality maritime education and training for IMO Member States, regardless of geographic location or resource constraints. IMO will leverage WMU and IMLI's remote learning capabilities, as well as IMO's learning management system (LMS) platform, which has been successfully developing in the past years. IMO's e-learning work will be influenced by the outcomes of the Committee's work relating to the development of an IMO e-learning implementation plan, as agreed at TC 74 (TC 74/16, paragraph 6.41), upon completion.

228 Under this theme, IMO will also continue its collaboration with WMU and IMLI as primary partners in the implementation of maritime education and training initiatives at national, regional and global levels; and also continue its dedication to creating gender equal training opportunities through fellowships to expand the role of women in the global maritime sector and thus contribute to the UN 2030 Agenda SDG 5.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Reduce barriers for IMO Member States, especially SIDS and LDCs, to access specialized maritime training opportunities, including barriers related to financial access, physical participation, gender and language

229 While IMO funds training opportunities across all other technical cooperation themes to access specialized maritime training, the focus here is on reducing the financial burden for IMO Member States to undertake education at WMU, IMLI and IMO Headquarters through the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) scheme, particularly for developing countries and those that are SIDS and LDCs, to have qualified and experienced staff working in their national maritime administrations to meet international obligations as flag, port and coastal States. This includes a dedicated mechanism for providing women in the maritime sector with training to advance their career opportunities, which might not otherwise be accessible.

230 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Fund fellowships to WMU and IMLI:** the programme will fund fellowships to WMU and IMLI, prioritizing the selection of SIDS and LDCs, and ensuring not less than 50% female selection if the pool of candidates allows, to equip IMO Member State officers with specialized maritime qualifications.
- .2 **Fund support Costs of JPOs:** the programme will fund the annual support cost of recruiting JPOs, increasing access to the opportunity for IMO Member State officers to gain maritime experience that can be applied back within their maritime administration to enhance their overall workforce capacity.

231 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Through WMU and IMLI, support regional and national training institutions:** to develop their capabilities for meeting local demand for maritime training, including advice and support on the establishment of maritime programmes and courses into regional and national maritime training curriculum.

Output 2: Increase the efficiency of training delivery, specifically to reduce costs of in-person training while simultaneously enhance learning outcomes and increase access to reach a wider audience across the maritime sector

232 IMO aims to achieve this output through expanding its e-learning portfolio and digital training offerings to Member States in collaboration with WMU and IMLI, as a way of providing a scalable, inclusive and cost-effective training solution for the maritime industry. Specialized e-learning paths for different roles (e.g. regulatory officials, seafarers) can support professional development, fostering a well-rounded, globally educated maritime workforce. This modular approach will allow learners to progress at their own pace and focus on job-specific skills relevant to their daily work.

233 The focus will also be to develop a blended learning model for capacity development, making e-learning a prerequisite where associated e-learning courses are available. This will combine e-learning with in-person training to optimize learning outcomes by allowing participants to establish a foundational understanding before participating in more specialized, hands-on sessions.

234 IMO commenced the development of its e-learning portfolio and digital training offerings to Member States in 2020 under a pilot project with WMU. Up to 2024, 11 e-learning courses⁶ had been developed, with four under production, as at April 2025 (London Protocol, MARPOL Annex V (OceanLitter Programme), the translation of the ISM Code from Spanish into French and English, and the IMSAS course translation from English to Spanish). These are all expected to be completed during 2025. There are also three courses that were approved by the Committee in the ITCP for the 2024-2025 biennium (TC 73/3(b)), including MARPOL Annex II, PSSAs, and the revision of a module in the existing Marine Biofouling e-learning course.

235 Until the finalization of the Committee's work related to the development of an IMO e-learning implementation plan, as agreed at TC 74 (TC 74/16, paragraph 6.41), which will consist of agreed criteria for the prioritization of courses to be developed in the future, there are a number of initiatives that can continue under the ITCP in parallel, to progress the vision of e-learning as a central pillar of IMO's technical cooperation programme.

236 This approach, focused on readiness, capacity-building, and supportive engagement, can position it as adaptable and prepared to ensure that all necessary groundwork is in place for the rollout of the IMO e-learning implementation plan. This preparatory approach ensures that, once the plan is finalized, the Secretariat can act swiftly and effectively to implement a high-impact e-learning programme that aligns with IMO's broader capacity-development objectives.

237 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Complete development and modification of existing e-learning courses:** Continue the development of the aforementioned three courses that were approved by the Committee in the 2024-2025 ITCP, if they are not completed by the end of 2025. There may also be existing courses that require updating due to ongoing developments in course content, which will also be progressed.
- .2 **Translation of existing e-learning courses:** In support of IMO's multilingualism agenda, and to further enhance access and inclusivity to maritime training, the existing courses can continue to be translated into IMO's three working languages (English, French, Spanish).
- .3 **Analysis of new foundational courses:** Conduct analysis of IMSAS Audits (and other inputs) to identify high-priority and common issues that could be served by e-learning, focusing on foundational topics relevant to the maritime community; and commence the development of new courses that are strongly supported by the analysis.
- .4 **Strengthen internal capacity and infrastructure for e-learning implementation:** In order to ensure there is adequate internal capacity and infrastructure in place to scale up IMO's e-learning training offerings, it is necessary to conduct research and analysis, as well as advance technical preparation in regards IT capability, to appropriately position IMO's learning management system (LMS) for the future. This may include conducting an assessment of internal capabilities, resource needs and IT solutions to ensure the Secretariat can support the rollout of the implementation plan once finalized.

⁶ <https://lms.imo.org/moodle310/>

- .5 **Explore partnership opportunities and resource mobilization:** analyse and identify sustainable funding models, including Member State contributions, donor partnerships or private-sector collaborations, ensuring continued resource availability to support the rollout of the e-learning implementation plan, once finalized, including support for LMS maintenance, course updates and the development of new content areas.
- .6 **Explore monitoring and evaluation options for e-learning:** Including cost-analysis of the course costs to date to ensure standardization for future development and value for money; development of preliminary KPIs and evaluation tools for performance tracking that could assess e-learning success, such as e-learning adoption, participant completion rates, user satisfaction, engagement and resource efficiency; and conduct of course evaluations to review programme progress to help IMO adapt to changing maritime regulations and emerging training demands over time.

Output 3: Establish IMO's global maritime training institutions (WMU and IMLI) as key partners in delivering maritime training to IMO Member States and supporting the core mandate of IMO

238 In terms of the implementation approach to IMO's overall technical cooperation programme, IMO's global maritime training institutions, WMU and IMLI, are central partners, playing an instrumental role in delivering specialized maritime education and legal training aligned with IMO standards and priorities. Enhanced collaboration between IMO, WMU and IMLI holds substantial potential for growth to further support IMO's technical cooperation programme. Subject to their capacity for implementation, enhanced collaboration in technical cooperation activities could include delivery of IMO workshops and seminars, jointly designing tailored training packages, actively engaging with the development of e-learning courses and exploring possibilities for operating a joint e-learning platform. This growing collaboration reinforces institutional linkages and strengthens the global network of maritime knowledge and expertise, supporting the development of robust maritime policy and governance frameworks both at a national and a global level.

239 The aim is to establish mechanisms that provide advice and support to WMU and IMLI to ensure they have the technical, financial and institutional capacity to enhance their role as key implementing partners for IMO's technical cooperation programme, and to facilitate their key role in delivering maritime training to IMO Member States.

240 At a global level, IMO will assist as follows:

- .1 **Delivery of lectures, seminars and workshops to WMU and IMLI:** IMO staff will deliver lectures to both WMU and IMLI students, sharing their expert knowledge and contributing to the development of maritime capacity across the IMO Member States.
- .2 **Participation in governance meetings:** IMO staff will actively participate in governance meetings, maritime conferences and forums, and graduation events at both institutions, thereby ensuring strategic alignment and complementing expertise between WMU, IMLI and IMO.

THEME 9: IMPROVED COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL MARITIME STANDARDS THROUGH THE IMO MEMBER STATE AUDIT SCHEME

Overall approach

241 The IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) is a critical initiative introduced to elevate and standardize compliance with international maritime regulations across IMO Member States. Since its inception, IMSAS has played a pivotal role in the global maritime sector by ensuring that all Member States maintain and enforce uniform standards, as laid out in the IMO Instruments Implementation Code (III Code) and relevant mandatory IMO instruments. The III Code serves as the foundation for IMSAS, detailing the required standards and protocols that Member States must adhere to as part of their commitment to maritime safety, environmental protection and regulatory enforcement.

242 The audit scheme became mandatory in January 2016, marking a milestone in IMO's mission to harmonize maritime practices globally. The audits under the Scheme assess the degree to which Member States have implemented and enforced IMO regulations, including conventions such as SOLAS, MARPOL and STCW, which are central to global maritime operations. The IMSAS audit evaluates multiple aspects of a country's maritime administration, focusing on legal frameworks, safety protocols, pollution prevention measures, and the enforcement of mandatory instruments that uphold maritime safety and environmental stewardship.

243 While significant strides have been made during the first audit cycle, challenges remain. Many Member States have struggled with resource constraints, limited access to training, and gaps in the necessary expertise required to achieve full compliance. For some, the ability to respond to audit findings has been hindered by these limitations, impacting their capacity to meet IMO standards consistently.

244 IMSAS operates under the guiding principle of continuous improvement. Through comprehensive audits, the Scheme identifies both strengths and areas needing enhancement, including the Member States' regulatory frameworks. The insights gained from these audits enable Member States to develop targeted corrective actions, address non-compliance, and implement capacity-building measures that directly benefit maritime safety and environmental protection.

245 Further, the analysis of the six CASRs (III 10/INF.6) under IMSAS identified the need for additional assistance to Member States in two major recurrent areas of findings/observations regarding the effective implementation and enforcement of the relevant mandatory IMO instruments covered by IMSAS and the III Code, as the audit standard. Implementation and enforcement (flag, coastal and port State) of mandatory IMO instruments were among the identified recurrent areas, with recommendations to assist Member States in developing and implementing policies by enacting and enforcing national legislation, guidelines and instructions in all three areas – flag, coastal and port State activities (III 10/18, annex 4, appendices 1, 2 and 4; and annex to document TC 75/8/1). Noting that support relating to the implementation of relevant conventions will be delivered under the safety and environment protection themes, the focus of this programme is to support implementation of those corrective actions addressing building blocks of the maritime administration processes as stipulated in the III Code (systemic approach).

246 Integral to IMSAS is its additional focus on capacity-building. The Scheme not only assesses compliance but also empowers Member States by offering technical assistance to strengthen their internal capabilities. This assistance is multi-faceted and includes an online e-Learning course for auditors, in-person training for auditors, blended learning where

e-Learning is followed by a more focused in-person training, centralized training for audit team leaders delivered periodically at IMO Headquarters, workshops for maritime administrations, and participation of observers/auditors from Member States in audits, which are aimed at reinforcing administrative and operational competencies essential for sustaining compliance with IMO standards. By providing a structured framework for training and capacity-building, IMSAS aids in developing resilient maritime administrations capable of independently conducting internal audits, responding to audit findings, and implementing corrective actions. IMSAS places special emphasis on enhancing gender diversity within the auditing workforce. Recognizing the underrepresentation of women on the roster of auditors under IMSAS, the programme is dedicated to expanding opportunities for female auditors, thereby promoting gender parity and fostering a more inclusive maritime industry, in line with SDG 5 on gender-equality.

247 The allocation of the TC Fund for the 2026-2027 biennium took into account the existing related project, titled SMART-C Leaders (TC 75/4, paragraph 22; TC 75/3(a), paragraph 125) that focuses on capacity-building for two Pacific SIDS to strengthen their ability to implement IMO conventions. This project, which commenced in 2023 and is due for completion in 2027, specifically targets the enhancement of skills in ship inspection, port State control (PSC), flag State implementation (FSI) and assisting countries in implementing their corrective action plans (CAPs) following audits carried out under IMSAS.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Maintain a pool of diverse and competent auditors to implement the IMSAS schedule across all regions

248 This output is designed for the delivery of training for IMSAS auditors and audit team leaders to ensure there is a sufficient pool of trained auditors to implement the IMSAS schedule. There will be a focus on diversity in auditing teams, which is expected to further enhance audit results by incorporating a wider range of viewpoints and expertise.

249 By equipping participants with the skills necessary to conduct effective audits, this activity directly contributes to improving audit readiness across multiple Member States, as well as to ensure a steady influx of trained auditors to be nominated by their Member States for inclusion into the IMO roster under IMSAS, and made available for audits of other Member States.

250 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **IMSAS e-learning course:** Continue developments and maintenance of the IMSAS e-Learning course, as well as make it a mandatory requirement for all auditor training, so that it can be effectively utilized to reduce the time and cost of auditor training (efficiency) and enhance IMSAS learning outcomes (effectiveness) through a blended learning format of training delivery. Developments will include translation of the course into the official languages of the IMO in support of the multilingualism agenda.
- .2 **IMSAS centralized training course for audit team leaders:** Maintain and further develop the centralized training course for audit team leaders to ensure a consistent and competent pool of lead auditors is available to implement the IMSAS schedule globally. This course aims to strengthen the leadership capacity of auditors identified as prospective future leaders by equipping them with the necessary skills to effectively manage audit teams, apply harmonized audit methodologies, and uphold the quality and

consistency of audit outcomes, in accordance with the IMSAS Framework and Procedures. Additionally, the training fosters collaboration and the exchange of best practices among audit team leaders, thereby contributing to enhanced audit readiness, more coherent implementation of the Scheme, and the sustained availability of diverse and capable cadre of lead auditors across all regions.

251 At a regional level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Regional training courses for auditors:** Aimed at expanding the global pool of auditors, this blended learning course, provides foundational knowledge on IMO audit requirements, procedures, and best practices.
- .2 **Regional training courses for women auditors:** Targeted specifically at increasing the representation of women in the audit workforce, this blended learning training addresses gender disparities while broadening the diversity of perspectives within audit teams.

Output 2: Develop Member States' capabilities for participating in the IMSAS audit process

252 This output is built on the premise that strengthening the internal capability of Member States to prepare for, undergo and engage in post-audit work under the Scheme offers foundational skills and knowledge that will lead to improved compliance with key IMO conventions and protocols. The aim is to ensure that all Member States have access to skilled personnel who can support compliance with IMO standards.

253 This includes training Member States on how to develop an effective corrective action plan (CAP) for post-audit work, thus strengthening their implementation and enforcement of maritime safety and environmental standards, and is vital in fostering a safer and more sustainable global maritime industry.

254 This output further aims to promote shared learning, networking among Member States, and encourage cooperation on common compliance challenges. This fosters a regional approach to audit preparation, identifying obstacles to audit completion, effectively implementing actions to address the findings and observations, and determining related capacity-building needs.

255 In addition, this output will support Member States in preparing for audits during the second audit cycle, in alignment with the IMSAS Continuous Monitoring Mechanism (ICMM), expected to be established. The ICMM comprises two stages: Stage 1, which focuses on audit prioritization and scheduling; and Stage 2, which occurs approximately six months prior to the audit and entails a technical review of information submitted by the Member State. This review will assess the Verification Index, conduct a gap analysis based on the Non-exhaustive List of Obligations (as per resolution A.1187(33) as may be revised), and examine responses to the State Audit Questionnaire. Where appropriate, technical cooperation projects and targeted assistance activities may be mobilized to support Member States in completing and submitting relevant information (Verification index, Gap analysis, and State audit questionnaire – VGS package) in a timely and comprehensive manner.

256 At a regional level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Regional workshops for maritime administrations:** These workshops bring together maritime administration officials from multiple Member States within a region to foster peer learning and share knowledge on successful audit preparation and compliance practices. Regional workshops also promote collaboration and harmonization practices within shared geographic contexts to support audit preparation, identify obstacles to audit completion, effectively implement actions to address the findings and observations, and determine related capacity-building needs.

257 At a national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **National workshops for maritime administrations:** These workshops are delivered using the standard IMSAS audit training programme, with interactive activities tailored to individual countries, with guidance specific to each State's unique compliance needs. They focus on the requirements of the III Code and best practices for audit preparation, corrective action planning and implementation, as well as participation in audit follow up. In addition to the standard programme, workshops will target particular compliance challenges that the Member State may face when preparing for their upcoming audit and assist in developing a road map to prepare for the audit.
- .2 **Participation of observer auditors:** This provides opportunities for Member State representatives to participate in audits in other countries. By participating in audits as part of the audit team, these representatives gain practical experience in conducting audits, as well as applying lessons learned to their administration's internal audits and enhancing the level of implementation and enforcement of applicable IMO instruments.
- .3 **Development of CAPs:** Following an audit, trained experts assist Member States to develop and submit their corrective action plan for the findings and observations identified during the audit, including related root cause(s), the necessary corrective actions and the appropriate target completion date for the implementation of the CAP. Assistance can also be provided to develop a methodology for communicating progress updates to the Audit Team Leader and IMO regarding implementation of the CAP.

Output 3: Encourage a culture within Member States of continuous improvement in compliance with international standards

258 IMO seeks to encourage a culture of continuous improvement in compliance with the international standards through the introduction of monitoring mechanisms, analysis and ongoing follow ups with Member States post-audit to ensure that initial improvements are sustained and that the overall regulatory framework continues to strengthen over time.

259 This involves supporting Member States in the implementation of their agreed CAP post-audit. Additionally, IMO seeks to ensure Member States have the resources and oversight needed to implement corrective actions effectively and in a timely manner.

260 At a global level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Research and analysis of audit data:** Regular analysis of audit findings and trends across Member States helps IMO to identify common areas of non-compliance and provides insights for developing future training materials and workshops. This data-driven approach supports continuous improvement in both the design and delivery of capacity-building activities.

261 At a regional and national level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Post-audit assistance to implement the CAP:** Trained experts work directly with Member States to support the implementation of their agreed CAP, including review of the CAP, providing guidance on how to implement the actions and help to address systemic or institutional weaknesses that may hinder implementation.

THEME 10: TC OUTREACH – PROMOTING THE MARITIME SECTOR AND ACHIEVING GLOBAL GOALS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

Overall approach

262 In September 2015, the 193 Member States of the United Nations unanimously adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including 17 SDGs and 169 related targets which emphasize the need to consider the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development simultaneously. The UN system is fully committed to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda based on the combined expertise and strengths of each entity within the system, and to ensure universal coherence. Increased collaboration is intended to eliminate duplication and fragmentation within the UN system. The UN 2030 Agenda is supported by other UN strategies such as South-South Cooperation, as well as many other forward-looking initiatives, including regional programmes such as the African Integrated Maritime Strategy for 2050.

263 As a specialized agency of the United Nations and part of the UN system, IMO has an important role to play in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including supporting Member States in their contribution to the SDGs, particularly SIDS and LDCs. The world relies on international shipping and benefits from its smooth operation, by which food, commodities, raw materials, energy and consumer goods are moved reliably and effectively around the globe at low cost. International shipping is central to the functioning of global trade, which underpins sustainable development across the globe, by providing a dependable, low-cost means of transporting goods globally, facilitating commerce and helping to create prosperity among nations and peoples.

264 It is therefore important that the maritime sector maintains a prominent place on the international stage to recognize sustainable maritime transportation as a cross-cutting enabler for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. Promotion of the maritime sector includes supporting the development of both the port and shipping sectors, promoting seafaring as a viable employment option for youth, both male and female, and facilitating inter and intraregional trade by sea to promote manufacturing, export of finished products rather than just raw materials, with resulting benefits including increased and sustainable employment opportunities for populations ashore. Ultimately, more efficient shipping, working in partnership with a port sector supported by Governments, will be a major driver towards global stability and sustainable development for the good of all people.

265 IMO's commitment is achieved through the delivery of the *Capacity-Building Decade Strategy 2021-2030* (the Strategy) (resolution A.1166 (32)) which also supports Member States to achieve the maritime aspects of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, through a focus on supporting the development and implementation of robust national maritime policies and strategies predicated on harnessing the full potential of the maritime economies. In this regard, important guiding documents include the *Linkages between the technical assistance work of IMO and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (resolution A.1126(30)) and the *Guiding principles of IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (resolution A.1127(30)).

266 The Strategy outlines several ambitious targets, which can only be achieved through effective partnerships and resource mobilization. In line with the theme of "outreach", this thematic programme will support the delivery of the *Revised Financing and partnership arrangements for an effective and sustainable Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme* (resolution A.1167(32)) and the long-term resource mobilization strategy (TC 69/4(a)) to achieve the implementation of IMO's overall TC programme.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Promotion of the maritime sector to ensure global maritime issues remain a high priority on global development agendas

267 This output seeks to enhance the visibility of the maritime sector within global development discussions and ensure that maritime priorities remain at the forefront of international policy agendas. Central to this effort is the promotion of the Sustainable Blue Economy and the crucial role of IMO's instruments in advancing global sustainability goals. By advocating for the adoption, implementation and compliance with these instruments, IMO helps drive the maritime-related aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

268 Furthermore, promoting the sector's contributions across various global issues requires innovative and engaging communication strategies. This output focuses on improving the global narrative around the maritime sector through events, campaigns, and real-time reporting that resonate with global stakeholders.

269 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will implement initiatives such as:

- .1 **Promotion of maritime development and the Sustainable Blue Economy:** Through global campaigns, discussions in UN forums and strategic outreach emphasizing the importance of IMO instruments for achieving SDGs.
- .2 **Enhancing awareness through real-time reporting and support for IMO campaigns:** Public relations tools and methods to highlight IMO's capacity-building work and raise awareness of key maritime issues through events, such as Day of the Seafarer, designed to highlight maritime careers and attract youth to the sector.
- .3 **Web-based TC Dashboard:** Development and maintenance of an interactive, user-friendly platform to provide real-time updates on the progress and impact of IMO's TC projects worldwide, accessible to IMO Member States, donors and stakeholders.

- .4 **Development of communication and outreach materials:** Such as annual "TC Impact Reports" featuring infographics, case studies and project highlights; stories from the field to highlight tangible results of TC initiatives to increase visibility and credibility; event promotion materials, such as brochures, banners and presentations for IMO events such as exhibitions during TCC and donor meetings; and development of materials to support private-sector engagement that showcase opportunities for supporting TC initiatives.
- .5 **IMO representation in UN system processes:** To ensure maritime issues are included in global development and climate action agendas.
- .6 **Leveraging digital storytelling and social media:** To amplify success stories, highlighting the work of seafarers, maritime professionals and coastal communities, while raising awareness about the contributions of women and youth in the maritime sector.

Output 2: Fostering partnerships for identification of capacity-building needs and resource mobilization

270 Addressing the complex and diverse needs of IMO Member States requires strong partnerships and coordinated resource mobilization. This output seeks to build strategic alliances among governments, development partners, the private sector, and civil society to assess real-time needs, mobilize resources, and support sustainable development in the maritime sector. Effective partnership frameworks ensure that capacity-building initiatives are demand-driven, culturally relevant and scalable across regions. Fostering these partnerships enhances IMO's ability to respond flexibly and sustainably to Member State needs, ultimately contributing to safer, more efficient and environmentally responsible maritime operations worldwide.

271 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will implement initiatives, including:

- .1 **Strengthen technical cooperation partnerships:** To enhance ongoing assessments and ensure continuous alignment between Member States' needs and available resources;
- .2 **Regional maritime needs assessment forums:** To enable Member States and partners to co-create action plans and identify priority capacity-building areas;
- .3 **Development of a global maritime partnership portal:** To facilitate coordination, share opportunities, and track progress across initiatives;
- .4 **Preparation of project proposals to support resource mobilization efforts:** Promoting transparency and attracting new funding sources for maritime development in line with identified Member State needs and priorities; and
- .5 **Engagement of private sector and academia:** In the design and implementation of capacity-building projects, incorporating innovation and emerging technologies.

Output 3: Supporting the implementation of the Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy, including monitoring and evaluation of the TC strategic framework

272 *Capacity-Building Decade Strategy 2021-2030* (resolution A.1166 (32)) represents a comprehensive framework to enhance the impact and coherence of IMO's technical cooperation work. Workstream 1 of the Strategy is entitled "Reform and streamline IMO's internal organization for the delivery of technical assistance", which aims to enhance the Secretariat's internal functions to ensure that TC is coordinated in the most efficient manner.

273 This output is designed to facilitate these institutional improvements to the quality, coordination, monitoring, evaluation and delivery of capacity-building activities. It supports long-term systemic change by ensuring that IMO's training programmes, knowledge transfer initiatives and support mechanisms are aligned with strategic priorities and adaptable to emerging challenges. In particular, it emphasizes robust planning, transparent reporting, standardized tools and regional cooperation, creating a platform for continuous learning, innovation and progress.

274 At a global, regional and national level, IMO will implement initiatives such as:

- .1 **Implementation of the TC impact evaluation:** As per the *Revised Rules of Operation of the Technical Cooperation Fund* (TC.1/Circ.76), IMO conducts an impact evaluation every four years and this programme will support the implementation of the subsequent recommendations from that evaluation;
- .2 **Review and update of internal TC procedures:** Following recommendations from previous impact evaluations and the restructure of the Technical Cooperation and Implementation Division, there is a need to update internal TC procedures manual for internal Secretariat coordination purposes.
- .3 **Internal annual monitoring and learning review workshops:** To evaluate progress of specific programmes, share lessons learned, and adjust programming based on evidence and feedback;
- .4 **Establishment of a global capacity-building knowledge hub:** Offering open access to resources, toolkits and case studies to assist Member States and stakeholders.
- .5 **Implementation of peer exchange and mentoring schemes:** Enabling countries with more mature maritime systems to support those with emerging needs.

THEME 11: IMO REGIONAL PRESENCE SCHEME – MEMBER STATES ENGAGING WITH IMO AND RECEIVING LOCAL ASSISTANCE

Overall approach

275 Engaging with Member States at the local level is essential for IMO to ensure the effective implementation of IMO instruments, with a view to their universal and uniform application. By fostering closer collaboration and communication within the regions, IMO can better understand and respond to the unique challenges, capacities and priorities of different countries and regions. This localized engagement not only strengthens the delivery of technical assistance and capacity-building but also promotes greater ownership, compliance and alignment with IMO instruments.

276 IMO first recognized the value of regionally tailored support in 1997 with the establishment of the Regional Presence Scheme, which remains one of the primary mechanisms to enhance the Organization's ability to support Member States in a more targeted, responsive and impactful manner. To date, the Scheme consists of seven Regional Presence Offices (RPOs), which support the objectives set out in work stream 3 of the *Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy* (resolution A.1166(32)). Their role is to bridge the gap between identifying regional maritime needs and implementing capacity-building initiatives, fostering institutional self-reliance and advance maritime governance through information-sharing, strengthening partnerships and enabling region-specific capacity-building. The strategic role of RPOs is further highlighted in documents TC 75/7 and TC 75/13, annex 4.

277 The seven RPOs, established under MoUs with the Governments of their respective locations, each have an appointed Regional Coordinator that requires continued financial support utilizing IMO's TC Fund as well as host-State in-kind support. These RPOs are located in:

- .1 Caribbean – Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago;
- .2 East Asia – Manila, Philippines;
- .3 Eastern and Southern Africa – Nairobi, Kenya;
- .4 Middle East and North Africa – Alexandria, Egypt (inaugurated in January 2025);
- .5 Pacific Islands – Suva, Fiji (inauguration planned for August 2025);
- .6 West and Central Africa (Anglophone) – Accra, Ghana; and
- .7 West and Central Africa (Francophone) – Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

278 Further, there is strong commitment from the Committee to continue developing and expanding the Scheme. The Committee, at its seventy-fourth session (TC 74), agreed to conduct a comprehensive review of the nature of RPOs, including their mandate, resource mobilization and deployment capabilities, as well as to convert one of the four existing RPOs in Africa from the current state to a model RPO to progress plans to review, expand and reform the RPO Scheme (TC 74/16, paragraph 6.7 to 6.10). The review commenced in late 2024 and, pending the outcomes of the report, it is expected that capacity-building support will be required throughout the 2026-2027 biennium to implement the recommendations and strategic improvements.

279 Implementing mechanisms for structured and meaningful dialogue within regions is essential for ensuring that the identification of maritime capacity-building needs is both comprehensive and representative, especially to ensure alignment with IMO's strategic TC framework. Regular, well-organized dialogue platforms – such as regional consultations, technical working groups, or heads of maritime administration meetings – create space for Member States to articulate their specific challenges, share experiences and collaborate on common priorities. These mechanisms foster a more coordinated regional voice, reduce fragmentation, and help build consensus on strategic areas for development. Importantly, such dialogue directly informs the IMO's centralized TC planning process, ensuring that global programming is responsive to regional realities. By integrating regionally-sourced insights into its planning, IMO can allocate resources more effectively, design tailored interventions, and enhance the overall impact and ownership of its technical assistance initiatives.

280 This thematic programme is therefore designed to facilitate the continuation of the Regional Presence Scheme with ongoing improvements to expand its strategic reach. This will ensure even regional coverage and equitable delivery of technical cooperation, allowing IMO to provide structured, regionally focused support that empowers Member States to meet international obligations and strengthen maritime safety, security and environmental protection. This will strengthen regional engagement and create opportunities to strategically expand IMO's regional presence to increase support to Member States, especially SIDS and LDCs, in meeting their maritime obligations and achieving compliance with IMO instruments.

IMO focus in 2026-2027

Output 1: Facilitate the IMO Regional Presence Scheme for efficient and effective implementation of IMO's technical cooperation programme

281 The RPOs serve as a critical hub to address specific regional challenges, providing technical cooperation, facilitating partnerships, and ensuring the effective implementation of IMO instruments across their respective region. This output will strengthen the operational and strategic role of the RPOs in delivering tailored capacity-building initiatives that align with regional maritime priorities. The RPOs' proximity to Member States enables the identification of specific needs, fostering effective interventions that enhance maritime safety, security and environmental protection in their specific regions.

282 Aligned with the United Nations 2030 Development Agenda, the RPOs will participate in maritime sector-related meetings at the regional and national levels. The RPOs are also critical champions for gender equality, with the Regional Coordinators advocating for the empowerment of women in maritime through regional meetings and forums.

283 At the regional level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Establish a Regional Coordinator:** As the key regional focal point to maintain continuous communication between IMO and Member States, ensuring timely feedback and coordination on technical needs.
- .2 **Strategic RPO review and implementation:** Complete the comprehensive review of the IMO RPO Scheme and support the implementation of recommendations that might be agreed to by future sessions of the Committee.

Output 2: Strategic regional coordination of needs and challenges for future capacity-building planning

284 This output is designed to facilitate mechanisms for coordinating the identification of regional needs and challenges to inform IMO's TC programme planning process. Strategic regional coordination plays a pivotal role in accurately identifying and prioritizing the specific needs and challenges faced by Member States, particularly in developing regions. By establishing strong regional mechanisms for consultation, data gathering, and knowledge sharing, IMO can ensure that capacity-building initiatives are better aligned with on-the-ground realities. This approach allows for more efficient allocation of resources, avoids duplication of efforts, and supports the design of tailored interventions that reflect regional dynamics. Ultimately, regional coordination strengthens the foundation for long-term planning and sustainable implementation of IMO instruments. The regional consultation processes will also systematically integrate Member State Audit recommendations to sharpen the prioritization.

285 At the regional level, IMO will assist Member States as follows:

- .1 **Support to Regional Heads of Maritime Administrations meetings:** Provide technical, logistical and analytical support to ensure inclusive participation and structured agendas that enable Member States to collectively identify and validate regional priorities, share operational challenges and best practices, and contribute concrete recommendations to inform IMO's strategic planning of future capacity-building initiatives. Outcomes will be documented and systematically fed into IMO's TC programme, ensuring alignment between regional needs and global support mechanisms.
- .2 **Develop regional and national partnership plans/road maps:** Co-created with Member States to align support efforts with IMO's thematic programmes at a regional and national level, providing the platform for longer-term interventions and enhanced monitoring of impact and effectiveness of maritime outcomes.
- .3 **Support the formation or strengthening of regional maritime networks or forums:** Encouraging collaboration via multi-stakeholder platforms that bring together maritime administrations, academic institutions, industry representatives and other relevant actors within each region to serve as collaborative spaces for dialogue, knowledge exchange and joint problem-solving on maritime challenges, including regulatory implementation, innovation and capacity development. Such forums can generate regionally driven solutions, promote harmonized approaches and identify emerging trends that may inform both national policies and IMO's technical assistance strategies.
- .4 **Leverage partnerships with regional organizations:** To co-design and co-deliver capacity-building initiatives with regional partners that have deep contextual knowledge, trusted relationships and existing governance frameworks that can enhance the reach, relevance and sustainability of IMO's technical cooperation activities. This can avoid duplication, align with regional development agendas and promote synergies with other ongoing initiatives.