



PRESS RELEASE

United Nations Agencies Partner with Shipping Corporations to Minimize Global Environmental Threat

The Newly Formed Global Industry Alliance Aims to Prevent Marine Bio- invasions Caused by Ships' Ballast Water

London, 2 March 2009— A Global Industry Alliance (GIA) was launched today to tackle the threats of marine bio-invasions caused by the transfer of alien plants and animals in ship ballast tanks. The Alliance, made up of an innovative partnership between the International Maritime Organization (IMO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and four major private shipping corporations, aims to harness the different skills and expertise brought by these groups in order to develop concrete solutions to this global environmental hazard.

According to IMO's findings, an estimated 10 billion tonnes of ballast water are being carried around the globe each year, and more than 3,000 species of plants and animals are being transferred daily. As a result, a serious environmental threat has developed, caused by the introduction of alien aquatic plants and animals to new ecosystems which may not be able to deal with the imported species. The damage done by these alien species is costing the world billions of dollars.

In many areas of the world, the effects of it have been devastating since once these invasive species are established they are extremely difficult to eradicate. For example, the introduction of the comb jelly (*mnemiopsis leidyi*) to the Black and Azov Sea caused a near extinction of anchovy and sprat fisheries and the introduction of the zebra mussel (*dreissena polymorpha*) in the Great Lakes required multibillion dollar control and cleaning of underwater structures and pipelines.

Recognizing the significance of the global environmental threat from ballast water transfer of such harmful species, the international community has developed a regulatory framework for ballast water management, culminating in the adoption of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments by IMO member States in 2004.

The problem is due largely to the expansion of seaborne trade and traffic over the last century. When cargo ships are not loaded, they pump water into their ballast tanks in order to maintain stability on their way to pick up cargo. Once the ships are loaded with heavy cargo, they discharge the water

from within the ship into the sea or ocean. Alien and potentially harmful invasive species are released with the discharged water. So far, very little of this ballast water is being managed in a way that minimizes the spread of these marine invaders and new invasions are being recorded at an alarming rate.

The Alliance will contribute to research and development of cost effective ballast water treatment technologies that can be fitted onboard ships. In addition, it will assist with exploring new ship design options such as 'flow thru' ballast tanks and 'ballast-free ships'. The Alliance aims to promote the transfer and diffusion of technology within the industry by opening a ballast water information exchange mechanism, developing training tools targeted at the maritime industry and establishing an industry dialogue forum.

The agreement signed today forming the GIA was initiated by GloBallast Partnerships – a joint initiative founded by IMO, UNDP and GEF. The Alliance is hosted by IMO in London. To date, four major shipping corporations - APL, BP Shipping, Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering, and Vela Marine International – have signed on to this partnership. More shipping corporations have expressed their interest to join.

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About IMO – the International Maritime Organization – is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships. IMO has 168 Member States and three Associate Members.

Website: www.imo.org.

GloBallast Partnerships and GIA: <http://globallast.imo.org>

About UNDP - is the UN's global development network, an organization advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. UNDP is on the ground in 166 countries, working with them on their own solutions to global and national development challenges. www.undp.org.

UNDP International Waters: <http://www.undp.org/gef/05/portfolio/iw.html>

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