



MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
COMMITTEE
60th session
Agenda item 2

MEPC 60/INF.2
9 December 2009
ENGLISH ONLY

HARMFUL AQUATIC ORGANISMS IN BALLAST WATER

Implementation of ballast water exchange area outside the ROPME Special Area

Submitted by ROPME/MEMAC

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This document contains information related to the implementation of the ROPME Member States' Council decision on ballast water exchange outside the Special Area
<i>Strategic direction:</i>	3.1
<i>High-level action:</i>	3.1.1
<i>Planned output:</i>	3.1.1.1
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 7
<i>Related document:</i>	MEPC 59/INF.3

Background

1 The ROPME Member States' Council at its fourteenth meeting decided to announce that ballast water exchange should take place outside the Special Area Zone of the ROPME Sea Area in accordance with regulation B-4 of the Ballast Water Management Convention. Considering the nature of the ROPME Sea Area, the sensitivity of the ecosystem and its vulnerability to marine bio-invasions compounded by the very large volume of ballast water being discharged, the Council made the issue of harmful aquatic organisms in ships' ballast water and sediments one of its priorities.

2 Recognizing the importance of the Ballast Water Management Convention, the ROPME Council has instructed the Regional Steering Committee to conduct an in-depth study regarding the provisions of the Convention focusing on the obligations resulting from the ratification of the instrument by its Member States. Such a study is believed to be instrumental for the further implementation of the Convention and for enhancing the capacity of Members to decide on the ratification process.

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Awareness campaign

3 Relevant information on ballast water exchange requirements, including their enforcement date of 1 November 2009, was provided and was noted by MEPC 59. Following a large number of enquiries received from the shipping industries, MEMAC, which is ROPME's specialized organ for issues related to shipping, developed a more detailed explanatory document that was published and widely disseminated. A summary of this explanatory document is attached at annex.

4 Furthermore, MEMAC conducted an extensive awareness campaign in Qatar, including workshops and several meetings with key stakeholders from the ROPME sea area in November 2009. These events were attended by a significant number of parties with direct interest in ballast water management matters, including various shipping companies and gas industry representatives.

Conclusions

5 As a result of several enquiries received from different parties, including the shipping industries, port operators, etc. and as a result of the discussions held during the awareness campaign, the following conclusions have emerged:

- .1 the urgent need for more awareness and training on the subject; and
- .2 the need for a Ballast Water Management Plan as part of a model legislation or guideline to be used at national level in the ratification process.

6 MEMAC is currently exploring the various possibilities to achieve the above objectives and would welcome any suggestions and recommendations from the Organization in this respect.

Action requested of the Committee

7 The Committee is invited to note the information provided in this document.

ANNEX**EXPLANATORY DOCUMENT REGARDING THE NEW BALLAST WATER
EXCHANGE REGULATIONS IN ROPME SEA AREA**

STATUTORY ALERT: ROPME Sea Area Ballast Water Management Regulation

APPLICABILITY: All Shipowners, Operators and Charterers

INFORMATION

In light of the Ballast Water Management Convention that replaced the voluntary guidelines and considering the specific provisions of the Convention, it is desired to take the necessary steps to mitigate the risk of introduction of harmful species and also to harmonize National and Regional policies to address the issue of Ballast Water in the ROPME Sea Area (RSA).

The ROPME Sea Area is defined as extending between the following geographic latitudes and longitudes, respectively:

16° 39' N, 53° 3' 30" E; 16° 00' N, 53° 25' E; 17° 00' N, 56° 30' E; 20° 30' N, 60° 00' E;
25° 04' N, 61° 25' E.

It is the largest recipient of ships' ballast water. Annually, more than 50,000 vessels visit this area and discharge a large amount of ballast water. The RSA is a semi-enclosed water body with intensely hot summers and short cool winters, extensive air and water temperature fluctuation and relatively high salinity. It is also characterized by high turbidity and low exchange of water with open sea. Therefore, there is a need to manage and control the spread of harmful aquatic species in ships' ballast water by implementing a set of measures such as ballast water exchange outside the ROPME Sea Area.

With effect from 1 November 2009, all ships, regardless of flag, will be required to exchange or treat all ballast water taken up outside the RSA for the protection of the marine environment. This comprises the states of: the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Republic of Iraq, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Taking into consideration the provisions of the regulation B-4 of the Ballast Water Management Convention, the following points should be observed:

- .1 Vessels arriving from outside the RSA should undertake ballast water exchange en route in water over 200 nautical miles from the nearest land and in waters at least 200 metres in depth.
- .2 If this is not possible for safety reasons, then vessels should be expected to make minor deviations to areas within the 200 nautical miles limit that can be identified as discharge area, so long as such areas are more than 50 nautical miles from the nearest land in waters at least 200 metres in depth.

- .3 If this is not achievable, then the ship shall provide the respective authority with the reason why she has not done so, and further ballast water management measures may be required, consistent with the Ballast Water Management Convention and other international laws.

Ballast Water, which has been treated with a ballast water management system approved in accordance with IMO standards, does not need to be exchanged.

Ships will be required to have on board an approved Ballast Water Management Plan in accordance with the IMO standards. Ships should also have and maintain a Ballast Water Record Book.

From the date specified above, all the ships passing the Strait of Hormuz will be required to complete the Regional Ballast Water Reporting Form (RBWRF) herewith attached. The ships will be inspected by the Port State Control Officers to ensure these regional requirements are fully implemented.

HELP US TO HELP YOU – If you are an owner or operator and require further assistance, please get in touch with your local Ship’s Agent, or respective Port Authority, or MEMAC as the Regional Centre at e-mail address: memac@batelco.com.bh at the earliest opportunity and we will be happy to assist.

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