

Maritime transport is the backbone of world trade and globalization. Twenty-four hours a day all year round, ships carry cargoes to all corners of the globe. World trade and maritime transport are fundamental to sustaining economic growth and spreading prosperity throughout the world, thereby fulfilling a critical social as well as an economic function. Furthermore, maritime transport will be indispensable in a sustainable future global economy as it is the most environmentally sound mode of mass transport, both in terms of energy efficiency and the prevention of pollution. In fact, shipping contributes to all three pillars of sustainable development: To the economic pillar by ensuring safe secure and efficient shipping; to the social pillar by directly and indirectly supporting the livelihoods of all economies and people around the world; and to the environmental pillar by protecting the marine and atmospheric environments.

To further support the three pillars, IMO as the UN Specialized Agency for global standard-setting for international shipping, provides coordination for a maritime sustainable development, and the future of the Maritime Transportation System. IMO's role as a trusted facilitator for global maritime standards is essential as the Maritime Transportation System requires norms that are standardized and global in nature, in order to ensure "level playing fields" across the world.

A Sustainable Maritime Transportation System requires coordination at national and international levels. At the national level, coordination for environmental protection must always take into account the other pillars of sustainable development, namely, social needs, including the health and safety of seafarers, as well as the economy of the shipping industry.

At the international level, processes of consultation and coordination among Governments and other multilateral, inter-governmental and international bodies should follow from national coordination and consultation with the various stakeholders through the formal discussion process at IMO.

In order to ensure a coordinated Sustainable Maritime Transportation System, policies related to the specific components of the Maritime Transportation System should be coordinated in the process at IMO. These include policies on the port sector, aids to navigation, oceanographic, hydrographic and meteorological services, fuel supply, the education and training of seafarers, maritime security and anti-piracy actions etc.

It is clear that, for sustainable maritime development to flourish there will be a distinct role for Governments, for industry, for international organizations and for all actors in the Maritime Transportation System, and IMO could provide the institutional framework for the sustainable development of maritime transportation.