

Opening Arctic Climate Crisis Statement

Thank you

Sir, it is traditional at this point of the meeting for Members to address recent human or environmental disasters that have a consequence for global shipping. Sir, the disaster that I am living is a disaster that is personal to me, but it is also personal to each and everyone of us and especially to the planet. We in the Arctic are convinced that the Arctic is clearly in crisis and the change is happening, rapidly beyond comparison in human history or in our indigenous knowledge. Last month, the Arctic Council released a new report concluding that the Arctic is warming three times faster than the average heating across the whole planet and we face the possibility that major portions of the cryosphere will be gone. Climate heating in the Arctic threatens the global climate and sea level rise around the world is an immediate concern for low-lying cities. A two metre sea level rise will have devastating impacts in many coastal communities and will likely put community infrastructure underwater.

Climate-driven disruptions in my Bering Sea homeland have placed the ecosystem in peril, with devastating impacts on both fisheries and protected resources. The Bering Sea is an exceptional ecosystem of tremendous ecological, economic and cultural importance. It supports one of the largest fisheries in the world and provides critical habitat for marine and terrestrial plants and wildlife. It is home to numerous communities and it is my home.

The IMO has already recognized that the Arctic is vulnerable to the impacts of shipping - but bolder action to protect the Arctic is urgently needed. The entire world looks to the IMO to address international shipping's contribution to the Arctic climate crisis - in the hope it will take meaningful action to reduce both emissions of greenhouse gases as well as emissions of black carbon. An increase in marine traffic heightens the risk of major events like oil spills and whale strikes and introduces millions of gallons of wastewater, chemicals, trash and noise pollution.

Last week, new research has found that Arctic sea ice is thinning twice as fast as previously thought, and while some might be tempted to view this as good news for shipping in the Arctic, it is not good news for me, for my community and other Arctic inhabitants, or for the planet. There can be no doubt that the Arctic is in crisis, and if the Arctic is in crisis, then we are all in crisis.

On behalf of myself and my community, and my colleagues at this meeting, I would like to stress the need for urgent action to reduce shipping's climate warming impacts on the Arctic. An ambitious and effective short term GHG measure consistent with the Paris Agreement temperature goals is needed, as is immediate action to cut black carbon emissions from ships in or near the Arctic.

Thank you

Austin Ahmusak, Kawerak Marine Advocate - statement made during International Maritime Organization's Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 76), 10 June 2021