



23 July 2010

IMO – BSC join hands to protect the Black Sea

Within the framework of the GloBallast Partnerships, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Permanent Secretariat of the Commission on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution (Black Sea Commission) organized a workshop, including legal training, between 19-21 July 2010 in Odessa, Ukraine, to prepare for the ratification of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (Ballast Water Management Convention - BWMC). The workshop is the first joint activity of the IMO and BSC within the framework of their recent Memorandum of Understanding and it brought together bureaucrats, legal experts and scientists from six Black Sea littoral states. It was hosted by the State Administration of Maritime and Inland Water Transport, Ministry of Transport and Communications of Ukraine.

The Ballast Water Management Convention is comprised of measures to prevent the potentially devastating effects of harmful marine organisms carried by ships' ballast water. It requires all ships to implement a Ballast Water and Sediments Management Plan, to carry a Ballast Water Record Book and to carry out ballast water management procedures to a given standard.

When ships unload their cargo brought from the Black Sea ports to North America, they have to fill their ballast water tanks with sea water in order to keep their balance on their way back to the Black Sea. It is estimated that about 3 to 10 billion tonnes of ballast water is transferred globally each year, potentially transferring from one location to another thousands of marine species that may prove ecologically harmful when released into a non-native environment. The effects of the invasive species have been devastating in many areas of the world, most notably in the Black Sea.

Being almost completely isolated from the world's oceans, the Black Sea's unique ecosystem is extremely vulnerable to the threats generated by human activities. Possibly one of the greatest of these threats is transfer of invasive species into the Black Sea.

Invasive species in the Black Sea reproduce rapidly and they can invade an area in a very short time competing the native species out, which may also result in dramatic



depletions in fish stocks. Hence these organisms have tremendous impacts on the economy and ecology of the areas they invade.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Black Sea Commission (BSC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to increase mutual support on several environmental aspects of shipping including the oil pollution preparedness, ballast water management and dumping. The MOU was signed on 8 July 2010.

An Agreement for Co-operation was reciprocally approved by the IMO at the 26th Session of the IMO Assembly, held on 23 November - 4 December 2009, and by the Black Sea Commission during their meeting on 19-20 January 2010. This agreement on the reciprocal observer status between the BSC and IMO will further increase the contribution at their meetings and mutual support to achieve the common objectives of both organizations, for the Safe, Secure and Efficient Shipping on Clean Oceans.

In 1992, realizing the importance of the Black Sea, its fragile and unique ecosystem as well as the unique role it plays in the lives of the people in the region, the six coastal countries of Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine signed the Convention on the Protection of the Black Sea Against Pollution in Bucharest hence the name "Bucharest Convention". The Black Sea Commission is the intergovernmental body established in implementation of the Bucharest Convention, which provides the legal framework for regional cooperation and the actions needed to reduce pollution and increase protection in the marine environment. The Permanent Secretariat of the Black Sea Commission is hosted by Turkey and located in Istanbul.