Statement by
International Maritime Organization (IMO)
to the 4th session of the BBNJ Preparatory Committee
Agenda item 5 (General statements)

Mr. Chair,

Thank you Chair. Let me start by expressing the International Maritime Organization’s gratitude to you and your team for the sterling contribution and efforts to further the process of the development of an international legally binding instrument on BBNJs in line with the UNGA resolution [69/292].

Delegates

International shipping uses the world’s oceans to deliver more than 80 per cent of global trade by volume and over 70% of global trade by value. Annually, more than 50,000 seagoing ships carry more than 10 billion tonnes of cargoes, including commodities, fuel, food, raw materials and consumer goods.

Shipping is the engine that keeps the global economy moving contributing to livelihoods of many. It is the most cost-effective and cleanest way to move goods in quantity. It facilitates commerce and helps to create prosperity among nations and peoples. Shipping is thus a fundamental component of any programme for sustainable development.

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the United Nations agency responsible for developing and adopting measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent marine and atmospheric pollution from ships.

IMO oversees the associated legal and administrative mechanisms for promoting cooperation among Member States and the availability of shipping services to world trade on a non-discriminatory basis.

IMO conventions, upon entry into force, cover all ships, regardless of the flag they fly, as ships of non-convention States entering the waters or ports of convention States are subject to the “no more favourable treatment principle, which is embedded in IMO treaties. In other words, this principle allows for a level playing-field so that ship operators cannot address their financial issues by simply cutting corners and compromising on safety, security and environmental performance. This approach is also a vehicle for innovation and efficiency within the shipping and maritime industries.

The international shipping fleet is, by far, the biggest user of the surface of the ocean and seas. Activities conducted from vessels include voyages carrying the world’s traded goods, voyages for fishing, tourism, exploration and
exploitation of sea-bed mineral resources and scientific research etc.

IMO currently has 172 Member States, more than over 130 observers from international organizations and NGOs representing all of the maritime industry.

IMO has adopted over 50 treaties, the vast majority of which are in force. In addition, to supplement these treaties, numerous measures such as guidelines, guidance, recommended practices and codes have been agreed. Some of which already dealing directly with the protection of BBNJs.

In closing, IMO has some 70 years of experience in addressing governance issues, consistent with UNCLOS, and welcomes the efforts to further address the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. IMO is encouraged that the Chair’s indicative suggestions recognizes that the new agreement should recognize and not undermine existing relevant legal instruments and frameworks, relevant global and sectorial bodies referencing IMO where appropriate.

IMO remains ready to provide input, advice and technical information to assist the Member States in the deliberations at this PrepCom - and beyond.

Thank you Mr. Chair.