



Press Release – November 13, 2006

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GREEN GROUPS CALL FOR CLEANER SHIP FUELS AND ENGINES DURING INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS IN NORWAY THIS WEEK

Oslo, Norway – Environmental groups allied with Friends of the Earth International are pressing for ships to abandon dirty bunker fuels and cut engine emissions by 70 to 90 percent using current pollution controls during U.S. led international negotiations November 13 to 17.

Results from the weeklong session could mark a turning point in reducing toxic emissions from ocean-going ships, which are steadily escalating due to increasing global trade and poor pollution standards. Fuel and engine emissions reductions benchmarks developed this week are expected to be adopted and finalized by July 2007 for implementation beginning in 2010 by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Several shipping nations support improved standards, but others beholden to shipping and oil interests could hamper reform of the shipping fleet. Ships carry 90 percent of consumer goods to market and the volume of trade is expected to triple in the next two decades.

"This is a critical time to make drastic cuts in ship smokestack pollution through international standards," said Teri Shore of Friends of the Earth – US. "With more evidence of people getting ill and dying early due to inhaling diesel exhaust from ships, we hope shipping nations and industry groups will finally get serious about cleaner fuels and engines – and stop putting profits before people and the environment."

David Marshall, Senior Counsel for the Clean Air Task Force, stated, "IMO must act now while this window of opportunity is still open. Shipping emissions are large and will only grow larger with increasing global trade. The techniques to control shipping emissions exist— now the political will to use them must be found. If IMO can't find it, then individual countries and states will be forced to do so on their own."

Shipping emissions contribute to substantial human health and environmental problems. People living near ports experience higher levels of cancer, heart attacks, asthma, respiratory illness and other cardiopulmonary problems – as well as premature death. Shipping emissions also contribute to acid rain, climate change, and water pollution by deposition.

By 2020, shipping emissions are projected to exceed land-based emissions in Europe and parts of the U.S. Ships are estimated to generate almost 30 percent of the world's smog-forming nitrogen oxide emissions and nearly ten percent of sulfur dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels.

A delegation of international, European Union and U.S. organizations, formally represented at the IMO by Friends of the Earth International, are pressuring the shipping industry to immediately switch to cleaner fuels and put air pollution controls on both new and existing ship engines that will drastically reduce smog-forming emissions and soot from diesel ship exhaust. The coalition includes: Clean Air Task Force (U.S.), Friends of the Earth – Bluewater Network (U.S.), Swedish Secretariat on Acid Rain (Sweden), North Sea Foundation (Netherlands), European Federation for Transport and Environment (Belgium).

Based on current technology and cleaner fuel supplies, environmentalists are urging the IMO to require:

- Reductions of 40 to 50 percent in smog-forming nitrogen oxides and sulfate-forming sulfur oxides by 2010
- Reductions of 70 to 90 percent in smog-forming nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides by 2015.
- Reduced sulfur content in marine fuels to 1 percent or less at sea by 2010; and switching to marine distillate fuel of .5 percent by 2015.
- Reduced sulfur content in marine fuels in Sulfur Emissions Control Areas to .5 or less.
- Prohibition of on-board incineration in coastal waters.

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