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Commissioner Apostolos Tzitzikostas
Sustainable Transport and Tourism

Brussels, 20 November 2026

Open letter ahead of key decision moment at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) on the future of global shipping

Dear Commissioner Tzitzikostas,

On 4 December, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) is expected to decide whether to adopt the Net-Zero Framework (NZF) for global shipping, including the world's first global emissions pricing on any industry, or whether to keep this vital sector stuck in costly delays and uncertainty. We write with urgency, and calling on European leadership to deliver for the maritime industry and for global climate diplomacy.

In 2023, IMO Member States adopted the Revised GHG Strategy committing shipping to net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by or around 2050 in an equitable way. They agreed that a regulatory framework including a technical and economic element is necessary to achieve this goal. In April 2025, the NZF was approved by an overwhelming majority as the mechanism to deliver on the IMO's climate targets.

With just days until the negotiations resume, renewed attempts from within the EU are trying to weaken the block's unity, in order to destabilise the negotiations and perpetuate the delay in getting the historic agreement adopted. These are the same tactics that succeeded in October 2025 but, more importantly, they consistently fail to offer alternatives to achieve IMO climate targets in a reliable and equitable manner. These efforts are not genuine negotiations but mere attempts to throw off balance the majority of IMO Member States engaging in good faith in the debate.

The NZF still remains the only approved and robust agreement on the table, with alternative proposals failing to attract sufficient support from IMO Member States. Three things are at stake if governments fails to adopt the NZF this December:

Progress: With the NZF already approved by a majority of the international community, a small minority of Member States and some sectors of the shipping industry are attempting to delay and weaken climate action to extend polluting business models. Delays are already undermining the confidence of first movers and preventing clean fuels and technologies to scale.

Certainty. Ships, fuel plants and ports are built to last for decades. Nearly 130 companies across the maritime value chain have told governments what they need: reliable rules, this year. Climate ambition and commercial confidence require the same thing. The industry is ready to move, and it is asking you to lead.

Fairness. The pricing mechanism is estimated to raise 10-15 billion US dollars a year in its early years, with the proceeds directed to supporting developing countries, including Small Island Developing States and Least Developed Countries. A transition that places excessive burdens on the countries that contribute least to emissions will not hold. This framework is designed so that it does not.

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The EU's position at the IMO negotiations in December will shape how the world's trade moves for decades. We therefore call on you to:

1. Ensure a unified EU position in support of adoption of the NZF in the December MEPC meeting, through the Organization's established procedures, with these core elements: a global fuel standard, a price on emissions, and revenue supporting a just and equitable transition and accelerated production of zero and near-zero emission (ZNZ) fuels.
2. Oppose attempts to further weaken or delay the IMO's processes. The past year has clearly shown that the NZF is the only viable option for moving forward with majority backing, opposed only by a small, obstructive minority.
3. Treat adoption as a beginning. Use the framework's review provisions and future sessions to strengthen it as science and experience require.

We can show that multilateral climate action can still deliver, and that shipping can lead rather than follow.

Yours sincerely,



Ester Asin Martinez
Director
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