

 <p>SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: IMO'S CONTRIBUTION BEYOND RIO+20</p>	 <p>INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION</p>
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Briefing 46/2013

22 October 2013

Ballast water treatment system test organizations launch GloBal TestNet group

A new formal group of organizations involved in testing for the certification of ballast water treatment systems has been set up, known as the “GloBal TestNet”, to facilitate increased standardization and harmonization of test procedures and information exchange.

The move is expected to benefit test facility clients as well as the end-users of ballast water treatment technologies: the ship owners who need cost-effective and environmentally-friendly systems to meet the requirements of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention), 2004.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) establishing the GloBal TestNet was signed on 21 October 2013 by representatives of 16 ballast water treatment system testing organizations, during a pre-conference event held as part of the 5th Global Ballast Water Management R&D Forum and Exhibition, being held in Busan, Republic of Korea, from 23 to 25 October 2013.

The R&D Forum, with a theme of “Meeting the demands of the BWM Convention: R&D in the context of catalysing innovative technologies”, was jointly organized by the Global Environment Facility (GEF)-United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-International Maritime Organization (IMO) GloBallast Partnerships Programme and the Government of the Republic of Korea.

The signing of the GloBal TestNet MoU follows four years of discussion among testing organizations, which have met several times under the auspices of the Global Industry Alliance (GIA), established within the framework of the GloBallast Partnerships Programme.

It is expected that other testing organizations worldwide may join the GloBal TestNet in the future. The GloBal TestNet is open to any organization involved in the generation of data from land-based and/or shipboard testing for the certification of ballast water management systems, under the 2004 BWM Convention and relevant Guidelines or other test protocols.

“I am very encouraged to see that the testing organizations have signed such an MoU and that the GIA and the GEF-UNDP-IMO GloBallast Partnerships Programme catalyzed such a collaborative process. This initiative could play a major role in addressing some of the concerns related to harmonization of technology testing and approval process and thereby accelerate the availability of approved treatment systems to meet the needs of the industry,” said Mr. Shaj U Thayil, Vice President, APL Co. Pte. Ltd, and Chairman of the GIA.

The GloBal TestNet aims to achieve greater levels of standardization, transparency and openness in the process of technology approvals and thus raise the standards of quality control and quality assurance, in what can be a complex testing process. The signing marks an important milestone in the global effort to address the problem of invasive species transferred through ships' ballast water and addresses concerns within the shipping industry about a perceived lack of standardisation and harmonization among ballast water treatment technology test organizations.

The BWM Convention was adopted to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic organisms from one region to another, by establishing standards and procedures for the management and control of ships' ballast water and sediments. Once it enters into force, the treaty will require all ships to implement a Ballast Water and Sediments Management Plan. All ships will have to carry a Ballast Water Record Book and will be required to carry out ballast water management procedures to a given standard.

Guidelines on approval of ballast water management systems have been adopted by IMO. Reliability and consistency of the test methodologies used is seen as extremely important, in order to meet ship owners' expectations that technologies approved and installed on ships have global acceptance, irrespective of the testing organizations used to test and approve them.

The GloBal TestNet will provide a neutral platform for information sharing and help ensure that all testing is comparable and in conformity, while delivering to the end users of the treatment technologies a greater level of transparency and provide tools for meaningful assessment and comparison of the different systems available on the market.

This is also expected to contribute to the timely implementation and ratification of the Ballast Water Management Convention, which has, to date, been ratified by 38 Parties, representing 30.38 per cent of world merchant shipping tonnage. It will enter into force 12 months after ratification by at least 30 States, representing 35 per cent of world merchant shipping tonnage.

IMO – the International Maritime Organization – is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships.

Web site: www.imo.org

GEF-UNDP-IMO GloBallast Partnerships Programme: <http://globallast.imo.org/>

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