

IMO timetables organisation phaseout

The International Convention on the Control of Harmful Antifouling Systems on Ships was adopted at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in October 2001 and applies to all commercial vessels. The convention will come into force 12 months after it has been ratified by at least 25 states representing 25 per cent of the world's gross tonnage. The convention lays down the following key elements:

1. The convention bans the application and use of TBT-based paint from January 1, 2003 onwards. Existing TBT-based coatings will have to be either sealed or blasted off by January 1, 2008.
2. It is uncertain when the convention will enter into force. It is possible that TBT-based paint will continue to be applied after January 1, 2003 in certain areas of the world where national or regional legislation does not prohibit its use.
3. Some countries, e.g. EU member states and the US, may enforce the convention retroactively. In such cases TBT-based paint applied legally after January 1, 2003 will have to be sealed off/removed after the relevant entry-into-force date before a ship would be allowed to enter the ports of the country in question.
4. The convention applies to all ships flying the flag of countries ratifying the convention. Also, all ships entering ports, shipyards and offshore terminals of a country party to the convention would be subject to its requirements, irrespective of the vessel's flag. In addition, the application of TBT-based paint in a signatory's shipyards is prohibited.
5. All ships of more than 400 gross tons flying the flag of a signatory country must carry an International Anti-Fouling System Certificate issued by the flag state's government or an organisation authorised by that government.
6. The certificate is to be issued before a ship enters into service; when the antifouling system is changed or reapplied; or if the ship bears a TBT-based paint at time of entry into force. The certificate, which includes a record of paint systems on the hull, can only be issued to ships flying the flag of a convention signatory state. Ships without a certificate may be detained. Ships above 24 metres in length and up to 400 gross tons must be in possession of a declaration of the antifouling system used.
7. In addition to the convention a conference resolution was adopted in October 2001 which urges the paint industry to refrain from the production, marketing and sale of TBT and TBT-based paint by January 1, 2003.

At the 47th Session of the IMO Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC 47) last month the Flag State Implementation (FSI) Subcommittee was requested to urgently develop three sets of guidelines, as required by the Convention, i.e. guidelines for the brief sampling of ships antifouling systems; guidelines for the inspection of ships antifouling systems; and guidelines on surveys of antifouling systems. FSI was asked to give priority to the latter set and have them finalised by the end of 2002.

MEPC 47 noted information provided by the European Commission that a ban on the marketing of organotin-based antifouling systems would come into force in all 15 EU member states starting on January 1, 2003.