

# UK Chamber of Shipping Single-Use Plastic Charter

## Introduction

Single-use plastic is a significant threat to life in the ocean and the planet as a whole. It is estimated there are over 150 million tonnes of plastic in the world's oceans and every year one million birds and over 100,000 sea mammals die from the ingesting or becoming entangled in plastic waste. A recent government report estimates that plastic in the sea is set to treble by 2025.

Plastic generally enters the oceans from land-based sources, especially via rivers. The shipping industry has, over the last few decades, been proactive in improving its environmental performance by implementing strict regulations about the disposal of waste. MARPOL Annex V<sup>1</sup> prohibits the discharge of all garbage, including plastic, into the sea. It also includes procedures for minimizing, collecting, storing, processing and disposing at port reception facilities of plastic waste generated on board. The regulation is enforced through flag state and port state controls.

The Chamber and its members have a goal of ZERO pollution from ships to sea from plastic and are committed to continuously minimising the generation of shipborne garbage by following the theme of reduce, reuse, recycle<sup>2</sup>. The Chamber has, with the help of several member companies, produced a guidance document entitled "Best Practice on Combating Single-Use Plastic in Shipping". The guidance showcases several initiatives to replace the use of non-essential single-use plastic by more environmentally friendly solutions. The next step beyond guidance is for the Chamber to lead the way in creating a cultural change in the industry by reducing plastic consumption and waste as laid out in this Charter.

## Single-Use Plastic

To provide a standardised understanding the UN definition of single-use plastics will be used:

*Single-use plastics, often also referred to as disposable plastics, are commonly used for plastic packaging and include items intended to be used only once before they are thrown away or recycled. These include, among other items, grocery bags, food packaging, bottles, straws, containers, cups and cutlery.*

## Aim

The UK Chamber of Shipping's "Single-Use Plastic Charter" aims to get companies to pledge to follow and go beyond the IMO's work and the UK Government's commitment,<sup>3</sup> to banning the use of non-essential<sup>4</sup> single-use plastics onshore and offshore to show the industry's

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Environment/PollutionPrevention/Garbage/Pages/Default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> G8 Summit 2004

<sup>3</sup> The UK Government has issued an SI for the "Environmental Protection (Plastic Straws, Cotton Buds and Stirrers) (England) Regulations 2020" which will come into force on 6th April 2020

<sup>4</sup> Plastics which are avoidable or where sustainable alternatives are available. Plastics which are used for safety, sanitary, medical and accessibility purposes, food preservation or containment of waste where viable safe and hygienic alternatives are currently not available are not deemed as 'non-essential'

commitment to this important issue. This can be done by replacing them with sustainable recyclable non-plastic alternatives, non-plastic biodegradable options, or reusable and recyclable plastics. In addition to this, the aim is to help the industry be part of the circular economy, and where applicable create cultural change to both passengers and seafarers' attitudes towards single-use plastic.

### **Action required**

Members will be asked to commit to this Charter to develop initiatives and replace non-essential single-use plastics as soon as possible but no later than 31<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

Members who have signed the Charter are encouraged to report back to the Chamber on their progress and share best practices in eliminating the use of non-essential single-use plastics.

### **UK Chamber of Shipping's commitment**

The UK Chamber of Shipping will seek to support the adopters of this Charter in achieving their commitments and improving awareness on initiatives to combat non-essential single-use plastic through guidance<sup>5</sup> and the exchange of best practices. In addition to this, the Chamber will also work closely with the UK Government, international shipping associations, ports and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that coastal states meet their MARPOL requirements to provide adequate port waste reception facilities.

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<sup>5</sup> "Best Practice on Combatting Single-Use Plastic in Shipping" produced by the UK Chamber of Shipping, 2019