

# THE ARCTIC COMMITMENT

The Arctic is one of the few regions of the world that has remained largely untouched by large-scale industrial development. This largely pristine environment is nonetheless host to millions of people with rich, often ancient cultures as well as a great diversity of ecosystems and marine life. The Arctic is also of major global importance due to its crucial role in regulating world weather patterns and ocean currents.

However, climate change poses significant challenges to this vulnerable environment due to the rapid melting of Arctic sea ice. These changes lead to the prospect of considerable growth in Arctic marine traffic as new sea routes become gradually accessible.

Heavy Fuel Oil (HFO) is, by volume, the most commonly used shipping fuel in the Arctic and the Arctic Council has categorised its use as one of the most significant threats to the Arctic environment. HFO is an

extremely viscous and toxic fuel and the potential for an HFO spillage poses a major risk to Arctic marine ecosystems and to the communities that depend upon these. The combustion of HFO produces high levels of air pollutants, including black carbon, that are harmful to human health and act as powerful regional climate change accelerators.

In recognition of the serious impacts and associated risks of HFO use in polar regions, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has already amended the MARPOL Convention to ban the use and carriage of heavy grade oils by ships in the Antarctic.

It is imperative that we acknowledge the grave risks to the Arctic environment and beyond and call for mitigation measures, including a phase-out of HFO use for Arctic shipping.

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## We, the undersigned

**CALL UPON** the international community to acknowledge the importance and vulnerability of the Arctic region and to pledge to protect this unique environment;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the uniqueness of the Arctic region; the diversity of its ecosystems and the richness of its peoples' cultures;

**RECOGNISING** that development needs to take place at a pace and on a scale that is supportable by the fragile and changing Arctic ecosystems;

**UNDERSTANDING** the Arctic's important role in the regulation of the global climate, notably its role in helping to maintain stable global temperatures;

**NOTING WITH CONCERN** the rapid melting of the Arctic sea ice and the alarming projected rise in global sea levels;

**AWARE OF** the particular vulnerability of the Arctic environment; its peoples, wildlife and ecosystems, to the effects of climate change, particularly the melting of polar ice;

**NOTING** the rapid expected growth of ship traffic in the Arctic region and that most of the fuel carried by vessels in the Arctic is heavy fuel oil;

**RECOGNISING** the harmful impact of heavy fuel oil combustion on the Arctic environment, resulting in particularly high emissions

of particulate matter, including black carbon, which accelerates the warming of the Arctic and the melting of ice;

**ALSO RECOGNISING** the harmful impact of heavy fuel oil combustion upon human, animal and plant life in the Arctic regions due to the high emissions of sulphur and nitrogen oxide, sulphates and other harmful forms of pollution;

**UNDERLINING** the considerable operational risks inherent in Arctic maritime navigation and, with these, a heightened risk of environmentally disastrous HFO spills;

**ACKNOWLEDGING** the potentially grave consequences for Arctic marine ecosystems in the event of a heavy fuel oil spill due to its high viscosity making it virtually impossible to clean up in the cold, ice infested and often inaccessible waters of the Arctic, with potentially disastrous consequences for Arctic marine wildlife, ecosystems and communities;

**RECALLING** that the Polar Code encourages ships not to use or carry heavy fuel oil in the Arctic;

**AGREEING** that a switch from the use of heavy fuel oil to cleaner fuel types by ships and the application of adequate emission reduction technology would significantly advance the objective of protecting the Arctic marine environment;

**Call for a phase-out of the use of heavy fuel oil by ships in a timely manner and urge International Maritime Organization Member States and stakeholders to advance this goal.**

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**We invite you to sign the Arctic Commitment.  
To do so please contact [Arctic.Commitment@HFOFreeArctic.org](mailto:Arctic.Commitment@HFOFreeArctic.org)**

The Arctic Commitment is an initiative launched by the Clean Arctic Alliance and Hurtigruten.  
For more information and a list of current signatories please visit <http://www.hfofreearctic.org/en/arctic-commitment>