

Mr. Harri Pursiainen, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Transport and Communications

Opening Speech in the Polar Code Conference, 22 February 2018

Mr Lim, Mr Taalas, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Finnish Transport Safety Agency, I have the honour to welcome you all to this International Polar Code Conference. Today, we are sharing experiences of the first year of enforcement of the Code after its entry into force at the beginning of last year. We are delighted that Kitack Lim, Secretary General of the IMO, is here with us to share his views on how the work is progressing.

When discussing Arctic issues, we can certainly agree that our cooperation has to continue. Finland takes some pride in having hosted the first-ever Arctic ministerial meeting in 1991. And only five years after that, in 1996, the Arctic Council was established.

As we all are aware, climate change will have dramatic effects on the Arctic region. The warming of the climate will open up new parts of the Arctic, and human activity in the region will increase. At the same time, worldwide interest in Arctic resources is likely to grow and important transport routes may be created.

One of Finland's priorities during its Arctic Council Chairmanship is to enhance maritime safety to ensure better protection of the marine environment. In addition to this Conference, Finland will contribute to safe and sustainable shipping by boosting collaboration among the Arctic Council Working Groups and the Arctic Region Hydrographic Commission. We plan to arrange a meeting of the International Ice Charting Working Group that will focus on collaboration, Arctic shipping and ice services. By making available accurate and updated sea charts and ice maps, we can ensure safe shipping.

Meteorological cooperation among the Arctic countries is a new area for the Arctic Council promoted by Finland. It will be developed under the umbrella of the World Meteorological Organization. The need for such cooperation is obvious. The changing climate means that better science, observations and services are needed in the meteorological and hydrological sectors, and for safe shipping as well. Accordingly, we welcome our second keynote speaker Petteri Taalas, Secretary General of the WMO.

Finland confirms its commitment to decrease black carbon emissions in the Arctic region. Accordingly, Finnish researchers have conducted studies to test the candidate measuring methods and collect data on black carbon emissions from shipping. So far the results of the studies can be summarized by saying that several parameters not only fuel quality can have an impact on the level of black carbon emitted. The results have been presented to the IMO. The next step is to discuss measures to limit emissions.

Ladies and gentleman

Finland and the other Arctic States, through the Fairbank Ministerial Declaration, welcomed the entry into force of the Polar Code. Furthermore, the Ministerial Declaration encouraged continued engagement by the Arctic States, also at the IMO, to facilitate harmonized implementation of the Code. Accordingly, Finland's intension is to enhance collaboration between the Arctic Council and the IMO. This event is a proof of that.

All the Arctic States worked actively together while we were negotiating the Polar Code in the IMO. Now, we have to ensure that together we achieve effective and coherent implementation and enforcement of the Code. In these efforts the IMO, the Arctic Council and the Antarctic Treaty Parties have a major role to play.

As part of its work, the Arctic Council has set up the Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum to support the effective implementation of the Polar Code. The Forum is developing a publicly available web portal with hyperlinks to information that is relevant to all those involved in safe and

sustainable shipping. The Forum, which Finland was chairing, met for the first time last June. Then, the work of the Forum was introduced and the outcome of its first meeting was presented at the IMO Maritime Safety Committee meeting last June.

Other efforts to promote the Code are also ongoing. For example, Finland and the Russian Federation have initiated a project in the Arctic Council to raise awareness of the Polar Code among seafarers.

The Polar Code, as it now reads, is a good package for enhancing maritime safety and environmental protection in Polar waters. However, today we are here to discuss the challenges related to putting it into practice.

Ladies and gentlemen

“Exploring common solutions” is the slogan for Finland’s Arctic Council Chairmanship. Our message is clear: only together can we successfully cope with the challenges. We encourage the public and private sectors to work together in the Arctic towards the common goals of the Polar Code. Finally, technological advances must aim at mitigating climate change to avoid a tipping point or a point of no return in global warming.

Once again, I would like to warmly welcome you all to this Polar Code Conference and I wish you many fruitful and inspiring discussions today to benefit the implementation of the Polar Code and to feed future developments of the Code at IMO.

Thank you for your attention!