

IMO PAME CAPE TOWN AGREEMENT ARCTIC WEBINAR

4 June 2026 (14.00 - 16.30 GMT+1) on MS Teams

Opening Remarks by Mr. Masud Karim Deputy Director, Sub-Division for Marine Technology and Cargoes, Maritime Safety Division

Minister Ármannsson (Ministry of Infrastructure of Iceland), Ms. Núñez (Director General of the Spanish Merchant Marine), distinguished colleagues and participants,

Good morning, afternoon, or evening, depending on where you are joining us from.

It is my great honour to be here today to deliver these opening remarks on behalf of the International Maritime Organization. My name is Masud Karim, Deputy Director of the Sub-Division for Marine Technology and Cargoes within the IMO's Maritime Safety Division.

We are gathering at a truly historic moment for the maritime and fisheries communities. Just a few months ago, in February 2026, the official ratification threshold for the 2012 Cape Town Agreement was finally met. Consequently, this landmark treaty is now set to enter into legal force on 24 February 2027. This is a monumental achievement that will, at last, provide fishers with the legally binding safety protections and vessel inspections that the merchant shipping industry has long enjoyed.

Seafood is an essential food protein for millions, yet commercial fishing remains one of the most dangerous professions in the world, with an estimated 80 lives lost per 100,000 fishers on average every year. The journey to this moment has been long, evolving from the initial 1977 Torremolinos Convention to the 1993 Protocol, and finally culminating in the adoption of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement.

To bring this Agreement into force, IMO has worked tirelessly alongside its Member States, including Iceland and Spain, and international partners. Allow me to highlight some of the IMO's dedicated efforts in promoting this vital instrument.

In October 2019, the IMO, together with the Government of Spain, co-hosted the Torremolinos Ministerial Conference on Fishing Vessel Safety and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing. This was one of the largest fishing vessel conferences in IMO history, attended by some 120 States. During this conference, nearly 50 States signed the Torremolinos Declaration, publicly pledging their commitment to promote and ratify the Agreement.

Furthermore, the IMO has actively promoted technical cooperation and capacity-building. Through our Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme (ITCP), we have organized numerous national and regional seminars and webinars across the globe to help national Administrations ratify, implement, and monitor the provisions of the Agreement.

However, global treaties require dedicated regional champions to ensure their success. This brings me to the incredible work of the Protection of the Arctic Marine Environment, or PAME, working group. I want to highly praise PAME for its exceptional efforts in highlighting the critical importance of the Cape Town Agreement, particularly through the organization of this Arctic Webinar.

Operating a fishing vessel is inherently hazardous, but doing so in the Arctic introduces unique and severe challenges, such as extreme weather, sub-freezing temperatures, and dangerous ice accretion. The Cape Town Agreement provides mandatory international requirements for stability, machinery, electrical installations, life-saving appliances, and communications equipment designed to keep crews safe in these exact conditions.

PAME's dedication to addressing fishing vessel safety in the Arctic is highly commendable. By initiating this dialogue, PAME is ensuring that the specific safety needs of Arctic fishers are at front and centre as we transition into the implementation phase of the Agreement.

The entry into force of the Cape Town Agreement will act as the fourth pillar of international maritime instruments for the fishing sector, standing alongside the STCW-F Convention, the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, and the FAO Port State Measures Agreement. Together, these instruments will significantly enhance safety, improve working conditions, and empower port States to carry out coordinated inspections to combat Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing.

In conclusion, the impending entry into force of the CTA is not the end of our work; it is merely the beginning. We must now focus on robust, worldwide implementation to save lives at sea. I thank PAME once again for convening this vital webinar, and I wish all of you a highly productive and successful event.

Thank you.

760 words, 5 minutes