国土交通省
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism

Press Release

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IMO Decided to Renew Mandate of Secretary-General A. Dominguez

--- 138th Session of IMO Council ---

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), at its 138th Session of the Council held during November 2 to 6, decided to renew the mandate of the incumbent Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez for another 4-year term (Jan 1, 2028 to Dec 31, 2031).

Japan, the Category-A Council member, expressed its strong support to re-appointment of the incumbent Secretary-General Dominguez, highlighting that since taking office in Jan 2024, he had been vigorously addressing various issues, including maritime security challenges, safety of seafarers and advancement of greenhouse gas reduction, and that his strong leadership should continue to be desired for the IMO.

The IMO Council, composed of 40 members elected every two years, deliberates on key maritime issues including safety of ships and seafarers, environmental protection, and matters concerning the management of the IMO.

Since being the member of the IMO in 1958, Japan has continuously been elected as the Council member and has actively participated in and contributed to its deliberations.

The 138th Session of the Council:

Date and venue

November 2 to 6, 2026, at the IMO Headquarters in London, the United Kingdom

Major Outcomes (please see ANNEX for details)

1. Protection of Vital Shipping Lanes
2. Contract of the Secretary-General for the Next Term
3. IMO's Resource Management
4. IMO Gender Equality Award

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ANNEX

The 138th Session of the Council: Major Outcomes

1. Protection of Vital Shipping Lanes

A number of the Council members, including Japan, stressed that i) the safety and freedom of navigation remain the fundamental principle of the international shipping, ii) the safety and welfare of seafarers and ships must be secured as a matter of crucial importance, and iii) safe and free passage of the Strait of Hormuz without any additional charges, as it used to be, must be maintained. Furthermore, Japan called for all relevant Member States to cooperate with the IMO to ensure a coordinated and sustainable return to unhindered navigation at the Strait.

Following the discussions, the Council reaffirmed that vital shipping lanes, including the international straits, should remain open, safe, secure and accessible to international shipping, in accordance with the applicable international law. Furthermore, the Council reiterated the call to refrain from unlawful measures that would jeopardize the safety of seafarers and international shipping.

2. Contract of the Secretary-General for the Next Term

The IMO Secretary-General is elected by the Council, and serves a 4-year term, which may be renewed for one additional term up to 4 years. The incumbent Secretary-General, Arsenio Dominguez, first took his office on January 1, 2024, and will complete his first term on December 2027. Therefore, the Council deliberated on the contract of the IMO Secretary-General for the next term at this session.

In the deliberation, Japan expressed its strong support to re-appointment of the incumbent Secretary-General Dominguez, highlighting that since taking office in Jan 2024, he had been vigorously addressing various issues, including maritime security challenges, safety of seafarers and advancement of greenhouse gas reduction, and that his strong leadership should continue to be desired for the IMO.

As a result, the Council decided to renew the mandate of the incumbent Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez for another 4-year term the next term (Jan 1, 2028 to Dec 31, 2031). In accordance with the IMO Convention, the re-appointment of the Secretary-General Dominguez will be subject to consideration and approval at the 35th Session of the Assembly to be held next year.

3. IMO's Resource Management

The Council considered the current status report on the IMO's 2-26 budget as of September 30. The Council acknowledged that the IMO's work had been carried out as planned within the scope of the initial budget plan, and approved the proposals from the Secretariat to manage the budget plan.

Japan, acknowledging the growing importance of the IMO in addressing various challenges in the international maritime sector, called on the Secretariat to continue its efficient operations and expressed its intention to contribute vigorously to all IMO activities as a Council member.

In addition, the Council approved the amendments to its Rules of Procedure to bring them into alignment with the rules of the United Nations General Assembly.

4. IMO Gender Equality Award

The IMO Gender Equality Award is established to accord international recognition to those individuals, irrespective of their gender, who, either in their personal capacity or as representatives of their respective institutions, have made significant contributions to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in the maritime sector.

The Council noted the report from the Secretary-General that the 2026 IMO Gender Equality Award was presented at IMO Headquarters on 18 May 2026 to Prof. Momoko Kitada, World Maritime University, who was nominated by Japan.

Furthermore, the Council endorsed the recommendations from the Assessment Panel Chaired by the Secretary-General that the following nominees be the recipients of the Award in 2027:

2027 Gender Equality Award: Ms. Yu Jiajia, Dalian Maritime University (China)

2027 Letter of Commendation: Ms. Gemma Griffin, DFDS (Denmark)