Topic 1 – Ballast Water Pollution

In this day and age, shipping by sea is the largest shipping industry in the world. Over 80% of the world's commodities are transmitted every year by ship and in turn, there are issues that come with it. When sailing, a boat will intake water or ballast water to compensate for an empty hull to weigh down the boat. When they arrive at their destination to take on goods, they then empty this water into the said port. There are approximately 10 billion tons of water that are transmitted by this method. The issue that comes along with this mass movement of water is that water isn't the only thing being transmitted in the water. Along with it are numerous bacteria and other species that are transmitted across the world and into foreign ecosystems.

Because of the mass transmitting of species, ecosystems are at serious risk of infiltration. One example of this occurred in North America when the Zebra mussel was accidentally introduced. The mussels multiplied and completely took over the internal waterways. It cost the US over 5 billion dollars in control measures to maintain this outbreak. Another example of cross-contamination is of "red-tide" algae, which in turn are often absorbed by shellfish. When these shellfish are consumed by humans, they can cause paralysis and possibly death.[1]

How do we deal with this issue? The UN Convention of the Law of the Seas (Article 196) gives an outline for "states to work together to prevent, reduce and control pollution of the marine environment including the intentional or accidental introduction of species, alien or new, to a particular part of the marine environment, which may cause significant and harmful changes thereto."[2] The Marine Environmental Protection Committee of the IMO has over the years created standards for ballast water management. Any ship using ballast water exchange must do so at a minimum 95% efficiency and at the standards of agreed number of organisms per unit volume.

[1] World inventory of fisheries. Ballast waters: pollution and invasive species. Issues Fact Sheets. Text by Devin Bartley. In: *FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department* [online]. Rome. Updated 27 May 2005. [Cited 2 October 2017]. http://www.fao.org/fishery/topic/14776/en

[2] ttp://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Environment/BallastWaterManagement/Pages/Default.aspx

Now that you have a little bit of a background, the following are the questions I would like you to focus on:

- How can the IMO universally improve on cutting down on contamination?
- If contamination does occur, who is responsible for handling it? Is any compensation necessary?
- Should countries require a screening process of the ballast water of all ships entering their ports?
- Is the IMO responsible for creating a policing branch to crack down and enforce its laws?

There are other questions that can/should be dealt with in this topic, as these are simply guiding questions. I encourage you to explore methods that have been used, build off the ones that have been successful, and learn from those that have failed. Please take care to represent your country's stance on these issues. You are expected to both know and understand what your country's views are and express them as their representative to YUNMUN. All rules and regulations that are stated in the YUNMUN Handbook must be followed. In your position papers, you are to give your country's stance and continue that stance while you are participating in the conference. Plagiarism on any position papers is unacceptable and will be dealt with accordingly.

I look forward to a great conference!

Raffi Wiesen

Chair, IMO

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