

**Moving Forward  
Network** →



INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING & OCEAN-GOING VESSELS COUNTRY PROFILE



# MARSHALL ISLANDS



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## Moving Forward Network

The **Moving Forward Network (MFN)** is a national network of over 50 member organizations that centers grassroots, frontline-community knowledge, expertise and engagement from communities across the US that bear the negative impacts of the global freight transportation system. MFN builds partnerships between these community leaders, academia, labor, big green organizations and others to protect communities from the impacts of freight. Its diverse membership facilitates an integrated and geographically dispersed advocacy strategy that incorporates organizing, communications, research, legal and technical assistance, leadership development and movement building. This strategy respects multiple forms of expertise and builds collective power.

MFN advocates for effective rulemaking on global and local levels as necessary to maximize zero-emission requirements for marine engines. Regulation and technological development that center zero emissions while prioritizing environmental justice are not just feasible; it is deadly to continue to delay action.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: [MOVINGFORWARDNETWORK.COM](https://movingforwardnetwork.com)



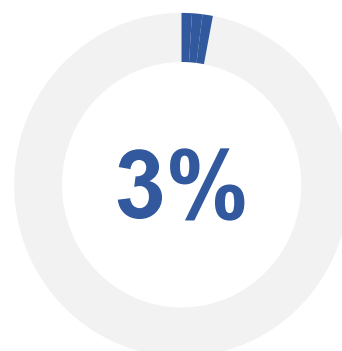
# IMPACTS OF MARITIME SHIPPING

## Environmental and Public Health

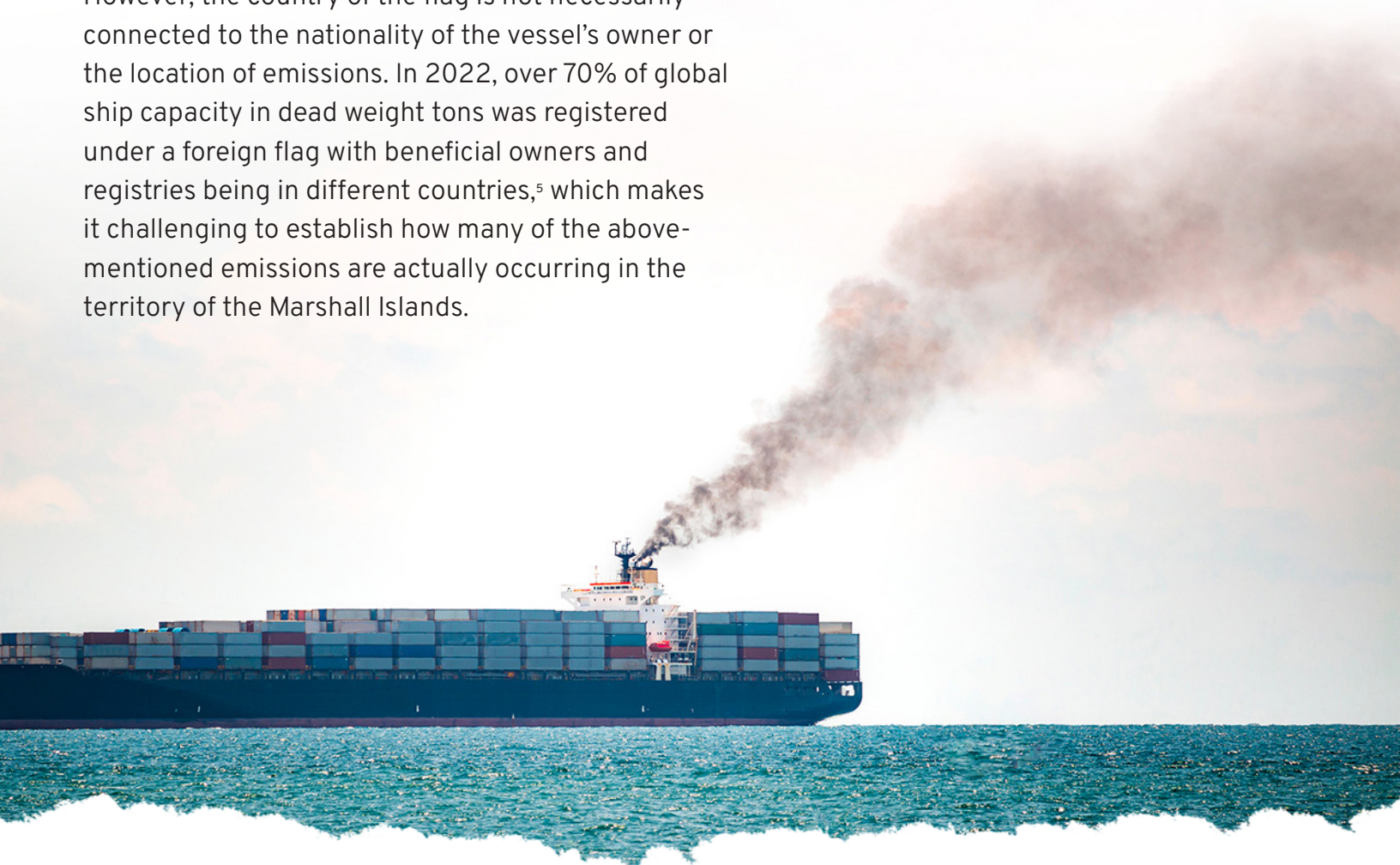
Maritime shipping is responsible for about 3% of all greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions worldwide every year.<sup>1</sup> The main emissions from shipping are CO<sub>2</sub>, nitrogen oxide (NOx), sulfur oxide (SOx), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), black carbon (BC) and particulate matter or particles (PM), all known to be harmful to human health and the marine environment.<sup>2</sup>

In 2022, Panama, Liberia and the Marshall Islands, the world's three leading flags of registration, collectively account for over one third of global carbon dioxide emissions from international shipping.<sup>3</sup> Marshall Islands-registered vessels emitted 88,611,254 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2022.<sup>4</sup> However, the country of the flag is not necessarily connected to the nationality of the vessel's owner or the location of emissions. In 2022, over 70% of global ship capacity in dead weight tons was registered under a foreign flag with beneficial owners and registries being in different countries,<sup>5</sup> which makes it challenging to establish how many of the above-mentioned emissions are actually occurring in the territory of the Marshall Islands.

APPROXIMATELY



OF WORLDWIDE  
GREENHOUSE GAS  
EMISSIONS ARE DUE TO  
MARITIME SHIPPING





There is a substantial amount of evidence on the wide range of health effects of air pollution, which include respiratory, cardiovascular, and metabolic diseases, stroke, lung cancer, impaired fertility outcomes, preterm birth, reduced birth weight and premature mortality.<sup>6</sup> Particulate Matter more specifically, triggers heart attacks, strokes, and asthma, causes cancer, exacerbates obesity and diabetes, and contributes to cognitive challenges, including Alzheimer's, dementia, and mental health disorders.<sup>7</sup> The sector contributes significantly to other environmental problems, such as the spread of invasive species, whale strikes, ocean noise pollution, and pollution discharges at sea and in delicate marine ecosystems.

Globally, 'shipping-sourced emissions' were projected to account for around 265,000 premature deaths in 2020 (accounting for ~0.5% of global mortality).<sup>8</sup> Populations closest to ports and high-traffic shipping routes are burdened with the highest air pollution concentrations and thus the most significant health burdens. However, as most research on health impacts of global shipping is concentrated in the European geographic region and on European populations,<sup>9</sup> the majority of the world's population are inadequately represented in current analysis.





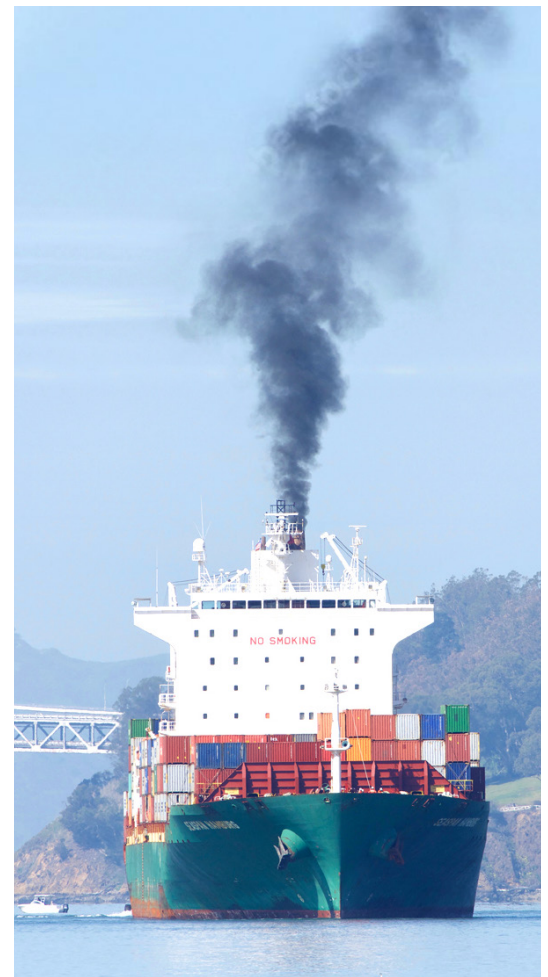
# WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships.<sup>10</sup> The IMO sets global standards for international shipping through the creation of universally applicable laws, regulations and policy programmes.



**NAVIGATING  
THE FUTURE:  
SAFETY FIRST!**

Representatives from member countries come together in various committees, subcommittees and working groups in order to make decisions at the IMO.<sup>11</sup> There are currently 175 countries that are members of the IMO.<sup>12</sup> This makes the IMO a key forum through which countries can ensure that the shipping industry takes meaningful action on climate change and other matters that have serious consequences for environmental justice communities worldwide.





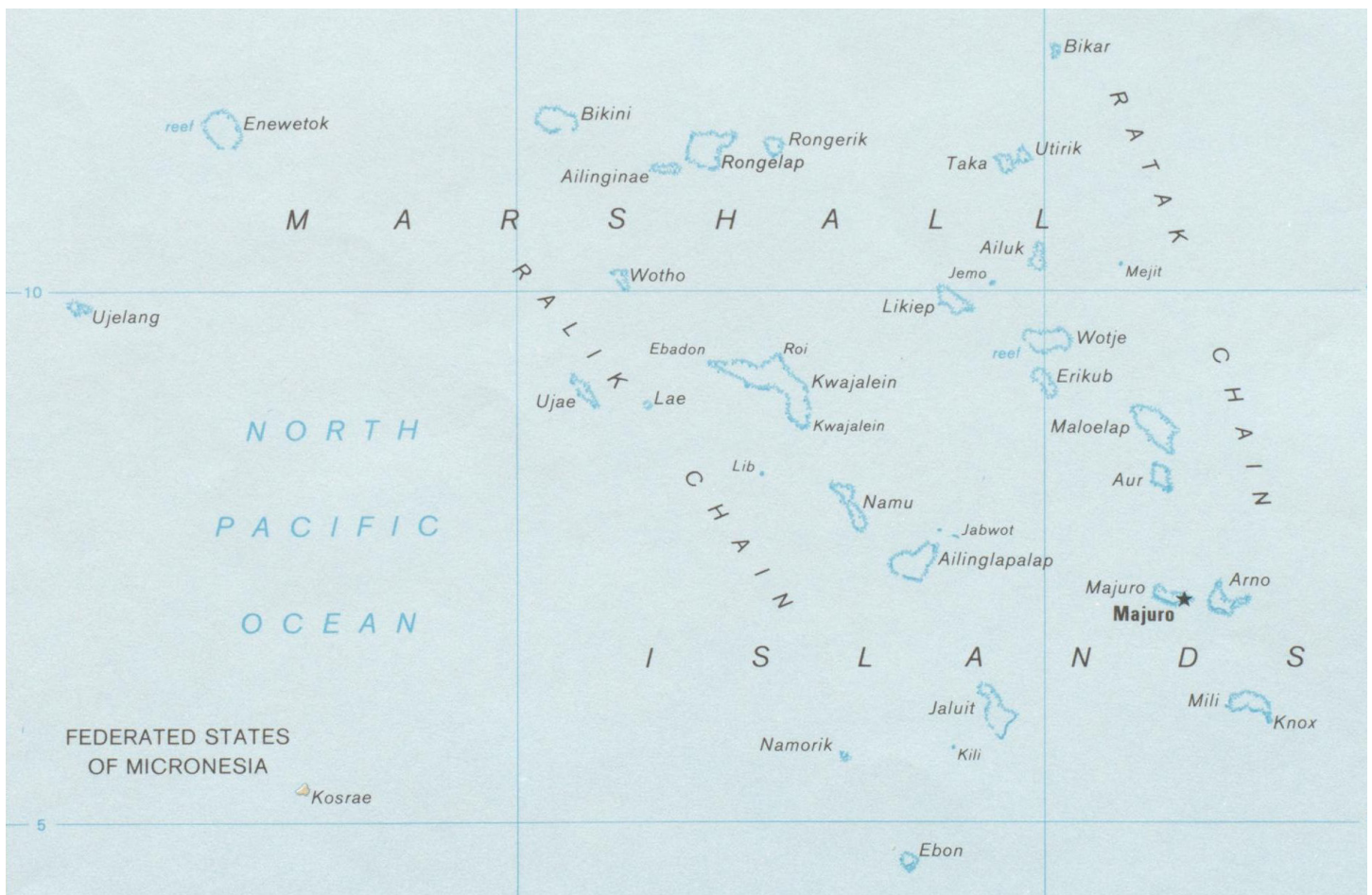
# RELEVANCE OF INLAND & MARITIME SHIPPING TO THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

## Historical and Economic Relevance of Maritime Industry

Shipping, fishing and other sea-related activities are key to the Marshall Islands' economy and international trading relations. Sea transportation has historically connected the whole Marshall Islands, meaning domestic shipping services plays an indispensable role in Marshallese daily life. The Marshall Islands is also a well-established player in international shipping. The Marshall Islands ship registry,<sup>13</sup> which is administered by the American company International Registries, Inc. (IRI), consistently places among the top three largest ship registries in the world by gross tonnage, deadweight tonnage, and the number of vessels operating under its authority.<sup>14</sup>



Fishing Boats in the Pacific Ocean near the Marshall Islands





## Mitigating International Shipping's Contribution to Climate Change

Estimates indicate that if GHG emissions from ocean-going vessels are not more stringently regulated on a global scale, international shipping may be responsible for 10–13% of

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global emissions in the coming decades.<sup>15</sup> Climate change hits small island states like the Marshall Islands the hardest. A joint report by the World Bank and the Government of the

Marshall Islands noted that the Marshall Islands will be one of the first nations to experience sea level rise as 'a genuine existential threat' unless serious climate mitigation and adaptation measures are implemented.<sup>16</sup> Without adaptation measures, rising sea levels are projected to endanger 37% of existing buildings in the capital, Majuro, with 96 percent of the city at risk of frequent flooding induced by climate change.<sup>17</sup>

The Marshall Islands is a global leader on environmental protection strategies in shipping and a consistent supporter of maritime pollution prevention at the IMO and in other international spaces. Further information on the Marshall Islands' activities at the IMO are available below.

The Marshall Islands also demonstrate regional leadership in maritime decarbonisation. In 2019, the Governments of Fiji and the Marshall Islands, also gaining support from the Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu launched a partnership to advance the just and equitable transition of the shipping sector in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>18</sup> The Pacific Blue Shipping Partnership (PBSP) intends to drive an ambitious, sustainable sectoral change in the region using country-led collective action and innovative financing. The PBSP is dedicated to full decarbonisation of the maritime transport sector in the region by 2050 and it has also sought to mobilize a blended finance package exceeding US\$500 million to enable its ambitious work plan.<sup>19</sup>



The RMI Registry also commits itself to the protection of the marine environment.<sup>20</sup> However, it is worth noting that the Marshall Islands flags a number of offshore drilling rigs and, was reported to be the number one ship registry for the world's oil tanker fleets in 2016<sup>21,22</sup>

## Potential Additional Financing for Adaptation and Mitigation of Climate Change Impacts

Various measures that will help international shipping reduce its climate impact are currently being discussed at the IMO. This includes economic measures, such as a levy on GHG emissions from ships, that could also be used to generate finance for adaptation and mitigation in countries most impacted by climate change. The Marshall Islands were the initial proponents of the maritime levy and fund distribution mechanism, and have led on various subsequent submissions related to the levy.<sup>23</sup> The revenues raised from this measure could be significant: According to the World Bank, between \$1 trillion to \$3.7 trillion could be raised by 2050.<sup>24</sup>

All measures, and in particular their impacts on countries around the world, are currently being assessed (Spring 2024). This research will provide the basis for further discussions at the meetings of the Intersessional Working Group on GHG emissions and the Marine Environmental Protection Committee, where any selected measures will be adopted.

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Kwajalein Atoll





The Marshall Islands joined the IMO in 1998. The Marshall Islands has ratified many Conventions and Protocols which have been created under the auspices of the IMO - an overview of ratifications per country is available on the IMO's website.<sup>25</sup>

The Marshall Islands was also one of eight countries to submit a National Action Plan to the IMO under an IMO initiative to encourage national strategies outlining policies and activities to address GHG emissions from international shipping.<sup>26</sup> The document 'Rebbelib 2050: A Catalyst for Change - Marshall Islands national transport decarbonisation framework' details current and expected decarbonisation initiatives in the country and broader region.<sup>27</sup>

## Engagement in Key Meetings

The Marshall Islands is very active at the Marine Environmental Protection Committee (MEPC) and its Working Group on GHG reduction in International Shipping (ISWG-GHG) and other IMO meetings related to pollution from international shipping.

The Marshall Islands were early advocates for an ambitious and equitable transition away from GHG emitting fuels and technology at the IMO, for example calling for specific emissions reduction targets prior to the adoption of the IMO's initial strategy on GHG emissions reductions in 2018.<sup>28</sup> In 2021, the Marshall Islands proposed the global levy on maritime emissions, as mentioned above. In the Summer of 2023, during the negotiations which led to the revision of the IMO's GHG strategy, the Marshall Islands, alongside fellow Pacific Island States, called on all IMO Member States to emphasize the importance of an equitable transition, leaving no country behind. They fought hard to 'keep 1.5 alive', advocating for Zero emissions by 2050, with ambitious interim targets of 37% emissions reductions by 2030 and 96% by 2040, all on a well-to-wake basis.<sup>29</sup> While the final strategy did not reach the ambitions of the Marshall Islands, they were instrumental in strengthening the final text as adopted.<sup>30</sup>



# LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There are many organizations and citizen's movements which may be interested in getting involved with the work of the IMO or work in areas relevant to maritime shipping. Including:

## **The Micronesian Center for Sustainable Transport (MCST)**

MCST is a research and implementation program dedicated to addressing the need for Pacific states to transition to low carbon transport pathways, including sea transport, first aiming to achieve the transition in the Marshall Islands and then use this as a catalyst throughout the region.

## **Waan Aelōñ in Majel (WAM)**

WAM is committed to empowering the young men and women of the Marshall Islands through the medium of traditional canoe and boat building.

## **The Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS)**

MICS builds awareness, support and capacity for sustainable use of resources, conservation and protection of biodiversity using a combination of traditional resource management practices and scientific assessments.





# ENDNOTES

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