

**Moving Forward
Network** →



INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING & OCEAN-GOING VESSELS COUNTRY PROFILE



SIERRA LEONE



PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH

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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)

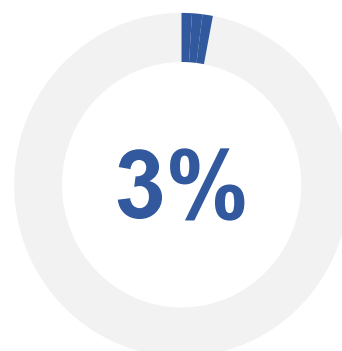
IMPACTS OF MARITIME SHIPPING

Environmental and Public Health

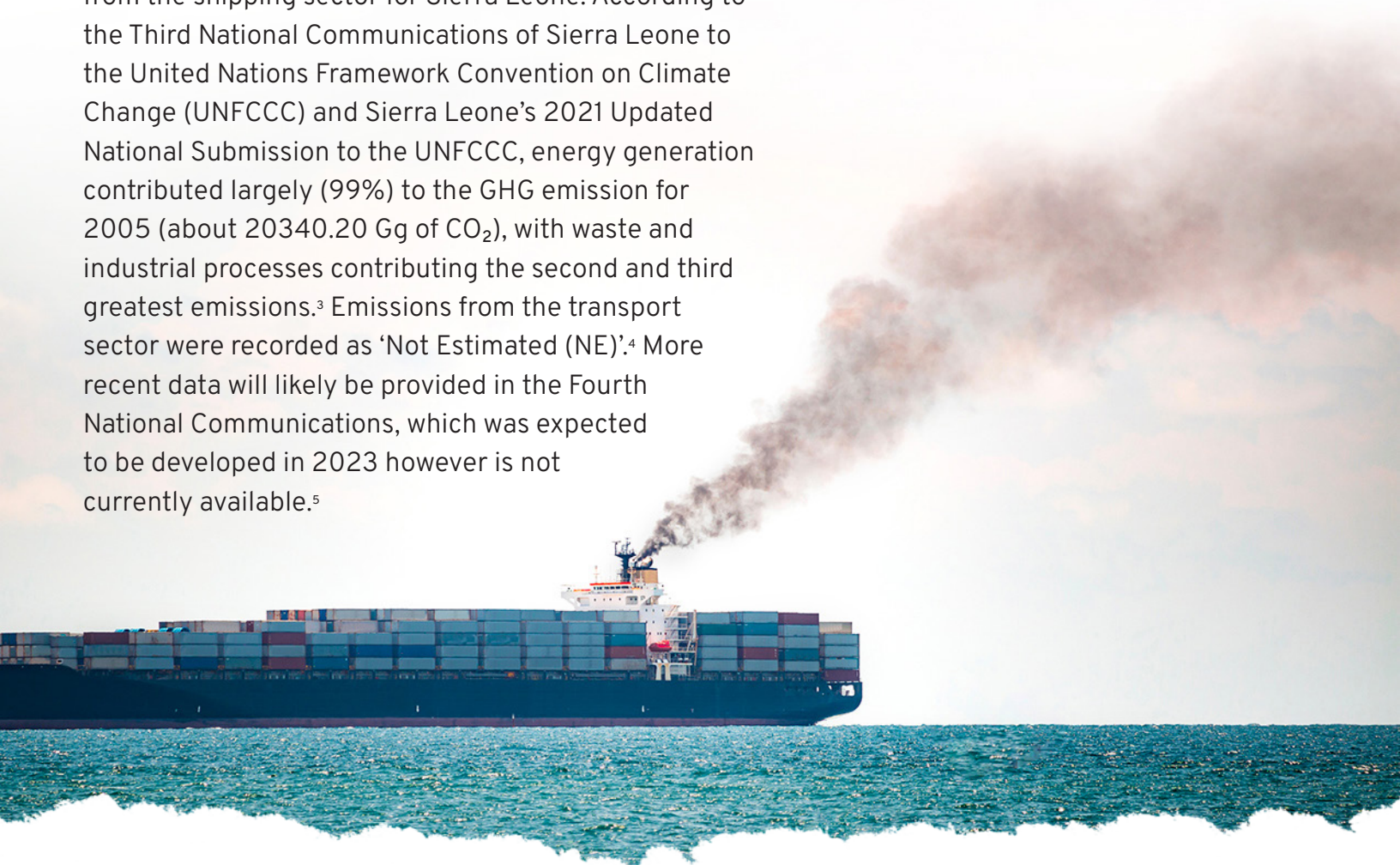
Maritime shipping is responsible for about 3% of all greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions worldwide every year.¹ GHGs are the atmospheric gasses responsible for causing global warming and climatic change. The main emissions from shipping are CO₂, nitrogen oxide (NO_x), sulfur oxide (SO_x), methane (CH₄), black carbon (BC) and particulate matter or particles (PM), all known to be harmful to human health.² In addition, 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.

The authors of this brief did not find data on emissions from the shipping sector for Sierra Leone. According to the Third National Communications of Sierra Leone to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Sierra Leone's 2021 Updated National Submission to the UNFCCC, energy generation contributed largely (99%) to the GHG emission for 2005 (about 20340.20 Gg of CO₂), with waste and industrial processes contributing the second and third greatest emissions.³ Emissions from the transport sector were recorded as 'Not Estimated (NE)'.⁴ More recent data will likely be provided in the Fourth National Communications, which was expected to be developed in 2023 however is not currently available.⁵

APPROXIMATELY



OF WORLDWIDE
GREENHOUSE GAS
EMISSIONS ARE DUE TO
MARITIME SHIPPING





Monrovia Freeport in Liberia
shares the coastline with Sierra Leone

Nevertheless, global maritime emissions continue to soar and air pollution does not stop at national borders. Transboundary flows of pollutants occur locally and regionally, and even globally.⁶ Within the region, Liberia, Sierra Leone's close neighbor, consistently places among the flag state fleets emitting the most CO₂ per year (although the country of the flag is not necessarily connected to the location of emissions).⁷ In 2022, Panama, Liberia and the Marshall Islands, the world's three leading flags of registration, collectively accounted for over one third of global carbon dioxide emissions from international shipping. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's (UNCTAD) 2023 Review of Maritime Transport, Liberia-flagged vessels are responsible for the highest volume of carbon dioxide emissions from ships, when purely measured by main flags of registration.⁸



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There is a substantial amount of evidence on the wide range of health effects of air pollution. This includes respiratory, cardiovascular, and metabolic diseases, stroke, lung cancer, impaired fertility outcomes,

preterm birth, reduced birth weight and premature mortality.⁹

According to the State of Global Air, total air pollution (not specific to shipping) was attributable to

Air pollution was attributable to 9,370 deaths in Sierra Leone in 2019

9,370 deaths in Sierra Leone in 2019 alone.¹⁰

Additionally, according to 2019 figures, residents face high exposure to PM 2.5, with an estimated 99% of the population exposed to a PM 2.5 concentration above the World Health Organization's least stringent target.¹¹ Health effects attributable to PM include heart attacks, strokes, asthma, cancer, exacerbation of obesity and diabetes, and it contributes to cognitive challenges, including Alzheimer's, dementia, and mental health disorders.¹²

Globally, 'shipping-sourced emissions' were projected to account for around 265,000 premature deaths in 2020 (accounting for ~0.5% of global mortality).¹³ Populations closest to ports and high traffic shipping routes are burdened with 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,¹⁴ the majority of the world's population is inadequately represented in current analysis.



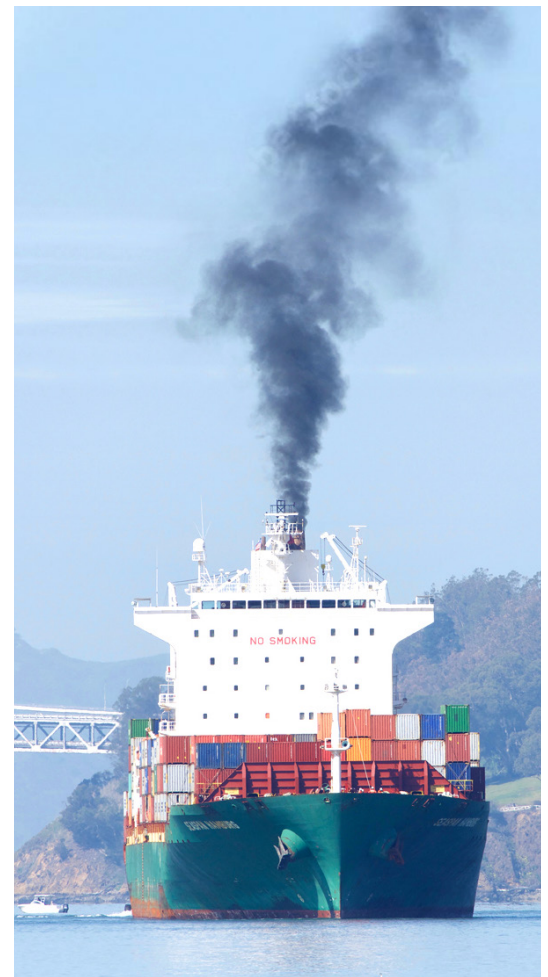
WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ There are currently 175 countries that are members of the IMO.¹⁷ 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.





Freetown, Sierra Leone

RELEVANCE OF INLAND & MARITIME SHIPPING IN SIERRA LEONE

Trade and Transport

Located on the west coast of Africa, Sierra Leone is well located for trade and maritime transport. At a regional level, West Africa participates in around 29% of Africa's maritime trade, according to 2019 data.¹⁸ The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement is expected to increase intra-African freight by 28% and demand for maritime freight by 62%. A significant increase in traffic flows is expected across all transport modes throughout Africa in the coming years. According to UNCTAD, enormous investment in transport equipment and infrastructure will be required, including 100 more vessels, if the AfCFTA is fully implemented.¹⁹

Importance of 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 global emissions in the coming decades.²⁰ Using available international processes, including negotiations on GHG emissions reductions at the IMO, to abate the industry's climate impact is thus very relevant to Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone is on the frontline of the climate crisis. It is impacted by higher temperatures and ocean level rise alongside climate-induced disasters, such as dust storms and prolonged and intense droughts.²¹ Many inhabitants are dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods.²² According to the World Bank, high dependence on agriculture and natural resources, coupled with high rates of poverty, unemployment and environmental degradation, leave Sierra Leone vulnerable to climate change impacts.²³

Potential 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, such as Sierra Leone. The revenues raised from such a measure could be significant: According to the World Bank, between \$1 trillion to \$3.7 trillion could be raised by 2050.²⁴ Many African countries, including Sierra Leone, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia and Namibia²⁵ have signaled support for the levy and revenue distribution mechanism, and recently (September 2023) various Heads of State and Government from the African Union signed the Nairobi Declaration at the African Climate Summit, which included a call for a 'global carbon taxation regime including a carbon tax on fossil fuel trade, maritime transport [...]'.²⁶ However, there is also a group of countries that loudly oppose the measure due to its potential impact on global trade - most notably China, Brazil, Argentina and most of the Latin American Member States (with the exception of Costa Rica and Mexico), South Africa, and Russia.

All measures, and in particular their impacts on countries around the world, are currently being assessed by UNCTAD. This research will provide the basis for discussions at the meetings of the Intersessional Working Group on GHG emissions (March 11–15, 2024) and the Marine Environmental Protection Committee (March 18–24, 2024). The levy and its revenues could be of great use to Sierra Leone for climate adaptation and mitigation; these meetings should therefore be of importance.



Sierra Leone joined the IMO in 1973. Sierra Leone 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.²⁷

Engagement in Key Meetings

In the recent past, Sierra Leone has had limited participation in the meetings of the Marine Environmental Protection Committee (MEPC) and its Working Group on GHG reduction in International Shipping (ISWG-GHG). Representation was recorded in the list of participants for ISWG-GHG 15 (June 2023) and MEPC 80 (July 2023), the meetings which concluded with adoption of a Revised Strategy on GHG emissions reductions at the IMO, although Sierra Leone did not contribute orally during the meetings.

It is important to note that some countries can apply for financial assistance to attend and participate in IMO meetings via the IMO's Voluntary Multi-Donor Trust Fund.²⁸

Representation

Sierra Leone is usually represented by a member of its Maritime Administration. As of February 2023, Sierra Leone's Permanent Representative to the IMO was recorded as Ambassador Dr Morie Manyeh and Alternate Representative was Sheik Kabba.²⁹

LOCAL GROUPS & OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The following groups or organizations may be interested in getting involved with the work of the IMO or MFN.

The The Center for Sustainable Blue Economy Development an Affiliate of Sierra Leone Life Saving Society

Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) protects and promotes human rights throughout the country.

Human Rights Defenders Network

A coalition of human rights civil society organizations and individuals working for the protection and promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone.

ENDNOTES

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- 16 Overview of the structure of the IMO available at: IMO, 'Structure of the IMO'. Retrieved from Structure of IMO
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