

# The Global Programme for Sustainable Ship Recycling



The Global Programme for Sustainable Ship Recycling was created in 2007 to facilitate improvements in worker health and safety and environmental conditions in ship recycling countries in the South Asia region. The Programme concept has been developed in close consultation with two other international organisations with an interest and expertise in ship recycling: the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The Secretariat of the Basel Convention seeks to work with all ship recycling stakeholders to ensure the future sustainability of the industry.

## Why the Global Programme?

Ship recycling<sup>1</sup> is the process of dismantling an obsolete vessel's structure for recycling or disposal whether conducted at a beach, a pier, a dry dock or a dismantling slip. It is an important industry in South Asia, particularly to the economies of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan, providing jobs to hundreds of thousands of workers and much needed steel for development. The practice is inherently sustainable given over 95% of a ship can be recycled: steel is re-rolled and used in construction, machinery and equipment are re-used and oils and fuels are re-used or recycled. Ship recycling countries provide a valuable service to the global economy, recycling ships that are no longer operable, which otherwise might be abandoned or sunk. Given over

<sup>1</sup> Also referred to as "ship dismantling", "ship scrapping" and "ship breaking".



90% of the world's trade is conducted via shipping, ship recycling is an issue in which the majority of the world's population has a stake, although its direct effects, both positive and negative, often go unseen at the global level.

Whilst in theory the practice is sustainable, there is growing concern in the international community over the conditions in which ship recycling takes place. There is often little regard for worker health or safety, with worker injury and illness, and sometimes worker fatality, being commonplace. The record in environmental protection is poor, with a high incidence of pollution of local air, soil and water sources. Ships contain highly toxic materials, including asbestos,

PCBs, heavy metals and oils and fuels, the dangers of which are not always understood by the workforce which results in limited precautions being employed to protect worker health and the environment. The concerns over standards in the industry are compounded by the impending phase-out of single-hulled tankers, which will result in thousands more ships requiring recycling over the coming ten years, the majority of which will find their way to the beaches of South Asia.

## What does the Global Programme seek to achieve?

A new Convention on the "Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships" is currently being negotiated under the auspices of the IMO to facilitate improvements in the industry, although entry into force is not expected until approximately 2015 after sufficient ratifications are received. Action is urgently required to prevent incidence of worker injury and fatality and reduce the negative impacts of this activity on the environment.

To this end, the Programme seeks to:

- Promote the sustainability of the ship recycling industry by enhancing the application of internationally recognized standards relating to occupational safety and health (OSH) and environmental protection;
- Promote effective implementation of the future Convention for the "Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships" being negotiated under the auspices of the IMO, by building upon existing technical assistance activities promoting the guidelines

of the IMO, ILO and Basel Convention, and elements of the new Convention (as developed); and

- Promote an integrated approach to the ship recycling industry, by addressing infrastructural and other needs in the participant countries in and beyond the ship recycling yards.

## The Global Programme concept

The Programme concept is based on four fundamental principles:

- **A life-cycle approach**, recognising that action is required within the confines of the ship recycling yard and beyond;
- **Inclusion** of ship recycling into national development and poverty reduction strategies, noting the important role the industry plays as an employer and source of raw materials;
- **Collaboration** with a wide array of stakeholders, including representatives of governments, ship recycling associations, workers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) of ship recycling countries, donor countries and ship owner representatives. The active involvement of all relevant stakeholders will be instrumental in securing a commitment to improve the global ship recycling industry in a sustainable manner; and
- **Continuity**, recognising that the Programme should build on the considerable work that has been done in the past and put into place processes and procedures for the long-term, to ensure the future sustainability of both the Programme and the industry.

## How does it work?

Extensive consultation with key ship recycling stakeholders will help to establish priorities and areas of opportunity in the main ship recycling countries. Core activities are outlined in the Global Programme concept which require tailoring to each individual ship recycling country's needs. Once a work programme for a specific country is agreed by all relevant stakeholders, implementation of the country strategy commences with oversight being provided through a Steering Committee.

### Consultation

The Programme seeks to establish public-private partnerships with key ship recycling stakeholders through which open dialogue and practical action can be undertaken. These partnerships would be comprised of all levels of government, industry and business sectors, non-governmental organizations, academia and other international institutions and bodies. Such consultative activities will help identify which of the Global Programme's activities are suited to the prevalent conditions in the country of implementation.

## Activities

All activities identified in the Global Programme concept are inter-related, although they all comprise of their own set of underlying objectives. These activities include:

- **Development of model facilities** in each of the participant countries to couple both operational and infrastructural improvements in a phased manner, providing a blueprint for other yards to follow suit. This activity provides a linkage between recycling facility owners wishing to upgrade their facilities and organisations and individuals with the expertise to consult on such improvements.
- **Development of Government-to-Business certification scheme(s)** to provide a yardstick by which ship owners and governments may assess the adherence of a yard to internationally accepted OSH and environmental standards. This activity would be developed and implemented in close regard to the certification scheme being developed under the IMO Convention.
- **Policy development** to assist ship recycling countries in preparing for the entry-into-force of the IMO Convention on the “Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships”. The requirements of the new Convention need to be translated into simplified rules and regulations, as part of a national framework which outlines the responsibilities of all stakeholders, including regulators (from all concerned government agencies and ministries), ship recycling facility operators, etc. Allowing for preparation and transparency in this process will facilitate the implementation of the requirements of the new Convention.
- **Establishing linkages** with related development programmes being implemented in the participant countries. Cross-sectoral issues of urban planning, waste management and health and welfare infrastructure need to be coordinated to ensure an optimal use of resources and outcomes.
- **Training and workshops** to encourage knowledge-sharing and collaboration between all stakeholders in the ship recycling process, including government agencies, ship recycling facility owners, operators and workers, NGOs and external experts.

## The oversight mechanism

A Steering Committee of private and public stakeholders would act as an oversight mechanism to the Programme’s activities in each ship recycling country. The Committee, established



to monitor and provide guidance on implementation of the Programme's activities, would include participant governments, intergovernmental organizations, donor countries/organizations and representatives from industry (yard owners and ship breaking associations, ship owners and ship owners associations).

## Further information

Further information on the Programme can be obtained from the Secretariat of the Basel Convention. The Secretariat is interested to hear from representatives of ship recycling countries who have an interest in participating in the Programme. The Secretariat also invites contact with those wishing to provide input into the Programme, either through technical expertise, financial or in-kind contributions.





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**For further information  
please contact:**

Secretariat of the Basel Convention/UNEP  
International Environment House

13-15 chemin des Anémones  
1219 Châtelaine (Geneva)  
Switzerland

Tel. +41 22 917 82 18

Fax +41 22 917 34 54

Email: [sbc@unep.ch](mailto:sbc@unep.ch)

[www.basel.int/ships/index.html](http://www.basel.int/ships/index.html)

