

**Press Release 25 November 2020**

## **Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum Sees Record Attendance with Huge Increase in Usage of its Web Portal**

Today, the Arctic Council's [Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum](#) (the Forum) concluded its fourth annual meeting, which for the first time was held by videoconference due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 140 registrants representing nearly 80 different entities attended.

Addressing the Forum, Dr. Heike Deggim, the International Maritime Organization's Director of Maritime Safety, said:

“This Forum is forward thinking, and a leading example of inclusivity in the implementation of important regulation for the protection of seafarers, the environment, and the Arctic's inhabitants, as well as important significance for the Antarctic. It is a lesson for others in how to approach the implementation of regulation. It would be great to see support for its replication for other IMO Regulations and Conventions.”

The purpose of the Forum is to support the effective implementation of the International Maritime Organization's *International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters* (Polar Code). This is accomplished by collecting and posting on a dedicated Web Portal authoritative information relevant to all those involved in safe and environmentally sound Arctic shipping, including shipowners and operators, regulators, classification societies, marine insurers, and indigenous and local communities.

‘The Polar Code: Trending Towards Success’ was the theme of this year's meeting in recognition of the enormous progress made in the Polar Code's successful implementation. Presentations from a diverse group of experts addressed efforts to advance harmonized interpretations of the Polar Code, highlighted initiatives to enhance meteorological, oceanographic, and hydrographic products and services that support safe and environmentally sound Arctic shipping, and described training initiatives to strengthen the critical human element in polar navigation.

Among the organizations represented by the expert presenters were the Arctic Council PAME Working Group, Russian Federation, International Maritime Organization, World Meteorological Organization, Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission, International Ice Charting Working Group, Bering Sea Elders Group, International Chamber of Shipping, and the World Wildlife Fund, amongst others (further details below)

The Forum's Web Portal, accessible at [www.arcticshippingforum.is](http://www.arcticshippingforum.is), provides links to carefully selected, authoritative information from intergovernmental bodies and widely recognized industry, non-governmental, indigenous, and academic organizations that is critical to effective Polar Code implementation. Since the launch of the Web Portal, page visits have grown substantially each year, with many pages receiving several thousand "hits" in the past 12 months. (17,475 visits in November 2019 increasing to 55,943 visits in November 2020 – further details below.) The Web Portal is regularly updated and expanded as new information becomes available.

The Arctic Shipping Best Practice Information Forum was established in 2017 by the eight Arctic States (Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States) to help raise awareness and to promote the effective implementation of the Polar Code. It also draws on experience from Antarctica, with Participant representation from that polar region.

**Iceland's Sverrir Konráðsson, the Forum Chair said:**

*"The importance of the Forum as a venue for the compilation and exchange of information critical to the implementation of IMO's Polar Code continues to increase as evidenced by the growing number of annual meeting Participants. The Forum's Web Portal has quickly become an indispensable source of carefully curated and ever-increasing number of hyperlinks to authoritative information essential to safe and environmentally sound navigation in the Arctic."*

**IMO's Director of Maritime Safety, Dr. Heike Deggim, said:**

*"I am glad that the Forum has established the Web Portal which provides a wealth of information, not just from a regulatory perspective but – and that is the theme of this Forum- also on Best Practices, as developed by those applying and implementing the Polar Code. These include partner UN organizations and other international organizations, Member State administrations, as well as shipping associations and classification societies, amongst others. IMO would like to thank the Forum's Organizing Committee, the PAME Secretariat, and Iceland as Chair for their hard work in organizing this meeting, and for the great support for the implementation of IMO regulation."*

The meeting took place virtually on 24-25 November. For further information about the Forum, its fourth meeting, its Participants, and presentations at the meeting, [please visit the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting Website.](#)

For further information about web-portal statistics, see Michael Kingston, Special Advisor to PAME's [presentation on the meeting website](#).

For any questions, contact Soffía Guðmundsdóttir, the PAME Executive Secretary, at [pame@pame.is](mailto:pame@pame.is).

Press Release in Electronic Format on PAME Website. Click [here](#).

### **About the Arctic Shipping Best Practices Information Forum**

The aim of the Forum is to raise awareness of its provisions amongst all those involved in or potentially affected by Arctic marine operations and to facilitate the exchange of information and best practices between the Forum participants on specific shipping topics, including but not limited to; hydrography, search and rescue logistics, industry guidelines and ship equipment, systems and structure.

### **About the Arctic Council**

[The Arctic Council](#) is the leading intergovernmental forum promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic States, Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular on issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic. Members of the Arctic Council are Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States.

### **About PAME**

[PAME](#) is one of six Arctic Council working groups. PAME is the focal point of the Arctic Council's activities related to the protection and sustainable use of the Arctic marine environment and provides a unique forum for collaboration on a wide range of activities in this regard.

### **About the IMO Polar Code**

[The Polar Code](#) is a mandatory international framework that increases the safety of ship operations and mitigates the impact on the people and the vulnerable environment in Polar waters. The Polar Code came into force in January 2017.

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