

# Executing a Scharnow turn: *reconciling shipping emissions with international commitments on climate change*

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## The Context

In 2012 and with global emissions rising at unprecedented rates to unprecedented levels, one clear certainty is that the future will be very different from the past. Whether emissions will be maintained within reasonable planetary boundaries, or, as the International Energy Agency's chief economist notes, we will continue towards "a temperature increase of 6 degrees Celsius" with "devastating consequences for the planet", is a decision the international community faces now.

Against this backdrop of rapidly escalating emissions and mounting anxiety over impacts, contrasting with express commitments to prevent dangerous interference with the climate system, this paper considers the role and responsibility of international shipping.

## Setting the scene

In an uncompromising assessment of how "our collective way of life has become unsustainable" the head of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) recently stressed "the need to make some tough decisions ... and ... to start putting "life" ahead of "lifestyle". However, in stark contrast to his emphatic call for leadership, the IMO supports a four-fold increase in shipping's carbon emissions by 2050 (c.f. 1990). Moreover, the IMO, along with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), repeatedly characterise this rise in emissions as an actual reduction. The smoke and mirrors in these claims result from their choice of counterfactual 'business as usual' scenarios, against which 'reductions' are projected to occur - "reductions" that dominate the qualitative narrative of the 2011 and other IMO reports on emissions.

## Shipping emissions and pathways

All of this needs to be considered in light of the shipping industry's express commitment to levels of mitigation "at least as ambitious as the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reductions" accompanying the Copenhagen Accord and Cancun Agreements. Put simply, the shipping industry effectively commits to making its fair and proportionate contribution to "hold[ing] the increase in global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius ... consistent with the science and on the basis of equity".

Building on this and the IMO and ICS's cogent arguments as to why shipping should be considered as a "sovereign nation" (exempt from national interference), the paper translates the qualitative language of the industry and international community into quantified mitigation pathways for shipping.

## Conclusion

Whilst the shipping industry maintains its pretence of contributing towards global commitments on climate change it nevertheless anticipates its emissions increasing from 468MtCO<sub>2</sub> in 1990 to 1895MtCO<sub>2</sub> by 2050. Such high-level declarations of responsible action contrasting with woefully inadequate policies are reflective of the Machiavellian duality exhibited by many industries and nations. This paper, with its focus on shipping, has sought to clarify the scale of the apparent masking of rapid and substantial emissions growth by the industry. The paper concludes that for shipping to make its "fair and proportional" contribution to even an outside chance of "preventing dangerous interference with the climate system" a fundamental and immediate change in its emissions pathway is essential.