

Extraordinary IMO Council Meeting

19-20 March 2026

The IMO Council convened an extraordinary two-day meeting to address the ongoing situation in the Strait of Hormuz. The following key points were addressed:

19 March: Statements and Discussions

More than 60 Member States delivered statements. The large majority condemned the attacks, called for de-escalation, and stressed the need to protect seafarers and vessels and to restore safe and secure navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. Several delegations also highlighted the importance of protecting marine biodiversity. A number of Member States expressed support for the establishment of a safe corridor for vessels, while Canada drew particular attention to the withdrawal of insurance as a significant challenge currently facing merchant shipping. Some delegations additionally raised concerns about shortages of food, fuel, and medical supplies on board affected vessels.

Among the observer organisations, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) strongly condemned the attacks, characterising them as an unacceptable threat to international shipping, global trade, and seafarer safety. ICS underscored the industry's readiness to provide support, while calling on states to cooperate in ensuring safe resupply of vessels and facilitating crew changes. ICS urged authorities to take immediate and decisive action to guarantee safe passage for affected ships, stressing that freedom of navigation must be protected. It further called for transparent communication and close coordination between governments, navies, and the shipping industry to minimise risks, and emphasised the urgent need for de-escalation and resolution of the crisis.

The Federation of National Association of Ship Brokers (FONASBA) and partner maritime organisations similarly stressed the need to ensure the safety of all maritime personnel and called for close cooperation between authorities and industry. The International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) urged States to support rescue operations, while the International Labour Organisation (ILO) highlighted the importance of upholding seafarers' labour rights, including safe working conditions, physical and mental wellbeing, and access to repatriation and medical care.

The Council then briefly turned to the third agenda item, under which co-sponsors introduced their proposals, followed by interventions from four Member States. All delegations expressed support for the UAE's proposal to facilitate vessel resupply and crew changes, Japan's proposal to establish a safe maritime corridor, and INTERTANKO's proposal to prioritise seafarer wellbeing, including maintaining communication with families, facilitating crew changes and disembarkation, and ensuring adequate stores and provisions on board.

20 March: Conclusions

With the support of a majority of delegations, and with reservations expressed by China, Russia, and Iran, the Council adopted the following conclusions:

- Condemned Iran's attacks on vessels and neighbouring countries.
- Underscored the paramount importance of ensuring the security of international shipping and the maritime community, safeguarding energy and humanitarian supply chains, and protecting the marine environment and biodiversity.
- Called upon Member States, with respect to the protection, safety, and welfare of seafarers, to ensure the provision of essential supplies to vessels, facilitate crew changes (as proposed by the UAE), and maintain communication between crew members and their families (as proposed by industry representatives).
- Agreed to revisit, at the Council's next session in July, the UAE's proposal to convene an extraordinary session of the IMO Assembly, taking into account the associated administrative and budgetary implications.
- Encouraged the establishment of a safe maritime corridor, on a voluntary and peaceful basis, to facilitate the evacuation of merchant vessels from high-risk and affected areas (as proposed by Japan).
- Requested the Council Chair and the Secretary-General to continue closely monitoring the situation and to report regularly to all Member States.

At the close of the meeting, the Cook Islands and India drew attention to media reports concerning a corridor allegedly established by Iran. In the absence of any written information formally submitted to the Council, the matter was not discussed further, and Iran did not engage to confirm or clarify the reports.