

HKCML (CityUHK) & Department of Logistics and Maritime Studies (HKPU) Co-organized Conference: “Decarbonisation of Shipping: Policy and Regulatory Issues”

On November 19, 2024, the Hong Kong Commercial and Maritime Law Centre, in collaboration with the Department of Logistics and Maritime Studies at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, held a pivotal conference titled “Decarbonisation of Shipping: Policy and Regulatory Issues.” This conference was part of the broader Hong Kong Maritime Week 2024, emphasizing the region’s commitment to sustainable maritime practices. The conference showcased a remarkable lineup of experts in the field, including: Mr. Simon Bennett, Deputy Secretary General of the International Chamber of Shipping; Mr. Edward Liu, Principal Representative of the International Chamber of Shipping (China) Liaison Office in Hong Kong and Partner at Haiwen & Partners LLP; Professors Stephen Li and Ling Zhu, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Professor Michael Tsimplis, City University of Hong Kong. Their insights sparked a robust discussion on the significant challenges and opportunities facing the shipping industry’s decarbonisation efforts.



The insights presented have catalyzed a meaningful discourse regarding the substantial challenges and opportunities inherent in the shipping industry's decarbonization efforts. In this context, Hong Kong is emerging as a pivotal contributor to the green fuel revolution, exemplified by the recently launched Action Plan on Green Maritime Fuel Bunkering, which aims to reduce carbon emissions from Hong Kong-registered vessels by at least 11% relative to 2019 levels. This initiative not only positions Hong Kong as a leading hub for green maritime fuel bunkering, leveraging its strategic proximity to Mainland China—an important producer of green fuels—but also encompasses several key components: the world's first green incentive program based on carbon intensity ratings, the implementation of the Shipping Legislation (Use of Fuels and Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2024, the development of a robust green fuel supply chain, the establishment of eco-friendly port operations, and the promotion of regional collaboration to enhance sustainable practices. Additionally, China's proactive stance on shipping decarbonization is noteworthy, as the nation aligns with international standards and pursues ambitious domestic initiatives to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions in its maritime sector, particularly given its status as home to seven of the world's top ten container ports. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has established ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70-80% by 2040, with a net-zero goal set for 2050, while recent developments such as the European Union's inclusion of shipping in its Emission Trading System (ETS) and innovations like dual-fuel vessels underscore a significant shift towards greener alternatives.

As we navigate transformative changes in the maritime sector, the importance of robust legal frameworks has never been more evident. Experts passionately emphasized the necessity for a multifaceted regulatory strategy that harmonizes public and private law, ensuring effective enforcement of emissions regulations. Clear definitions of liability and accountability emerged as

critical components for fostering compliance and giving early adopters of sustainable practices a competitive edge.



This event drew in over thirty enthusiastic participants from diverse industries, creating a vibrant atmosphere charged with insightful exchanges. Attendees actively engaged in dynamic discussions, sharing their perspectives and challenging conventional ideas alongside our esteemed speakers. The energy in the room was palpable as we explored how Hong Kong and China are spearheading a shift towards a greener maritime future.