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## **Global Cruise Activist Network Warns: Cruise Ships are Super-Emitters of Greenhouse Gases; Proposes Action**

*Calls on G20 Climate Summit in Venice on July 11, 2021, to accelerate steps that will reverse climate damage from cruise ships.*

The Global Cruise Activist Network (GCAN) today is calling on the G20 states to take immediate steps to ensure that cruise ships entering any port comply with standards that will achieve net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by the cruise industry by 2050. At a minimum, the standards should require emissions reductions of 40% by 2030 and incremental reductions of 5% year-on-year thereafter. Imposing such standards would be consistent with the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement and with the right of every country to control access to its ports.

“The shipping industry is seriously lagging in efforts to decarbonize. Cruise ships, in particular, are super-emitters of greenhouse gases. The cruise industry’s carbon footprint will only increase if it is allowed to operate post-pandemic as it has in the past. It’s time to abandon ‘cruising as usual,’” said Tom Siebens, a GCAN activist in New England, U.S.A.

“Cruise ships continue to exploit man-made wonders like Venice and natural wonders like the Great Barrier Reef while contributing to the climate change that will destroy these treasures. Now is the time to rethink the restart of this industry and its unsustainable practices,” said Dr. Steve Gration, a GCAN activist on Australia’s Gold Coast.

**Ship emissions of greenhouse gases will continue to grow.** The worldwide shipping industry produces over 3%<sup>1</sup> of the planet’s greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide -- as much as all of America’s coal plants combined<sup>2</sup>. These emissions include micro-particles of black carbon, a proven human health hazard in cruise ports<sup>3</sup> as well as a contributor to global warming.

**Shipping industry targets for decarbonization must be tougher.** The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the arm of the U.N. responsible for regulating global shipping, has set a goal of 50% reduction in shipping’s greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 compared to 2008 levels.<sup>4</sup> Yet the IMO’s own

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<sup>1</sup> Fourth IMO GHG Study 2020 by the International Maritime Organization. 2021, p.1. “The share of shipping emissions in global anthropogenic emissions has increased from 2.76% in 2012 to 2.89% in 2018.”

<sup>2</sup> [“Tasked to Fight Climate Change, a Secretive U.N. Agency Does the Opposite”](#), by Matt Apuzzo and Sarah Hurtes, *New York Times*, June 3, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> [Black Trail](#) film, June 1, 2021, a European Investigative Collaborations (EIC Network) documentary produced by Espresso, The Black Sea, SIC TV and Reporters United, in co-production with RTS and VG, with research and reporting support from Financed Uncovered (UK). See discussion of mortality in neighborhoods close to the giant cruise ship port of Civitavecchia near Rome, and close to the port area of Genoa.

<sup>4</sup> MEPC Resolution .304(72), adopted on 13 April 2018, [Initial IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships](#), Section 3.1.3.

projections anticipate growth of as much as 30% above 2008 levels by 2050,<sup>5</sup> absent more immediate and effective efforts to decarbonize. The IMO's actions to date do little to reverse this trend.<sup>6</sup>

**Cruise ships, in particular, are super-emitters of greenhouse gases and black carbon.** Most cruise ships burn the cheapest and most carbon-intensive fuels.<sup>7</sup> These ships are more carbon-intensive than cargo ships of similar size<sup>8</sup> because they burn fuel constantly, even when in port, to power infrastructure for, typically, 3,000 to as many as 10,000 passengers and crew.

**The cruise industry's recovery post-Covid should be truly carbon responsible, not 'business as usual'.** The cruise ship industry is desperately returning to 'business as usual' following its shutdown during the Covid-19 pandemic. This will lead to more cruises to more destinations in ever-larger ships . . . and more greenhouse gas emissions. The cruise industry's stated goal of reduced carbon intensity for each ship is meaningless in the face of continued industry growth.<sup>9</sup> In effect, cruise tourism is undermining the goals of the Paris Agreement.<sup>10</sup>

Yet the industry can take effective measures now to reduce its carbon footprint.

**The G20 should promote faster action toward ship emissions accounting, economic incentives to decarbonize the industry, and development of clean power practices, shore power and alternative fuels.** No single solution exists to eliminate the greenhouse gas burden that shipping imposes on our

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<sup>5</sup> Fourth IMO GHG Study 2020, p.3.

<sup>6</sup> See [Shipping body's climate plan 'ignores Paris agreement'](#), published by The International Council on Clean Transportation (ICCT), October 30, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Most commercial ships, including cruise ships, burn the dirtiest fuel available, heavy fuel oil (HFO). It is cheaper than other fuels, such as diesel, but also dirtier when burned, producing high levels of CO<sub>2</sub> and chemicals directly hazardous to human health. HFO is a heavy residue from the oil refining process. In the process of refining, crude oil is separated into its components, or "fractions", through distillation. Chemical compounds are separated by heating the crude to temperatures at which one or more fractions vaporize. Vaporized components are then condensed from their gas phase into liquid distillates. Fractions with low boiling points and high volatility vaporize and separate out first. These include kerosene and gasoline. Heavier components such as diesel fuel and lubricating oils are the next fractions to separate out. Fuel oils are part of the residue that remains and include the heavy fuel oil commonly known as "fuel oil no. 6" or "bunker C". It has a boiling point above 400 F and is the highest boiling fraction of petroleum. Bunker C is a black liquid, sticky and similar in appearance and smell to asphalt. The only refining by-products denser than HFO are carbon black feedstock, used in tires and as a color pigment in plastics and paint, and bituminous residue, commonly known as asphalt, used for paving roads and sealing roofs. Some ships use fuels a bit lighter than HFO, such as marine gasoil (MGO). MGO is similar to diesel fuel but has a higher density. It is produced with a lower sulphur content than HFO and has less particulate matter and soot than HFO. Low sulfur marine gasoil (LS-MGO) with a sulfur content of less than 0.1% can be used in ports of the European Union and in Emission Control Areas (ECAs).

<sup>8</sup> See ["How Cruise Ships Are Polluting Our Oceans"](#) by Kate Wheeling, *Pacific Standard*, updated Nov. 15, 2018. "These ships burn as much fuel as whole towns," Bill Hemmings, the director of aviation and shipping at Transport & Environment, told the *Guardian* earlier this year. 'They use a lot more power than container ships and even when they burn low sulphur fuel, it's 100 times worse than road diesel.'"; ["Cruise ships still using 'dirtiest of all fuels' must be banned in European ports, says environmental group"](#) by Josh Gabbatiss, *The Independent*, August 22, 2018. See also, [Black Carbon and Fuel Use in Global Shipping 2015](#), published by ICCT, 2017, p. vii. "Outside the group of container ships, bulk carriers and oil tankers, cruise ships accounted for a disproportionately large amount of black carbon (BC), emitting 6% of BC emissions despite accounting for only 1% of ships and less than 1% of dwt in the global fleet. In fact, as shown in Figure ES-2, cruise ships emitted 10 t per ship per year, or nearly triple that of a typical container ship. On average, one cruise ship emits as much black carbon as 4,200 Euro V [emission standard] heavy-duty trucks operating 100,000 km over one year. Further, cruise ships emit the most BC per unit of fuel they burn: the average cruise ship emits 0.34 kg of BC for every tonne of fuel, compared with 0.26 kg/t for a container ship."

<sup>9</sup> ["CLIA Sets 2030 Carbon Emissions Targets"](#), *The Maritime Executive*, Dec. 19, 2018. "While this sounds like a huge step in the right direction, it will likely prove virtually meaningless, as the reductions are intensity reductions, not absolute reductions," said international environmental organization Stand.earth."

<sup>10</sup> [NABU Cruise Ship Ranking 2020 – Industry not on track for climate protection](#)" by Daniel Rieger, Beate Klünder & Malte Siegert of NABU.

world. But multiple initiatives already underway or in development would, in combination, have a significant impact. They need to be pursued with greater urgency.

These initiatives include:

- operating fewer cruises and using only the most fuel-efficient ships;
- slow steaming, which leads to dramatic reductions in fuel consumption;
- mandating the use of shore power;
- systematically measuring and policing the carbon intensity of ships;
- powering ships with wind, solar and non-fossil fuels to eliminate or reduce the burning of carbon fuels;<sup>11</sup>
- adding a levy on ship fuel to fund alternative energy research;
- promulgating a carbon tax to incentivize greater fuel efficiency;
- halting the construction of new cruise piers and terminals worldwide in order to stop further damage to the natural and built environment of ports; and
- imposing a “clean ship standard” that progressively reduces the carbon intensity of each ship to zero.<sup>12</sup>

Cruise ships are a luxury that causes serious climate damage. The industry and its regulators must give priority to decarbonizing ships and promoting the long-term health of the atmosphere, the marine environment, and port communities. It’s time to abandon “cruising as usual”.

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**About GCAN:** The Global Cruise Activist Network formed during the Covid-19 pandemic to demand changes to the cruise industry’s business model. GCAN’s members, consisting of cruise port residents, civil society organizations, and labor & crime victim advocates, are aligned around the values of health, safety, security, conservation, and equity. Learn more, including GCAN’s 12 Principles of Responsible Cruise Tourism, at [globalcruiseactivistnetwork.com](https://globalcruiseactivistnetwork.com).

GCAN’s logo features two international maritime flags representing the letters K and L, which communicate “I wish to communicate with you” (K or Kilo) and “You should stop your vessel immediately” (L or Lima).

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<sup>11</sup> See recommendations in [All Aboard: How the Biden-Harris Administration Can Help Ships Kick Fossil Fuels – Navigating our Way to Zero Emission Ship Industry](#), by J. Barry, M. Rose, D. Hubbell for Pacific Environment and Ocean Conservancy, Washington, D.C. 2021, pp. 17-28.

<sup>12</sup> Norway has already done so. In 2018, to protect its fjords, Norway passed a law requiring zero-emissions cruise ships and ferries by 2026. *All Aboard*, p.8. See also, [“Catching Cruise Off-Guard: Norway’s zero emissions fjord cruises”](#) *Marine Link*, July 2, 2021. In another context, after the *Exxon-Valdez* tanker disaster, the United States used its “port control” to require oil tankers calling in U.S. ports to be double-hulled. Today, the 12,000 oil tankers in the world are all double-hulled.

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