

Date & Venue

To be held on 19 December 2025
from 10:00 to 13:30 (IST) | Hybrid
Mode | TERI, India Habitat Centre,
New Delhi

Organiser

Organised by the National Centre
of Excellence for Green Port &
Shipping (NCoEGPS), a Co-Action
Centre of the Ministry of Ports,
Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)
and The Energy and Resources
Institute (TERI)



Future Fuel Pathways under a Delayed Net Zero Framework

Round Table Discussion



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Background and Context

The IMO's Net Zero Framework—designed to guide global shipping toward lifecycle GHG neutrality through a Global Fuel Standard (GFS) and a market-based pricing mechanism—has been delayed, shifting the expected adoption to late 2026 and pushing enforceability to 2027–28. This postponement has created a period of regulatory uncertainty precisely when the shipping sector is preparing for multi-year investment decisions in ships, fuels, infrastructure, and compliance systems. Different countries and regions are now advancing their own climate regulations at varying speeds. This divergence increases the likelihood of fragmented compliance obligations, uneven costs, and new barriers for fleets from developing countries. India has responded proactively after the release of Greenhouse Gas Fuel Intensity (GFI) concept. As detailed in the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) Guidance Note, the GFI measure approved at MEPC 83 will apply to foreign-going ships above 5,000 GT, with domestic and coastal shipping fully exempt. The two-tier GFI structure—using remedial units, reward mechanisms, and lifecycle-based accounting—offers a more balanced and performance-linked system than earlier flat-levy proposals. The Guidance Note outlines key preparatory steps for Indian shipowners, ports, fuel suppliers, training institutions, and classification societies, as the GFI regime is expected to enter into force in March 2027 and apply from 2028. India's support for the model reflects its alignment with national green fuel ambitions, its emphasis on its interest in shaping forthcoming implementation rules.

The Current Challenge: Fuel Pathways Amid Regulatory Uncertainty

The delay in finalizing the global framework comes at a time when multiple alternative fuels—methanol, ammonia, hydrogen, advanced biofuels, LNG—are competing for space in the maritime energy transition. Each pathway carries different requirements for safety, lifecycle emissions, bunkering readiness, and cost. Without firm global timelines, the sector faces growing uncertainty on:

- which fuels to prioritize for long-term vessel investments,
- the scale and sequencing of port infrastructure upgrades,
- how to prepare fleets for GFI compliance in a compressed timeframe,
- and how to remain competitive as regional rules evolve faster than global ones.

For developing countries, the stakes are higher: misaligned fuel choices, fragmented availability, or inconsistent global standards could translate into increased compliance costs, restricted port access, or diminished competitiveness.

The roundtable aims to examine these realities in a way that is grounded in verifiable data, operational experience, and national regulatory guidance—especially that already issued by the DGS.

Purpose of the Round Table Discussion

The roundtable will bring together senior representatives from embassies, government agencies, industry associations, shipowners, ports, technology providers, and classification societies to:

- Interpret the implications of the Net Zero Framework delay for India and other developing maritime economies.
- Assess how the delay interacts with the emerging multi-fuel landscape, including operational, safety, cost, and lifecycle emission considerations.
- Examine how the approved GFI structure shapes fleet planning, fuel procurement, and compliance strategy ahead of the 2027–28 enforcement window.
- Reflect on opportunities for green fuel development, knowledge sharing, and early preparedness, based on the DGS Guidance Note.
- Identify practical considerations for ports, operators, and maritime institutions as they prepare for GFI-linked monitoring, reporting, verification, and potential technology upgrades.

The discussion will focus on evidence, clarity, and near-term decision-making—recognizing that the delay does not pause the transition but makes strategic choices more complex.

Why This Discussion Matters Now

- The IMO delay compresses the preparation period for GFI implementation.
- Fuel decisions made today will shape costs, competitiveness, and compliance exposure for the next two decades.
- Ports and shipowners must make infrastructure and technology choices before global rules are finalized.
- Developing countries face the risk of uneven access to fuels, higher remedial unit exposure, and fragmented regional obligations.
- India has already issued early guidance; aligning understanding across stakeholders is essential for coordinated readiness.

This roundtable provides a timely platform for governments, embassies, and industry stakeholders to jointly examine the implications and prepare for the next phase of the global maritime energy transition.