

Brazil Signs Accord to Protect Ecosystem

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On Tuesday, January 25, in London, Brazil signed the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments.

The Convention, which was approved by the International Marine Organization (IMO) in February, 2004, is intended to reduce the introduction of exotic species into the ecosystem through ships' ballast water.

Brazil was the second country to sign the accord, which, to take effect, depends upon the adhesion of 30 nations that represent 35% of the world fleet's tonnage. The first country to subscribe was Spain, on January 18. Now the accord needs to be ratified by the countries' parliaments.

The adoption of a new convention on ballast water had been under discussion for 10 years, in view of its substantial economic and environmental implications.

Ocean transport is responsible for over 80% of the merchandise shipped internationally, and 3-5 billion tons of ballast water are transferred around the world each year.

A similar volume may also be transferred domestically each year within countries and regions.

Ballast water is absolutely essential for the security and efficiency of modern shipping operations. It provides balance and stability to empty vessels.

But the water may also carry toxic algae and exotic and pathogenic species, such as the cholera bacillus.

It is estimated that the circulation of ballast water transfers at least seven thousand species among regions of the globe every day.

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