

“That Ireland would ratify the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships Ballast Water and Sediments 2004”

Five years ago the Department of Transport told the United Nations agency dealing with safety at sea and the marine environment that it was preparing to ratify a treaty drawn up by the UN intended to control the spread of invasive marine species which could cause damage in Irish waters, possibly wiping out native [marine species](#) and causing damage to the marine environment generally.

Five years later, while 51 nations around the world have signed the Ballast Water Management Convention drawn up by the International Maritime Organisation, Ireland still hasn't done so, despite a request from the Secretary General of the Organisation. The treaty is designed to counter the threat to marine ecosystems caused by potentially invasive species carried across the oceans of the world in ships' ballast water. Ballast water is essential to the safe and efficient operation of modern shipping, providing balance and stability to unladen and partly laden ships. Because shipping transports up to 90 per cent of the world's traded commodities, it is reckoned to transfer up to 5 billion tonnes of ballast water around ports of the world every year and that is claimed by scientists to be the main cause of introducing non-native species from one country to another.

When Peru, this month, became the 51st State to accede to the Treaty to try to control this problem, I asked the International Maritime Organisation if Ireland had ratified...

“Not yet” I was told from IMO Headquarters in London, with the additional quote from their spokesperson... “but it is apparently intending to ... Well that is what Ireland said in 2011” and they sent me a copy of Marine Notice No.47 of 2011 from the Department of Transport which stated that “Ireland's maritime administration is at present preparing the legislation that is required and intends to ratify the Convention when this process is complete...”

Five years later, the IMO suggested to me that it might be worth asking why Ireland had not signed... I did and the Department told me...that “provision to give effect to the Convention was made in the Sea Pollution Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 2006. Now that's ten years ago, but it seems a Statutory Instrument has been drafted by the Department to give effect to the Convention in Irish law. However, subject to some legal clarifications the Department expects that the Order will be enacted only ...” shortly after the Convention comes into force...”