Climate targets for the shipping sector

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It is cumulative greenhouse gas emissions over time which determine the level of global temperature rise. This means that it is the shape of the decarbonisation pathway from now that matters most, not just reaching zero emissions at some point in future. What happens in early decades is crucial. Tyndall research sets out what this insight means for the shipping sector:

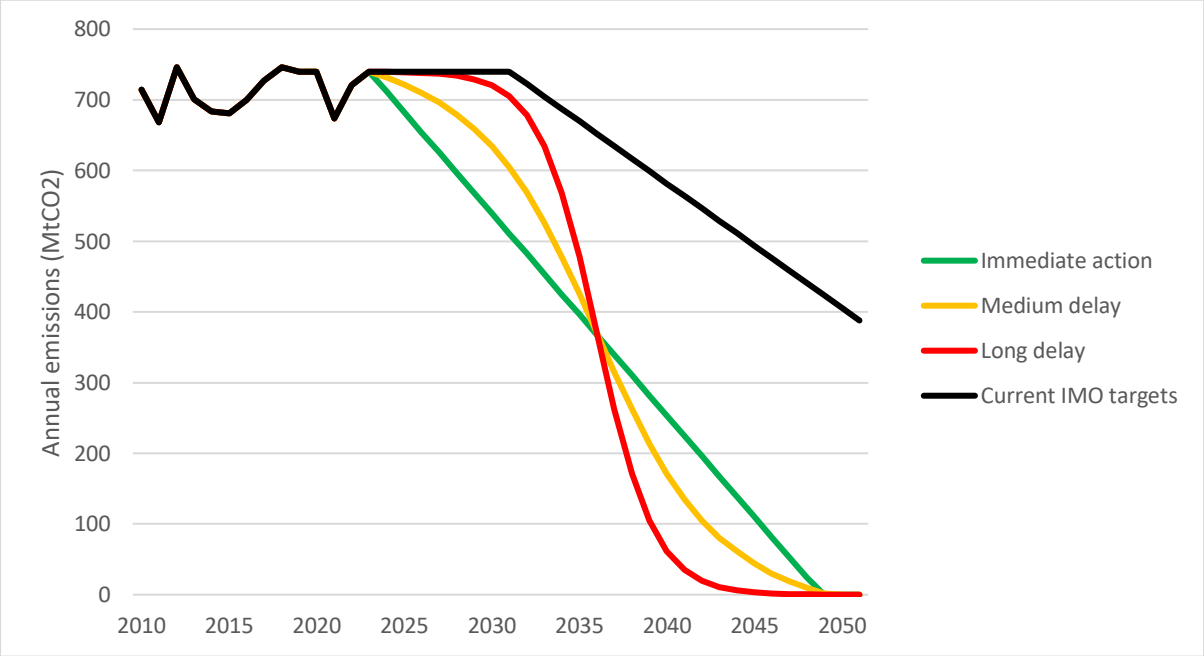

Figure: The IMO's targets and Paris-compatible 1.5°C pathways

The figure shows three CO_2 pathways for the international shipping sector (red, green, yellow), all with the same cumulative emissions: compatible with keeping global heating to 1.5°C. Pathways delaying emissions reductions require steeper decarbonisation in later decades. Key points:

- Current International Maritime Organisation targets are completely incompatible with the Paris Agreement 1.5°C goal.
- The red pathway (delay emissions reduction until 2030) would require a rate of decarbonisation in the 2030s that is too rapid to be feasible.
- The only remaining feasible pathways compatible with 1.5°C require deep emissions cuts this decade.
- It is imperative that the IMO's strategy meeting in July 2023 sets a target of at least a third cuts in emissions by 2030, on a pathway to zero before 2050.
- The UK should also set a similar target for its share of international shipping emissions, and its domestic shipping emissions in its 2023 Clean Maritime Strategy refresh. Equity principles on capability and responsibility mean the UK should go faster than the global average.

These global targets align with those from the Science-Based Targets Initiative, and with the February 2023 proposal to the IMO by the USA/UK/Canada (paper ISWG-GHG 14/2/9).

This briefing note is based on Bullock, S., Mason, J. and Larkin, A, 2022. "The urgent case for stronger climate targets for international shipping." *Climate Policy* 22(3), pp. 301-309. https://tinyurl.com/IMOclimate.

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