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EU Cross-forum Coherence on Climate
in International Transport Fora

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Not so Fast: EU Cross-forum Coherence on Climate in International Transport Fora

by

Joseph Earsom*

Abstract

As an established climate leader within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the European Union (EU) has in recent years turned a fresh gaze to climate action in international transport, specifically via the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The EU has declared a desire to work in both fora in a way wholly consistent with its approach to the UNFCCC. However, institutional differences in these two specialised UN fora give rise to a negotiation environment largely populated by officials from ministries of transport, including at the EU level, with working methods and priorities potentially conflicting with those in the UNFCCC. This likely complicates the EU's ability to act on climate issues in these fora in a way that is coherent with its action in the UNFCCC. The paper answers the research question "To what extent is the EU's external climate action in ICAO and IMO coherent with its action in the UNFCCC?" It looks at the cases of ICAO CORSIA (2016) and the IMO Initial Strategy (2018) – two political agreements on climate action adopted in the respective fora. Based on official documents and semi-structured interviews with EU, EU member state, and third state officials, the paper finds that the EU's external climate action in both fora was only somewhat coherent with its action in the UNFCCC, a far cry from the integrated climate diplomacy called for in EU Council conclusions. The paper also provides preliminary insight into factors shaping EU climate action outside the UNFCCC, while developing a detailed framework for assessing cross-forum coherence at the international level for fora dealing with overlapping issue areas.

Keywords: EU external action; Transport negotiations; Cross-forum coherence; Climate change

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I. Introduction

Although the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is the main forum for international climate governance, the regulation of climate issues related to international aviation and shipping falls under the jurisdiction of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). While greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from international shipping and aviation each make up approximately 3% of total global emissions (Rayner, 2021), a study commissioned by the European Parliament suggests that the share of transport emissions could increase to almost 40% by 2050, should the two sectors continue to lag behind others in their decarbonization efforts (Cames et al., 2015). ICAO and IMO have therefore come under increasing pressure to act on decarbonizing their respective sectors.

As an established climate leader, the European Union (EU) has long pushed for progress in these two fora. Moreover, following the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, the EU seemed to place renewed focus on action in both ICAO and IMO. In its Conclusions on Climate Diplomacy in 2016, the Council noted “that diplomatic outreach should also focus on the negotiations in the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to address greenhouse gas emissions...” (Council of the European Union, 2016). Thus, the EU appeared eager to extend its climate successes and priorities from the UNFCCC context into both transport fora.

Yet, ICAO and IMO present three significant differences in institutional structure compared to the UNFCCC: (1) an express objective to promote and defend the international development of their respective sectors, (2) differing organisational culture based on technical regulations, and (3) different actor and interest coalitions. This translates into a negotiation environment largely populated by officials from ministries of transport, including at the EU level, with working methods and priorities potentially conflicting with action in the UNFCCC. These factors likely complicate the EU’s cross-forum coherence, or the (at a minimum) lack of contradictions in its external action on climate in ICAO and IMO as compared to the UNFCCC. By external climate action, I refer to any type of interaction between the EU (understood as its institutions or member states acting on its

behalf) with a third country, international organisation, or regime, in relation to its international climate policy objectives (Schunz et al., 2017).

Surprisingly, EU external climate action in these fora following the Paris Agreement has largely fallen outside the scope of the literature, despite the fact that two major climate agreements were reached in both ICAO (Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation – CORSIA; 2016) and IMO (Initial Strategy for the reduction of GHG emissions from ships; 2018). While EU political figures have issued statements saluting the work of the EU and its member states in facilitating these agreements, the EU's action therein remains a black box. Furthermore, with major negotiations on climate targets slated to take place in both fora over the next two years and the inclusion of several transport-related provisions in the European Green Deal, an understanding of the extent of the EU's cross-forum coherence in ICAO and IMO is essential.

Using the two aforementioned agreements as case studies, this paper seeks to answer the research question: *To what extent is EU external climate action in ICAO and IMO coherent with its action in the UNFCCC?* These two negotiations not only were targeted by the Post-Paris Climate Diplomacy Conclusions but also are significant in that they are the first political agreements in either forum related to climate change (Rayner, 2021).

In order to answer the research question, this paper builds a framework for assessing cross-forum coherence in EU external climate action. The paper finds that the EU's external climate action in ICAO and IMO was only somewhat coherent with its action in the UNFCCC. Moreover, the two fora's mandates to promote and defend their respective sectors and focus on technical expertise and standard-setting appeared likely to have influenced said coherence.

The paper makes three principal contributions to the literature. First, it provides insight into how EU external action on climate works in non-UNFCCC contexts, while also identifying potential facilitating and hindering factors. Second, and relatedly, it extends the study of climate governance beyond the UNFCCC, providing insight into the under-studied negotiations in ICAO and IMO. Third, in analysing the cross-forum coherence of the EU – an established climate leader with a successful track record of adapting its climate leadership to new challenges and domains (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021) – it complements existing, high-level theorization on actor coherence in international fora with overlapping mandates.

This paper is structured as follows. Section two provides an overview of the literature on climate governance in ICAO and IMO and institutional differences with the UNFCCC, as well as on the EU's external climate action therein. Section three introduces the conceptual framework in two parts. It first operationalises external action and then frames the

assessment of cross-forum coherence. Section four provides the empirics of the case studies. Section five analyses the empirics and briefly evaluates potential explanatory factors behind the overall level of cross-forum coherence. Finally, section six concludes and discusses the implication of the paper's findings in the literature, while also identifying future avenues for research.

II. Literature review

A. Climate governance in ICAO and IMO

While ICAO and IMO have unique competences and membership dynamics, they are nonetheless quite similar with respect to climate governance in that they are both specialised UN agencies with comparable institutional setups dealing with subsets of international transport (Martinez Romera, 2017). Both are mandated by Article 2.2 of the Kyoto Protocol as the competent international fora for regulating GHG emissions in their respective sectors. The literature identifies three key differences compared with the UNFCCC: (1) an express objective to promote and defend the international development of their respective sectors, (2) differing organisational culture based on technical regulations, and (3) different actor and interest coalitions (Martinez Romera, 2017; Oberthür, 2003; Rayner, 2021).

The potential impact of such differences on overall climate governance outcomes is relatively well-established (Hoch et al., 2019). Work on fragmentation has stressed the potential for inconsistency and conflict in governance practices across these fora, due to, inter alia, differing objectives, norms, memberships, decision-making procedures, and interests (Biermann et al., 2009). However, less attention has been paid to how such differences among climate fora could affect an individual actor's approaches to different fora. Nonetheless, the work of Morin and Orsini (2013) and Bernstein and Cashore (2013), who have sought to better understand the impact of complexity at the international level on states, can help shape our understanding of the institutional environment in which the EU seeks to be coherent. With that in mind, I will now discuss each of the three institutional differences, as well as how they could potentially shape the EU's cross-forum coherence.

First, both ICAO and IMO have an express objective to promote and defend the international development of their respective sectors (Martinez Romera, 2017). The work to regulate climate change is only a small part of their broader agenda. The fora bring together officials from transport backgrounds, i.e. primarily ambassadors and officials from transport ministries. This is also the case for the EU. This differs from the UNFCCC, whose mandate for climate action assembles officials and leaders from climate, energy, and foreign affairs ministries. These transport officials could have differing priorities and objectives as those negotiating in the UNFCCC and, as such, may prefer particular courses

of action that conflict with action elsewhere (Morin & Orsini, 2013). This raises barriers for coherent action in ICAO and IMO vis-à-vis the UNFCCC, as the EU will have to weigh its overall priorities in the transport fora against climate objectives.

Second, both ICAO and IMO have a different organisational culture than the UNFCCC. Both transport fora have earned a reputation as venues of technical expertise and standard setting based on the equal application of regulations to all members (Martinez Romera, 2017; Rayner, 2021). Negotiations therefore are traditionally highly-technical, though political considerations have emerged on occasion. This conflicts with the UNFCCC, which, over the past decades, has become a venue for high politics and international summitry in the context of a bifurcation between developed and developing countries (Oberthür, 2016). The standard-setting nature of the fora and culture of technical expertise establish expectations for the negotiations and on what is feasible. The EU could therefore be constrained in its approach to the negotiation, not only in how it has been socialised to negotiate climate in ICAO and IMO, but also how other actors perceive the negotiations vis-à-vis the UNFCCC (Morin & Orsini, 2013).

Third, both transport fora present different actor constellations than the UNFCCC (Oberthür, 2003). For historical and technical reasons, the aviation and shipping industries maintain an outsized influence in their respective international fora, as compared to the UNFCCC (Martinez Romera, 2017; Rayner, 2021). This differs from the dynamic in the UNFCCC, which is driven primarily by state-based negotiating groups. It is therefore possible that these interests could shape not only the EU's climate objectives in ICAO and IMO, but also the general appetite for climate action in the fora in general, which could be difficult to overcome (Bernstein & Cashore, 2013).

Overall, these differences underscore that ICAO and IMO constitute an ecosystem of largely distinct actors, objectives, and interests than the UNFCCC. These differences could thus serve as barriers to the EU's cross-forum coherence. Although the paper's intent is not to explain how these institutional differences impact the EU's cross-forum coherence, they nonetheless shape our expectations of the level of cross-forum coherence and therefore provide a compelling reason for its study.

B. The EU's evolution as a climate actor

Overall, the literature has repeatedly recognised the EU as an international climate actor with significant leadership ambitions (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021). Moreover, the EU has demonstrated its ability to adapt its climate leadership to changes in the international context, notably with its pivot from leader to a bridge-building 'lead actor' following its failure at UNFCCC COP15 in Copenhagen and the cementing of this role with its success at COP21 in Paris in 2015 (Oberthür, 2016).

Though not the only contributing factor, the EU external action on climate played a significant role in preparing the ground for the EU's successful outcome at Paris (Oberthür & Groen, 2018). The EU position for the Paris negotiations was crafted within the Working Party on International Environmental Issues (WPIEI) and its expert groups, which was then operationalised by an informal "EU team" of lead negotiators. Climate outreach activities were then coordinated informally within the EU Team and within the WPIEI, with the assistance of the EEAS (Torney & Cross, 2018).

Since then, EU external action on climate has focused on implementing the Paris Agreement and convincing other actors to increase their nationally-determined contributions. There has been increased attention on achieving EU objectives vis-à-vis negotiations in the other fora designated by the Kyoto Protocol to handle GHG emissions, notably ICAO, IMO, and the Montreal Protocol (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021).

C. EU climate action in ICAO and IMO

Unlike the UNFCCC, the EU is not a full member of ICAO or IMO, as membership is only open to states. Therefore, the EU is relegated to acting through its members on areas of Union competence (Martinez Romera, 2017). Due to the transport-nature of the two fora, EU-level coordination primarily takes place in working parties under the Council of the EU's Transportation, Telecommunications, and Energy (TTE) configuration with the input of the Commission's Directorate General for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE).

Following the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol, the European Commission began to look for ways to reduce emissions in both shipping and emissions as part of its reduction commitments (Staniland, 2012). The literature on EU climate action within both ICAO and IMO has revolved around the EU using unilateral action to encourage progress in the two fora. Much attention has been paid to the circumstances surrounding the EU's 2008 decision to include aviation emissions from flights departing or arriving from EU airports within its Emissions Trading System (ETS) and the subsequent backtrack and pausing of its implementation (Birchfield, 2015; Gonçalves, 2017; Lindenthal, 2014; Staniland, 2012). While the ETS inclusion seems to have triggered serious action in ICAO in that it began to seriously consider market-based measures (MBMs), it significantly damaged the EU's working relationship and credibility with other countries, notably the US & China, at ICAO (Birchfield, 2015; Lindenthal, 2014).

As for EU action in IMO, the unexpressed nature of Union competence on climate issues in shipping has created an opening where EU member states are relatively accustomed to acting unilaterally under the guise of general coordination (Gulbrandsen, 2013). Nonetheless, Poulsen et al. (2021) note the influential effect of the EU's Monitor, Reporting and Verification (MRV) Regulation – seen as a first step in the EU implementing ETS in

shipping – on the IMO, in that it prompted the IMO to adopt its own similar system in 2016. The literature thus underlines a similar phenomenon to that in ICAO – the ability of the EU to use its power of internal regulation to threaten the IMO and eventually upload legislation to the international level.

The literature on EU climate action in ICAO and IMO largely focuses on EU unilateral action and the consequences, both positive and negative, of said action. What remains less understood is how the EU approaches climate negotiations in each forum, particularly in light of the differences in institutional structures evoked in the literature. This is contrasted with the UNFCCC, where the literature has not only studied in great detail the EU's external action but also underscore the EU's role as a climate leader and its desire to expand such leadership to other fora, including ICAO and IMO (Oberthür & Dupont, 2021).

Yet, the EU is confronted with the institutional differences described above. Notably, the fact that EU coordination of climate negotiations in these two fora primarily takes place under TTE, with the input of DG MOVE, leaves space for potential conflict with the typical climate coordination structure of DG CLIMA and the Environment configuration. Based on the findings of Skovgaard (2018) on policy coherence within the European Commission, a mismatch in priorities between the EU transport and climate constituencies could indeed lead to incoherence in what the EU pursues in ICAO/IMO, vis-à-vis the UNFCCC, with each constituency seeking to frame the policy within its own priorities and less likely to compromise. State-based membership in the two fora could complicate the EU's pursuit of cross-forum coherence, with EU potentially member states acting in their own interests, which may not coincide with EU climate objectives, particularly in the case of member states with strong aviation or shipping industries.

III. Research design

This section presents the conceptual framework of the paper. First, I operationalise EU external climate action in ICAO and IMO. Second, I conceptualise what cross-forum coherence would entail in this context. Finally, I operationalise said framework.

A. Operationalising EU external climate action

In order to assess EU external climate action, I build on the work of Schunz (2019); Schunz et al. (2017). The study of EU external action is largely centred around understanding how the European Union acts at the international level. Schunz et al. (2017, p. 19) identify four fundamental components: agency, objectives, mechanism, and interlocutors/arenas, summarising it as “Who (agency) does what (objectives) and how (mechanisms) with whom/in which fora (interlocutors/arenas)?”

I adapt these components to the context of the ICAO and IMO negotiations as follows. Agency refers to the EU institutional actors involved in the interactions, while objectives refers to the EU's position for the negotiation in question. Mechanisms refers to the specific ways in which the EU interacts with other actors, such as a bilateral outreach, forming of a coalition, etc. Finally, due to the different policy issues at hand (e.g. both climate and transport), interlocutors/arenas relate to the level at which the EU engages (e.g. transport or climate ministry; leader level) and where (e.g. bilaterally or multilaterally).

B. Conceptualising and assessing cross-forum coherence

In the case of inter-related policy areas, such as climate and transport, the EU is typically considered 'coherent' if there is, at the bare minimum, an absence of contradictions in the EU's external policies covering those inter-related policy areas (Bossuyt et al., 2020). However, there can indeed be differing degrees of coherence, ranging from the absence of conflict to the presence of synergies, or mutually-reinforcing policies (Portela, 2021). Work on coherence across international fora (i.e. cross-forum coherence) while rather limited, has focused mainly on negotiations themselves (Morin & Orsini, 2013, 2014). However, due to the breadth of diplomatic activity that takes place in the leadup to the negotiations, I extend the concept to external action. Evaluating cross-forum coherence in EU external climate action therefore consists of assessing the degree of coherence in each of the elements of external action in ICAO and IMO with the UNFCCC.

Note that due to the nature of international climate governance, I consider such coherence to be unidirectional, i.e. the extent the EU's external climate action in ICAO and IMO is coherent with that in the UNFCCC and not vice-versa. Climate change is just one of many issues handled in ICAO and IMO, while the UNFCCC serves as the international focal point for climate governance. Such a unidirectional analysis fits with analysis on climate policy integration (CPI), which although at the domestic policy-making level, seeks to assess the extent climate issues are taken into consideration in other issue areas.

For each element, the corresponding level of coherence is assessed as low, medium or high. Such a scale allows for an ordering of the elements which can then be extrapolated to broader analysis (Mayring, 2014). I develop indicators based on the relevant literature on EU policy coherence and coherence at the international level. My intention is not to replace these works on coherence, but rather use them to build a framework to assess overall EU cross-forum coherence in external climate action. I now proceed through the different elements, which are laid out in Table 1.

The indicator for objectives is the extent that the EU evokes or integrates its position in the UNFCCC into its negotiation position for ICAO/IMO. In their work on policy coherence in the international regime complex on genetic resources, Morin and Orsini

(2014) assess the degree of complementarity and similarity in an actor's negotiation position across fora dealing with an overlapping issue area. As such, the negotiating position serves as a useful template for evaluating the coherence of EU objectives in ICAO/IMO compared to the UNFCCC.

As for agency, the indicator employed is the role of EU climate institutional actors in deciding and acting on diplomatic process related to the negotiations. This again is inspired from Morin and Orsini (2014), who view the degree of internal coordination as a component of an actor's overall coherence. Similarly, Dupont (2016) uses the integration of pro-climate stakeholders in the policy process to assess CPI. Therefore, it can reasonably be seen as an indicator of coherence in agency.

The indicator for mechanisms is the extent to which EU integrates UNFCCC arguments/concerns into how it negotiates with others in order to achieve its objectives in ICAO/IMO. Here, I draw from Schunz et al. (2017) who establish the use of issue linkage, or using coercion or persuasion in one policy area to achieve a desired outcome in another, as an indicator of a high level of policy-based coherence, in that its positions in two fora or areas become inter-connected.

Finally, with respect to interlocutors/arenas, I look at the political level of those with whom the EU engages, with the underlying logic that the EU seeking higher levels of political engagement on the issue would be indicative of the high level of political importance and congruity the EU attaches to the issue, which is seen as a necessary condition for overall coherence (Carbone, 2008; Morin & Orsini, 2013). Evoking climate issues from fora traditionally viewed as isolated from the climate landscape at a high political level would represent an EU desire for coherent action vis-à-vis the UNFCCC.

The analysis for the level of coherence was conducted via qualitative coding (Mayring, 2014) of 24 semi-structured interviews with EU, EU member state, third state, and secretariat officials involved in these negotiations. Additionally, I consulted EU documents, press reports, and official documents (e.g. meeting notes) from relevant international organisations. Data was triangulated and coded in NVivo based on a coding scheme derived from Table 1.

Element of External Action / Level of coherence	Indicator	Low	Medium	High
Objectives	The evoking and/or integration of EU position or engagements in UNFCCC into the EU position for negotiation in ICAO/IMO	ICAO/IMO position passively acknowledges UNFCCC	ICAO/IMO position actively acknowledges UNFCCC as important and regularly mentions it in EU position	Achieving a target that fits with the UNFCCC position figures centrally into EU objectives for the negotiations and drives its position
Agency	The role of EU climate institutional actors (e.g. DG CLIMA and WPIEI) in deciding and acting on diplomatic process related to the ICAO/IMO negotiations	The process is led by Transport institutional actors. Climate institutional actors are not involved in process or act unilaterally on outreach without informing their transport counterparts	The process is led by Transport institutional actors, with climate institutional actors involved in a consulting role. Institutional actors inform each other of progress and outreach	Climate and transport institutional actors co-decide and work together on a position. Outreach is coordinated via a division of labour and regular contact on messaging, action, etc, for <i>all</i> institutional actors
Mechanisms	The extent to which EU integrates UNFCCC arguments/concerns into how it negotiates with others in order to achieve its objectives	EU uses negotiation elements that are largely unique to the situation at hand in the transport fora / does not integrate climate	EU uses arguments or tactics it has used in UNFCCC to negotiate in ICAO/IMO	EU uses coercion or persuasion on issues in the UNFCCC to influence negotiations in ICAO/IMO
Interlocutors / Arenas	The level of participating actors with whom EU engages (e.g. official, minister, or leader)	EU discusses issues related to the negotiation with counterparts at the negotiator/official level, either bilaterally or multilaterally	EU discusses issues related to the climate negotiation at the ministerial level, either bilaterally or multilaterally	EU discusses issues related to the climate negotiation at the leader level, either bilaterally or multilaterally

Table 1: Measuring policy coherence in the EU's approach to ICAO and IMO climate negotiations

IV. Empirics

A. ICAO CORSIA

1. Background: the path to CORSIA

While ICAO has considered climate-related issues since the early 1990s, serious reflection on the use of a MBM in emissions reductions began in 2007, thanks in part to increased pressure from the EU and its decision to include aviation in its Emissions Trading System (ETS) (Martinez Romera, 2017). In 2013 at Assembly 38, within the context of the EU ETS, the Assembly agreed that negotiations on an MBM would be finalized by 2016. At Assembly 39 in September 2016, the Assembly adopted CORSIA as a non-binding political declaration. It calls for the implementation of an emissions offsetting program based on 2020 levels and is based on three phases: a pilot, voluntary phase (2021-2023), a first phase with voluntary participation (2023-2026), and a second phase in which all included states will be obligated to participate (2027-2035).

2. Objectives

The EU's negotiation position for the Assembly was expressed via a so-called Bratislava Declaration, which spelled-out political support for an MBM and their desire to commit to the first voluntary phase of the process (interviews 5, 7, 9). The declaration was issued by the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC), which serves as a regional coordination body of 44 European states (i.e. not only EU), plus representatives from European aviation institutions, in order to present a common position within ICAO on various issues (Lindenthal, 2014; Martinez Romera, 2017). While the declaration at the beginning of the document welcomes the adoption of the Paris Agreement and reiterates the need for aviation to contribute to the agreed-upon temperature targets, it mainly focuses on the commitment of the 44 ECAC member states to participate in the voluntary pilot phase of CORSIA and encourages others to do so (European Civil Aviation Conference, 2016). Interview respondents acknowledged that there was an understanding amongst climate and transport EU institutional stakeholders that while the Paris targets were important, it would be unrealistic to achieve an agreement fitting with those targets in ICAO (interviews 4, 5, 6, 7). As such, the negotiation objectives were largely structured around what was achievable in ICAO based on the recent negotiation trajectory and not on what had occurred in the UNFCCC. This corresponds to a *low level* of objective coherence.

3. Agency

EU decision making and diplomatic action were coordinated in two main venues: the Aviation Working Party of the TTE Council Configuration and a working group within ECAC, including non-EU member states. Within the EU process, DG MOVE was the lead on the file, with DG CLIMA regularly providing input (interviews 1, 3, 7). The eventual EU/ECAC position was discussed in ECAC before being rubber stamped in the Council (interview 4). An EU official summarised the position of climate officials in the process: “They’re not the ones with all the authority [...] They get invited to speak when their head of delegation invites them to speak. There is a secondary status” (interview 1). Regarding outreach, DG CLIMA facilitated a demarche via the Green Diplomacy Network in early 2016 (interviews 3 & 6). At the same time, aviation-specific outreach was also coordinated via the ECAC expert group to say “how should we split this up and who should approach whom?” (interview 7). Officials from DG CLIMA also conducted their own bilateral outreach, while keeping their transport colleagues informed (interviews 3 & 6). This corresponds overall to a *medium* level of agency coherence.

4. Mechanisms

Much like the integration of climate objectives in the negotiations process, the EU approach largely fit within what was occurring in ICAO in the lead-up to the Assembly (interviews 7, 9). However, two notable implications of climate negotiation activities stand out. First, the EU attempted to recreate the High Ambition Coalition (HAC), the famous grouping of vulnerable and developed states from the UNFCCC COP21 in which it had played a key role, in order to lobby more states to join the voluntary pilot phase of CORSIA. While this was seen a reasonably-successful publicity move, its actual impact was rather limited (interviews 1, 3, 5, 7). Second, the EU worked in the leadup to the negotiations to stress the need for language that fit with the Paris Agreement and to avoid the potential for double counting of offsetting credits (interviews 3, 6). EU transport negotiators, solicited by their climate counterparts, pushed to incorporate climate-related language that would have otherwise been excluded. The EU sought to compliment the Paris Agreement by replicating the HAC and seeking compatible language, but it did not engage in issue linking. This fits with a *medium* level of coherence in mechanisms.

5. Interlocutors & arenas

With respect to intended audiences of outreach, there were mainly inroads with transport people in the counter parts in ICAO, either via side meetings or through the regional bodies (interviews 5, 7). In addition to the demarche utilising the Green Diplomacy Network, DG CLIMA officials made bilateral outreaches to transport and climate officials in China. There

was also a limited attempt to bring up the agreement at higher-level political fora dealing with climate, like the Petersberg Dialogue and the Major Economies Forum. A G7 transportation ministerial in September 2016 served as a further engagement with partners on a political level (interview 8). In a more aviation-centred approach, the Bratislava Declaration served as a further springboard for engagement with ECAC's sister organisations around the world (interviews 5 & 7). Overall, the implication, albeit limited, of higher-level ministerial fora suggest a *medium* level of integration in interlocutors and arenas.

B. IMO

1. Background: the path to the Initial Strategy

Environment-related issues in IMO are primarily handled by the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC). It was not until 2011 that the committee took a first major decision on emissions mitigation. In the following years, pressure for climate action grew within the MEPC, thanks in part to an impassioned proposal from the Marshall Islands at MEPC 68 in May 2015 for ambitious GHG reduction, which was then followed by the adoption of the Paris Agreement months later (Corbett et al., 2020; Selin et al., 2021). In late 2016, the MEPC established a roadmap which called for agreement on a GHG reduction strategy within the next two years. Finally, at MEPC 72 in April 2018, IMO member states adopted the Initial Strategy, which calls for (1) a review of ship efficiency standards for new ships to reduce carbon intensity; (2) a reduction of carbon intensity of international ships by at least 40% by 2030, with efforts towards 70% by 2050 (compared to 2008 levels); and (3) a peak in GHG emissions from international shipping as quickly as possible and a reduction of GHG emissions in 2050 by at least 50%.

2. Objectives

The specific position for the negotiations was coordinated on the basis of a non-paper approximately two weeks before the negotiations at MEPC 72 (Council of the European Union, 2018). Due to the ambiguous question of competence at the time, it served merely as a coordination document (interviews 14, 15, 16, 20, 22). Nonetheless, the agreed position includes multiple references to the Paris Agreement and its temperature targets, notably declaring “pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to stay below 1.5°C, as agreed under the Paris Agreement, as a critical element of the initial IMO strategy” (Council of the European Union, 2018, p. 14). While there was an understanding of the importance of the Paris targets, there was also a pragmatic perspective on what was achievable (interviews 12, 16, 19, 20, 21). The EU looked at “what is the general kind of willingness of the other IMO member states to actually have an agreement [...] this gives you the kind of global

understanding of what is the level of ambition that you can actually achieve” (interview 20). Yet, it is worth noting that the overall level of ambition and emission reduction targets were shaped within the aforementioned push by Tony de Brum in 2015 and later work by the Shipping High Ambition Coalition (SHAC), which included several EU member states (interviews 12, 14, 16, 20). This balancing of the Paris targets with the realities of the IMO corresponds with a *medium* level of coherence.

3. Agency

Coordination within the EU on a position and diplomatic action took place within the Shipping Working Party of the TTE Configuration. DG MOVE was the lead, with involvement from DG CLIMA in a consulting role via one official (interviews 15, 19). Throughout the negotiation process, it was mainly shipping/transport officials, along with the inclusion of a climate negotiator from the Council Presidency, here Estonia on behalf of Bulgaria (interviews 15, 20, 22, 23). Regarding outreach, DG CLIMA organised a demarche in 2017 via the Shipping Working Party, though there was little coordination beyond that until a position was reached in the weeks leading up to the negotiations. With an agreed position, the Council Presidency informally coordinated with member states to use existing ties and relationships with geographic areas (e.g. Spain in Latin America) and contacts in the climate and shipping spheres (interviews 20 & 22).

Yet again, like ICAO, looking at the EU level of coordination only tells part of the story. A separate group, SHAC, served as a parallel track for coordination and action among some EU member states. Originally formed at the initiative of the Marshall Islands, this group, which at first included Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, and the Commission later grew to include a large share of EU member states (interview 14, 16, 19, 20). As such, SHAC became a separate hub of developing positions, strategizing, and coordinating an approach based on shipping contributing its “Fair Share” to combatting climate change (interview 16). SHAC mainly included transport officials, though DG CLIMA was also there from the Commission. However, since not all EU member states were part of the SHAC, it cannot be considered as part of the overall EU coordination process. Therefore, looking at the involvement and input of EU climate institutional stakeholders, albeit meagre, in the main EU coordination and outreach process suggests a *medium* level of coherence.

4. Mechanisms

As with the agency section, there are seemingly two tracks to the EU’s approach to the negotiations. First, with respect to SHAC, there was an attempt to incorporate ambition from the UNFCCC and translate such ambition into reduction targets (interviews 16, 18,

22). This was done via bilateral outreach and presentations at UNFCCC meetings. SHAC also sought to draw more political, leader and ministerial level attention to the negotiations in IMO (interviews 16, 18). At the initiative of France, the coalition arranged for a political declaration on the imperative of decarbonizing shipping to be signed at the One Planet Summit, a gathering of world leaders to commemorate the second anniversary of the Paris Agreement, in 2017 (interviews 14, 16, 18). The “Tony de Brum Declaration” was intended to “get countries that were progressive at UNFCCC to acknowledge that they also needed to be progressive at IMO...make a link between environment and transport ministries” (interview 18). Within the EU sphere, EU institutional actors sought to build capacity within the IMO to address climate considerations. The Council Presidency’s climate negotiator worked to explain potential scenarios and provide insight on the UNFCCC process to shipping delegates (interviews 15, 20, 22). Additionally, DG CLIMA sponsored a capacity-building project on technology for emission reductions (interviews 19, 24). The Tony de Brum declaration, in that it connects ambition targets from the UNFCCC with IMO stands out as a high point of outreach. However, again, it is not an EU initiative, but EU member states acting outside of coordination. In the EU sphere, the educating of concepts and capacity building, in that they reference UNFCCC processes, are *medium*.

5. Interlocutors & arenas

Outreach was mainly concentrated in transport contexts, with a few discussions in climate spheres in order to bring attention to the shipping process. At the EU level, DG CLIMA utilised a demarche using the Green Diplomacy Network (interviews 12, 19, 21). The lower political attention attributed to shipping largely kept it off the radar of the G7 and the G20 at the time (interview 12). The Commission also made presentations at UNFCCC events (interview 16). Finally, after a position was agreed upon, EU member states officials reached out to shipping colleagues around the world with whom they had close contacts (interview 20). In SHAC, there was also a regular presence at UNFCCC events, as well as the leader-level One Planet Summit (interviews 14, 16, 18). Again, we see a difference in the approach of the SHAC, which targeted the leader-level, and the EU process which remained at the official and negotiator level in its outreach, which corresponds to a *low* level of coherence.

V. Discussion

As the previous section assessed the degree of coherence in the different elements of EU external action in the two cases (summarised below in Table 2), I now discuss the findings of the case study and potential explanatory factors with respect to the institutional differences of ICAO and IMO and EU coordination which could help explain the overall levels of coherence.

In both cases, the EU exhibited overall medium levels of coherence, with one low level element in each case. The level of coherence for two elements – agency and mechanisms – was the same for both cases. However, there were different levels of coherence with respect to both objectives and interlocutors/arenas, which reinforces that the two fora are not identical, nor is EU external action therein. As the differences are relatively minor, this should not detract from the overall assessment of cross-forum coherence vis-à-vis the UNFCCC.

Element of External Action	ICAO	IMO
Objectives	LOW	MEDIUM
Agency	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Mechanisms	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Interlocutors / Arenas	MEDIUM	LOW

Table 2: Cross-forum coherence of different elements of EU external action in ICAO and IMO

While the objective of this paper was to understand the extent of cross-forum coherence, several points of reflection stand out as to what factors might have influenced it, particular with respect to the three aforementioned differences from section 2.1. The fora’s focus on promoting and defending their sectors and focus on technical expertise seemed to create a challenging environment for overall coherence vis-à-vis the UNFCCC. This appeared to affect not only the general negotiating context but also the ways in which the EU approached and coordinated its external action. For the general negotiating context, respondents used terms like “parallel process”, “two parallel universes”, “another world”, “different cultures”, to describe the respective fora’s relationships with the UNFCCC (interviews 2, 3, 6, 19). The fact that climate change was essentially negotiated against transport officials who felt relatively little pressure to act not only tempered expectations of what was feasible (interviews 1, 2, 3, 7, 18, 19, 23) but created challenging coordination issues across policy silos which limited the potential for coherence in mechanisms and interlocutors/arenas (interview 6, 7, 11). At the EU level, this meant that it was transport officials taking a lead who were accustomed to working in this other world, with climate colleagues taking a supporting role. Even if issues were evoked in other climate fora, it

would be with climate counterparts, who would then have to speak to their aviation colleagues handling the negotiations (interview 6). As an official noted about ICAO negotiations: “At the end of the day, it all boils down to the aviation world, so you’re dealing with aviation ministries or transport ministries. They might bring in or not their climate and environment people” (interview 7). Finally, the constellation of actors and interest, particularly the role of industry, did not stand out as an influential factor in the coherence of the EU position, at least directly.

However, it is worth noting that these institutional differences are only one side of the equation. They shape the external dynamic in which the EU deploys its (in)coherent external climate action. It remains to be seen if the EU’s lack of coherence is a consequence of this dynamic or also an aggravating factor. For instance, is DG CLIMA’s minor role in the EU’s action in ICAO and IMO a consequence of the fora being populated by transport officials or does it further aggravate the incoherence? Additionally, questions of competence and EU membership in the two transport fora should also be considered, particularly given the importance of extra-EU action in both cases. This could affect not only the EU’s ability to act, both legally and via the volition of its member states, but also how it is perceived therein. Future research should seek to unpack the causal mechanism behind this lack of coherence and tease out the internal and external factors behind it and propose solutions for overcoming it. The framework for assessing cross-forum coherence can serve as a starting point.

VI. Conclusion

This paper finds that the EU was somewhat coherent in its external action on climate in the negotiations leading to ICAO CORSIA in 2016 and the IMO Initial Strategy in 2018, when compared to its climate action in the UNFCCC. The level of cross-forum coherence could therefore be considered medium. Moreover, the EU did not demonstrate high coherence in any of the elements of its external climate action. Overall, the EU’s climate action in ICAO and IMO fits somewhat with what its work in the UNFCCC. However, it is a far cry from the expected transposition of the EU climate leadership apparatus that high-level documents have suggested. Additionally, the fact that the cases had different levels of cross-forum coherence for two components – objectives and interlocutors/arenas – suggests that the two fora may be less similar with respect to climate governance than expected.

This paper makes three main contributions to the literature. First, the findings call into question, albeit indirectly, the extent the EU can be considered a coherent climate actor outside the UNFCCC. While there were indeed attempts to integrate climate priorities and actions into the EU’s approach to the negotiations, it was done so in a very limited fashion.

The findings therefore nuance the EU's position as climate leader in international climate governance, which is especially pertinent given recent focus on the international impacts of the European Green Deal. Second, in looking at how the EU, an international climate leader, works in other fora dealing with climate, the paper provides insight into the relatively understudied negotiations of climate agreements in fora beyond the UNFCCC, which complements existing work on polycentricity and regime complexity in climate governance. Finally, it provides a more-encompassing framework for assessing coherence on external action across different fora dealing with an overlapping issue area.

However, this paper is not without limitations. First, the analysis of the impact of the institutional structural differences of ICAO and IMO vis-à-vis the UNFCCC remains rather high-level and relies on existing literature on climate action in the two fora. A more encompassing analysis could offer further insight into the impact of structural differences and internal factors on cross-forum coherence. Second, the paper is only a first step for understanding EU climate action in transport fora. It only looks at the *how* as opposed to the effectiveness of EU involvement. As such, future research should look at the impact of such a diplomatic apparatus on the EU's achievement of its objectives in these fora.

* * *

List of abbreviations

CORSIA	Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation
CPI	Climate Policy Integration
ECAC	European Civil Aviation Conference
ETS	Emissions Trading System
EU	European Union
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
HAC	High Ambition Coalition
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
IMO	International Maritime Organization (IMO)
MEPC	Marine Environment Protection Committee
MBM	Market-based measure
MRV	Monitor, Reporting and Verification
NDC	Nationally-determined Contributions
SHAC	Shipping High Ambition Coalition
TTE	Transportation, Telecommunications, and Energy
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WPIEI	Working Party on International Environmental Issues

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2. 16/06/2021, EU official, MS Teams
3. 17/06/2021, EU official, MS Teams
4. 30/06/2021, EU official, MS Teams
5. 01/07/2021, EU member state official, MS Teams
6. 06/07/2021, EU official, MS Teams
7. 06/07/2021, EU official, MS Teams
8. 27/07/2021, EU official, MS Teams,
9. 28/07/2021, EU member state official, MS Teams
10. 29/07/2021, ECAC member state official, MS Teams
11. 11/08/2021, EU member state official, MS Teams

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12. 05/02/2020, EU official, In-person
13. 10/02/2020, EU member state official, In-person
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15. 12/02/2020, EU official, In-person
16. 18/02/2020, EU member state official, In-person
17. 28/02/2020, EU member state official, Skype audio
18. 02/03/2020, Non-EU expert, In-person
19. 02/03/2020, EU official, In-person
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