The 95th session of the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization (MSC 95, 3-12 June 2015)

The 95th session of the Maritime Safety Committee of the International Maritime Organization was held at IMO headquarters in London from 3 to 12 June 2015. Close to 900 delegates from 116 countries attended the eight-day meeting, as did representatives from intergovernmental organizations and 49 non-governmental organizations including the International Association of Institutes of Navigation (IAIN). This report covers navigation topics and the more general items of interest considered to be of specific interest to IAIN.

Implementing e-navigation

Having approved a Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) for e-navigation at its previous session, held in November 2014 (MSC 94), the Committee followed this up with approval of a prioritized plan of work for the next two biennia (2016-2017 and 2018-2019) relating to the harmonized implementation and future development of e-navigation.

The work will be undertaken by the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR Sub-Committee).

Specifically, the Committee agreed on five priority tasks (selected from an original proposal for 18 tasks to form IMO’s output on e-navigation implementation).

It based its decision on extensive preparatory work to align SIP-related work more closely to the Organization’s High-Level Action Plan for the two biennia, as well as accommodating concerns that finite resources demand that all IMO’s work is defined in SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound) terms and meets the Organization’s result-based budget requirements. The preparatory work had been undertaken jointly by seven member States (Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea) with wide industry support (ICS-International Chamber of Shipping, IALA-International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities, BIMCO-Baltic and International Maritime Council, CLIA-Cruise Lines International Association, Intermanager and the Nautical Institute).

1 IMO defines e-navigation as “the harmonized collection, integration, exchange, presentation and analysis of marine information on board and ashore by electronic means to enhance berth-to-berth navigation and related services for safety and security at sea and protection of the marine environment”.

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The development of **IMO guidelines on standardised modes of operation (S-mode) of shipboard navigational equipment** was assigned medium priority, with a target completion date of 2019.

Three tasks were accorded top priority, with completion targeted for 2017. These concern:

- updating the revised performance standards for **integrated navigation systems** (INS), by adding **new modules** relating to the harmonization of bridge design and display of information;

- developing revised guidelines and criteria for **ship reporting standardization and harmonization** with a view to mandating ship reporting by **electronic** means and **automated** collection of onboard data for reporting; and

- developing guidelines for the **harmonized display of navigational information received via communications equipment**.

The fifth task concerns **built-in integrity testing for navigation equipment** and involves the development of amendments to the general requirements for shipborne radio equipment forming part of the **Global Maritime Distress and Safety System** (GMDSS) and for **electronic navigational aids**. This task was assigned medium priority, with a target completion date of 2019.

The importance of IMO having firmly established a coherent plan of deliverable work within an agreed time frame cannot be underestimated. It sends a strong signal that the Organization, as the global standard-setting body for international shipping, is committed to exercising its **leading and coordinating role** with regard to the continuous evolution of e-navigation. The priority is to ensure that emerging regional, national and local e-navigation solutions that meet different needs in waterways and sea areas around the world are **compatible within a global framework**.

In this regard it is also worth noting that last November, at MSC 94, the Committee approved guidelines on **harmonized reporting of e-navigation test bed results**. At MSC 95, it additionally approved guidelines on **software quality assurance and human-centred design** for e-navigation.

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2 Supported by IAIN, see accompanying report by Andy Norris and Aline Debievre
Shipowners and equipment manufacturers in particular wish to have certainty about the standards they may be expected to meet and these will also have **implications for training**.

Significantly, at a special event, held during MSC 95, CIRM, the international association for marine electronics companies, called IMO to account on its e-navigation initiative of almost a decade ago. Together with four other major industry stakeholders (ICS, BIMCO, IALA and CLIA) and the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), it urged IMO to deliver on a digital information environment in a coordinated manner. Concrete and practical solutions for e-navigation were needed and these should be fair, by ensuring a level-playing field, as well as effective. Otherwise the complexities of maritime trade would become unmanageable.

**Other MSC 95 outcomes pertaining to maritime navigation**

**Adoption of performance standards for multi-system shipborne radionavigation receivers**, resilient position-fixing (PNT) having been the reason behind their development.

**Adoption of the new IMO Polar Code** on safe and environmentally sound navigation in the polar regions (Arctic and Antarctica).

The *International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters* is designed to become **mandatory under new SOLAS and MARPOL amendments** (SOLAS-International Convention for the Safety Of Life At Sea; MARPOL-International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships). Its expected date of entry into force is 1 January 2017.

The Committee decided that the correspondence group established by decision of MSC 94 and coordinated by Norway should continue its important work on the development of **guidance on a methodology for determining limitations for operation in ice** for the purpose of structural risk assessment and inclusion in the ship’s documentation.

**Adoption of ships’ routeing measures for the south-west Coral Sea** to serve as key Associated Protective Measures (APMs) in support of the designation of the south-west part of the Coral Sea as an **extension of the “Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait Particularly Sensitive Sea Area”**.

The APMs concern two (2) two-way shipping routes and an area to be avoided (situated just between the two two-way routes) – for implementation on 1 January 2016.
The adoption of the extended GBR and TS PSSA to include the south-west Coral Sea was agreed by the Marine Environment Protection Committee in May of this year (MEPC 68) in order to safeguard against collisions and groundings and enhance environmental protection of reefs and islets.

**Adoption of five areas to be avoided in the region of the Aleutian Islands** (northern Pacific Ocean) – also for implementation on 1 January 2016.

**Message of IMO Secretary-General Koji Sekimizu on retirement**

IMO Secretary-General Koji Sekimizu, who will retire in December of this year, urged the Committee to stay vigilant in safeguarding life at sea.

Too many seafarer lives continue to be lost as a result of avoidable accidents. In his view, it was incumbent upon the Committee to set international rules and goal-based standards that **encourage new technologies and innovations leading to further reduction of maritime casualties**.

The work on passenger ship safety needed to be a continuous high priority work item and should extend to the development of IMO guidance and eventually of new SOLAS provisions on enhancing the **safety of domestic passenger shipping** (non-international voyages), which provided an indispensable public transport service in many developing countries.

Mr Sekimizu welcomed the Committee’s decision to place on the agenda of its next session (MSC 96) the issue of **unsafe mixed migration by sea**. The humanitarian tragedies unfolding in the Mediterranean and certain Asian waters were discussed extensively at MSC 95. They posed unprecedented challenges to the time-honoured tradition of rendering search and rescue assistance at sea and also endangered the safety and well-being of crews on board merchant vessels responding to the plight of smuggled migrants abandoned at sea. They could not be resolved by IMO on its own and urgently required a coordinated response at United Nations level.

Mr Sekimizu also emphasized the continued importance of the Committee’s work on **counter-piracy measures**.

As regards other security-related issues, in particular cyber threats, he welcomed the Committee’s support for the **development of IMO guidance on cyber security**.

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3 Mr. Ki-tack Lim, of the Republic of Korea, will be the new Secretary-General, with effect from 1 January 2016, for an initial term of four years. He was elected by the IMO Council, the Organization’s executive organ of 40 elected member States, on 30 June 2015, following a tightly fought contest between six candidates. His taking office is subject to the approval of the Assembly, IMO’s governing body, which will meet from 23 November to 2 December 2015.
Election of new MSC Chairman and Vice-Chairman
This was also the last session of the Committee for outgoing chairman Christian Breinholt of Denmark and the Vice-Chairman, Captain A.M. Segar of Singapore, both of whom served the Committee and the Organization with distinction. Mr. Brad Groves of Australia and Mr. Juan Cubisino of Argentina were unanimously elected as MSC Chairman and Vice-Chairman for next year.

_Aline DeBievre, 30 June 2015_