IMO COUNCIL ELECTIONS  
A report by Aline De Bievre FRIN

The elections for the 40-member executive Council of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for the next biennium (2016-2017) took place on 27 November 2015, as part of the regular biennial session of the IMO Assembly (29th session, 23 November-2 December 2015). The result was as follows:

• **Category (a):** 10 States with the largest interest in providing international shipping services:
  China, Greece, Italy, Japan, Norway, Panama, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States.

• **Category (b):** 10 States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade:
  Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden.

• **Category (c):** 20 States not elected under (a) or (b) above, which have special interests in maritime transport or navigation and whose election to the Council will ensure the representation of all major geographic areas of the world:
  Australia, Bahamas, Belgium, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Indonesia, Kenya, Liberia, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey.

There was no competition for **Categories (a) and (b),** so the listed Member States are the same as they were for the 2014-2015 biennium.

There were 23 Member States competing for **Category (c).** Jamaica lost its seat, but Egypt regained its seat (lost two years ago). Saudi Arabia and Iran tried to gain a seat but were not successful. (So there was only one change: Jamaica out, Egypt in.)

The different Categories have no bearing whatsoever on voting rights. Each elected Member State has one vote, although a vote is very rarely taken as the IMO strives to make decisions by consensus as a matter of principle, in the interests of international cooperation and global harmonization, implementation and enforcement of its regulatory instruments.

Mr Jeffrey G. Lantz (United States) was re-elected, by acclamation, as Chairman of the Council, to serve for the next two years.
The concluding Plenary session of the 29th IMO Assembly was held on 2 December 2015 and adopted a number of resolutions on financial, administrative, legal and technical matters including the High-Level Action Plan and the budget of the Organization for the 2016-2017 biennium. It was noted that Member States had made “immense efforts” to ensure timely payment of their budgetary contributions (largely based on registered gross tonnage), with the level of payment for 2015 having reached 99 per cent by the end of November. The results-based budget voted for the new biennium totals just under £66M (£65,772,000), comprising appropriations of £32,618,000 and £33,154,000 for 2016 and 2017, respectively.

Among the Assembly resolutions adopted related to maritime safety were Revised guidelines for the onboard operational use of shipborne automatic identification systems (AIS). These replace the guidelines that were first adopted in 2001 (resolution A.917(22), as amended by resolution A.956(23) adopted in 2003). The revised guidelines take account of evolving uses of AIS, such as in vessel traffic services operations, to support mandatory ship reporting systems (SOLAS regulation V/11), for search and rescue purposes (AIS-SARTs), or to mark aids to navigation (AIS-AtoNs).

The 29th Assembly also provided the opportunity to say farewell to outgoing Secretary-General Koji Sekimizu, who chose not to stand for a second four-year term for personal reasons and will therefore leave the Organization at the end of December, to return to Japan, his home country.

In his first speech, the newly elected Secretary-General, Mr Kitak Lim (Republic of Korea), said that it was “imperative” to further assist Member States, in particular developing countries and small island nations, with effective implementation of IMO conventions through capacity-building. There had to be “shared growth for all Member States”. “Better communication” between the IMO, developed and developing countries, and the industry was of the essence, as was communication with the world outside IMO to enhance both the Organization’s outreach and global standing.

Mr Lim, a master mariner, stressed that in progressing IMO’s work he would “listen to seafarers” as a top priority. He listed 10 major challenges facing the Organization, starting with the mandatory introduction of the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) on 1 January 2015. Others ranged from passenger and fishing vessel safety and progressing goal-based standards to counter-piracy and cyber security. He also singled out the implementation of e-navigation and the new IMO Polar Code. Further progress also needed to be made with the Ballast Water Management Convention and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
About IMO
The Council is the executive organ of IMO and is responsible, under the Assembly, for supervising the work of the Organization between sessions of the Assembly, which normally meets every two years in regular session.

The Council performs all the functions of the Assembly, except that of making recommendations to Governments on maritime safety and pollution prevention.

The IMO Assembly is the Organization’s highest governing body. It is responsible for determining the financial arrangements of the Organization and for approving the work programme and the budget, taking account of the Council’s recommendations. It elects the Organization’s 40-Member Council and all IMO Member States whose credentials have been formally verified are entitled to cast their vote. All Member States (there are currently 171) are entitled to attend the Assembly.

The Organization’s three Associate Members (Faroes, Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China) are also entitled to attend, as are the intergovernmental organizations with which agreements of co-operation have been concluded and international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO (such as IAIN).

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