



8 – Strategy and Policy

8.3.1 IALA Centres of Support

Note by the Secretariat

IALA CENTRES OF SUPPORT

1. SUMMARY

This paper presents a proposal for the establishment of IALA Centres of Support (ICoS), building on previous Council considerations and recent input from Member States and the Policy Advisory Panel (PAP), (C04-8.1.1 Report of PAP60). The centres would provide nationally or multi-nationally funded support to the Organization in defined areas of expertise, operating in a subordinate and complementary role to the Committees and Secretariat. Council is invited to consider and approve the concept with a view to preparing a draft resolution for submission to the General Assembly.

2. BACKGROUND

The transformation into an intergovernmental Organization (IGO) has strengthened the Organization's mandate to promote harmonized Marine Aids to Navigation (AtoN) worldwide. As the Organization's global role expands, the Secretariat and the World-Wide Academy are facing increasing demands for technical development, standardisation, training and capacity-building support.

In recent years, several Member States have expressed interest in hosting local centres that could support the Organization in meeting these demands without increasing the budget or member contributions. The possibility of establishing such support for the Organization was first discussed by the Council, when IALA was still an association, at C79 in December 2023. The Council noted the information provided but decided not to pursue the matter at that time, agreeing that any further consideration should take place after the transition to the IGO and under the newly elected Council.

Following the successful establishment of the Organization, the subject was brought back to Council at C03 in December 2025 through input paper C03-8.4.1 on Centres of Excellence. Japan, the Republic of Korea and Spain provided written contributions (C03-8.4.1.1 to 8.4.1.3) and joined Denmark in presenting their views during the meeting.

Council agreed that members should submit comments and suggestions on the proposed centres to the Secretariat by the end of February 2026. The Council further endorsed



continued work on the concept of Centres of Excellence as a strategic initiative supporting the Organization's global mandate. The Secretariat was requested to develop a formal framework for the designation and governance of the concept, together with a proposed timeline and an outline of how such centres would integrate into the Organization's work programme.

3. DISCUSSION

Since Council 03 the Secretariat has received comments from Denmark, Finland and Japan (C04-8.3.1.1 to C04-8.3.1.3). All were supportive of continuing to develop this concept and provided constructive feedback, which has been taken into account in discussions of the Concept. The PAP was also asked to advise on the proposal and offered comments that have further supported its development. As requested by Council 03, the Secretariat has reflected these inputs in the present proposal.

The Organization and its Committees have long benefited from support provided by individual members, particularly when a topic required dedicated resource or specialist attention beyond the capacity of the Committees or the Secretariat. In many respects this mirrors government practice, where external bodies such as academia may be engaged to undertake studies or provide material for consideration. A clear example is the work undertaken by the Republic of Korea in the S-200 domain, where their contribution has been central to progress across all Committees. The Secretariat acknowledges the importance of this support and sees merit in establishing a formal framework to ensure transparency and good governance for such arrangements in future.

An important comment from Member States and PAP concerned the relationship with the Committees. It has become clear that the Committees are the IALA Centres of Excellence; therefore, the name of the proposed centres has been changed to "IALA Centres of Support," which better reflects their position in the hierarchy and the fact that they support the work of the Organization's organs.

The input received, particularly from Japan, has also highlighted that other international organisations have taken similar approaches. A brief review shows that many IGOs operate with comparable support mechanisms and associated frameworks, indicating that this model is widely regarded as necessary and beneficial.

Of particular interest is the newly established IHO Infrastructure Centre in Busan, Republic of Korea. The Centre's role is to support the development, operation, and management of IHO-standardized products and associated services through a shared infrastructure.

This initiative is considerably more far-reaching than the proposed IALA centres, as the IHO Infrastructure Centre is a permanent and integral part of the IHO Secretariat. Its staff are employed under the IHO Staff Regulations. Oversight of the Centre falls within the responsibilities of the Secretary-General, but is normally delegated to one of the IHO Directors.

For reference, the relevant IHO resolution is provided in input paper C04-8.3.1.4.

4. FRAMEWORK

4.1. What are IALA Centres of Support?

IALA Centres of Support are nationally or multi-nationally funded entities in Member States approved by IALA. They support the Committees and subsidiary bodies and the Secretariat, including the World-Wide Academy, in areas where the formal structure lacks the



competencies or resources that add value and extend the Organization's reach. They provide recognized expertise and experience that benefit the Organization and support IALA's aims and objectives, while avoiding duplication of assets, resources and capabilities already present within the organs of the Organization.

4.2. What do IALA Centres of Support do?

Each centre would focus on specific areas of expertise, strengthening IALA's capabilities. As demonstrated by recent work, such contributions might include data modelling, test and validation tools, product specification development in the S-200 domain and the work on heritage. Likewise, the World-Wide Academy may be able to utilise additional specialised resource to increase its impact, for instance, by delivering education in additional languages.

4.3. Finance and liability

ICoS shall operate on a fully self-funded basis. All costs associated with the establishment, operation and ongoing activities of the ICoS shall be met by the hosting Member State or entity. This shall include, but not be limited to, staffing, facilities, equipment, operational expenditure, administrative costs and all costs arising from interaction with the Secretariat. The designation and operation of the Centre shall not create any financial burden on the Organization or its wider membership.

Furthermore, the host Member State shall assume full and exclusive liability for the Centre's activities. IALA shall be indemnified and held harmless from any claims arising from ICoS outputs, which remain advisory until formally adopted through the Organization's established approval process.

4.4. Governance

IALA Centres of Support would sit within a wider framework aligned with IALA's aims. Good governance and transparency are essential to ensure they function effectively and that any risks are managed appropriately. It is proposed that the General Assembly endorse both the concept and the overarching framework through a resolution, which would empower the Council to establish ICoS where necessary in between General Assemblies.

A published catalogue of needs, prepared by the Secretariat based on input from members, Committees, subsidiary bodies and the Secretariat would allow entities to submit expressions of interest outlining the areas in which they wish to offer support.

Following receipt of expressions of interest, discussions would take place between the Secretariat and the prospective host to develop a detailed proposal for Council's consideration. Council would then determine whether to agree to an entity as an ICoS for a defined period. The following criteria may be taken into account by Council:



- Aims and objectives of the Organization
- Priorities of the Organization
- Alignment with the Catalogue of Needs
- Resources offered by the host
- Geographical distribution
- Resources of the Secretariat

Where Council agreement is reached, the Secretariat would conclude a standard agreement (Annex A).

ICoS designation shall be granted for a fixed term of up to a maximum of 3 years. Six months prior to expiry, the Secretariat will conduct a performance review to evaluate the Centre's contribution and relevance. Based on this, the Council may approve a renewal for a subsequent term or decide to terminate the designation.

Oversight of the Centres of Support would be the responsibility of the Secretariat who would provide structured oversight, facilitate technical liaison with the Committees and PAP and submit reports to Council. Day-to-day liaison and tasking would also rest with the Secretariat resulting in no extra commitment from the membership.

4.5. Output

All outputs (documents, software, data models etc.) produced by ICoS would be submitted to the relevant organs of the Organization for consideration. These outputs would be subject to the same checks and balances as any material included in Committee input papers or publications, ensuring that no single entities views receive disproportionate weight.

5. NEXT STEPS

The Council is invited to consider and discuss the Secretariats proposal.

Subject to Council's agreement, the Secretariat proposes that a small drafting group be established to finalize the concept, the draft agreement with Member States and to develop a draft General Assembly Resolution for consideration at Council 5 in December 2026. The draft agreement in Annex A will also be submitted to the Legal Advisory Panel for consideration.

It is proposed that the group comprise those Member States that have submitted papers or comments on the concept to date, namely China, Denmark, Finland, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Spain.

An initial, non-exhaustive list of potential areas of support is set out below. This list may be further developed into the Catalogue of Needs by the drafting group, informed by needs identified across the Organization:



- S-200 series Product Specifications, including data modelling, test and validation tools and product specification development
- Technological research on Marine Aids to Navigation, including engagement with maritime research institutions
- IALA Maritime Connectivity Platform
- Specialised resources to extend the impact of the World-Wide Academy, including the development and delivery of education in additional languages
- The use of Artificial Intelligence in the IALA domain
- IALA's work on heritage and culture

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the concept of IALA Centres of Support seeks to build on the valuable contributions already provided by individual members while ensuring that future arrangements are governed in a transparent and structured way. These centres would not replace or sit alongside the core expertise of the Committees but would operate in a clearly defined subordinate and supportive role, providing additional capacity where needed and enabling the Organization to progress work that would otherwise be difficult to resource. By formalising this model, IALA can continue to benefit from specialist input while maintaining the primacy of the Committees and the Organisation's established processes.

7. THE COUNCIL IS INVITED TO

Note the information with a view to **approving** the proposal.

**ANNEX A****DRAFT AGREEMENT ON IALA CENTRE OF SUPPORT (ICOS)**

DRAFT Agreement
on IALA Centre of Support (ICoS)
between
The International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation
(the Organization)
and
(Member State) or (Member States)
(the Host) or (the Hosts)
(together the parties)

RECALLING the Resolution of the General Assembly RXXXX on the approval of the concept of IALA Centres of Support to promote the aims and objectives of the Organization;

RECALLING FURTHER the decision of the Council CXXX as delegated by the General Assembly to implement an IALA Centre of Support in the territory of XXX based on the gracious offer from that Member State;

NOTING the need of continuous support to the Secretariat, the Committees and subsidiary bodies of the Organization in fulfilling the aim and objectives of the Organization;
Having agreed as follows:

Article 1 Objective

The objective of this Agreement is to specify details of the implementation of an IALA Centre of Support (ICoS) and define the scope of activities in the territory of (Member State) between the parties as approved by the Council decision XXXX.

Article 2 Scope

- 1 The Host commits to the implementation of an ICoS for the purpose of (include purpose from Council decision) in its territory.
- 2 The implementation includes the complete funding of both premises and staff working for the ICoS.
- 3 The Host also commits to fund additional costs of the Secretariat for overseeing the technical work of the ICoS including e.g. additional tasks of the Secretariat and travel budget for visits to the ICoS.

Article 3 Implementation of ICoS for (XXX Specific task as agreed by the Council)

- 1 The Host commits to implement an ICoS for (include task or tasks)
- 2 The ICoS will be situated in (city/address) and consists of (description of premises/or incorporated in an existing government agency/scientific institution).
- 3 The ICoS will have at least XX full staff member/ XX part time staff member.
- 4 The Host will remain fully responsible for the premises and the employment of ICoS staff members.
- 5 The Host guarantees that the ICoS enjoys complete academic and scientific freedom in that regard.

**Article 4 Budget**

- 1 The Host commits to an annual budget of XXX€ to finance the implementation and operation of the ICoS as included in Article 3. This includes travel costs for staff members of the ICoS to the meetings of Council, the Committees or subsidiary bodies of the Organization as deemed necessary for the technical work of the Organization.
- 2 The Host also commits to finance the cost of the additional administrative tasks of the Secretariat of the Organization overseeing the ICoS and the travel costs for the staff of the Secretariat related to the ICoS subject to a separate agreement between the Organization and the Host.

Article 5 Operational period

The ICoS will commence operations on (date XXX) and will stay in operation for XXX years.

Article 6 Governance and oversight

- 1 The Secretary-General is responsible for the oversight of the ICoS regarding the technical work.
- 2 The Secretary-General tasks the ICoS with specific tasks within the scope of the Council decision in line with Article 3.
- 3 The Secretary-General monitors the progress of these tasks and regularly reports back to the Council, the Committees and subsidiary bodies on the results or progress of the technical tasks according to Article 8.
- 4 The Host remains responsible for all aspects concerning the employment and operation of staff and the premises of the ICoS.

Article 7 Reporting and technical outputs

- 1 The ICoS will deliver progress reports to the Secretariat in line with the schedule for Council.
- 2 The ICoS will submit technical outputs to the respective organs of the Organization for further consideration.
- 3 It remains in the decision of the respective organs of the Organization if or how to make use of the technical outputs or parts of it in their respective work.

Article 8 Point of contact

The ICoS, the Secretariat and the Host name a point of contact who have responsibility for the operation of this agreement and which serve as the main communication for the purpose of this agreement.

Article 9 Intellectual property and use of the IALA logo

- 1 The Organization including its organs may use the work of the ICoS for the aim and objectives of the Organization free of any intellectual property rights.
- 2 The ICoS refrains from using the logo of the Organization without prior approval of the Secretary-General.



Article 10 Liability

- 1 The liability for errors or omissions regarding the results or outputs of the technical work remains with the ICoS.
- 2 The Organization assumes no responsibility for its content.

Article 11 Meetings between the parties and the ICoS

- 1 Meetings between the parties with or without participation of the ICoS may be organized anytime and as considered necessary for the oversight and performance of the ICoS.
- 2 Such a meeting should take place at least once a year.

Article 12 Entry into force and duration

- 1 This Agreement will enter into force on the date of signature by both parties and will remain in force until the ICoS has concluded the operational period as stated in Article 5.
- 2 Upon approval by the Council of the Organization the Agreement might be prolonged for another operational period of the ICoS.
- 3 There is no limitation to the number of consecutive operational periods approved by the Council.

Article 13 Termination

- 1 The Agreement may be terminated by the Organization prematurely in case of a decision by the Council of the Organization.
- 2 The termination will enter into force three months after the decision of the Council or on a specific date included in the Council's decision to terminate.

Article 14 Settlement of disputes

Any dispute that may arise between the parties relating to any matter under this Agreement will be settled amicably between the parties.