

Pre-DIPCON

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2.1 (E) - Co-operation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Speech delivered by the Secretary-General of the IMO

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here and I am grateful for the chance to say a few words to you as you convene this important meeting to prepare for your forthcoming Diplomatic Conference.

I'd like to take this opportunity to look back at how important the contribution of IALA has been both to IMO's work and to the overall objectives that we share, namely improving the safety of maritime navigation and preventing ships from having navigational accidents.

And then to look forward to some of the exciting and potentially game-changing challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Many people assume that IALA and its members are concerned mainly with physical objects – or hardware. And while this is true to a certain extent, what you are really most concerned with is communication – specifically, the provision of accurate and timely information to seafarers who are responsible for the safe navigation of ships, in particular, by providing Vessel Traffic Services.

In the simplest terms, the message from lighthouses and lighthouse authorities to ships has always been "there is danger here". And that remains true today. But if the essential message remains the same, what we see today are huge changes and developments in the technology available to deliver that message.

Until relatively recently, this technology was based almost entirely on light and sound, and had been essentially unchanged for centuries. But, today, new technology has given responsible authorities the potential to transform the way information is supplied to ships about the navigational hazards they may be facing; making it more timely, more accurate and more detailed.

We are now in the age of electronic information. Despite the service-enhancing opportunities of relatively new lighthouse and buoy technology such as LED and laser lights, solar power and remote monitoring by radio or satellite, traditional manned lighthouses are in the process of being phased out all over the world. Indeed, many are looking at a future as heritage sites or tourist attractions.

The challenge that faces responsible authorities today is how best to harness the electronic information and digital resources that already exist or are currently under development. There is no doubt that the potential is there to make a giant leap forward in terms of the quality of information provided to navigators – and, as a result, in the safety of ships and the protection of the environment.

Just consider some of the technology that already exists today. Satellite systems can pinpoint ships' positions to extreme accuracy using differential correction systems – something which IALA played a key part in helping to develop; electronic charts can display those positions in an accurate and meaningful navigational context in real time; radar can provide an overlay to confirm and verify; automatic identification systems, now mandatory for most ships, can transmit detailed information about the ship, its course and speed, its cargo and so on.



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All this information can be made available to ships at sea and, of course, to Vessel Traffic Services ashore. And it doesn't stop there. Meteorological data routing, chart corrections, navigational warnings can all be made available electronically and broadband communication can ensure this kind of information is instantly shared by all.

Many of these ideas and technologies come together in the concept of e-navigation. This is something that IALA and IMO – along with others – have been working on and developing for many years. It is something I have a great interest in – indeed, one of my first engagements as IMO Secretary-General was to speak at the "E-navigation Underway" Conference last February, which was jointly organized by IALA.

As I said at the time, e-navigation is the future; but it has been "the future" for a long time. The challenge now is to turn "the future" into "the present" so that all the benefits and advantages of e-navigation can be fully realized.

IMO, IALA and other stakeholders are working under the e-navigation Strategy Implementation Plan (SIP) to make this happen. IALA has established a dedicated e-Navigation Committee that meets once or twice a year, and organizes regional workshops and international conferences to promote the concept of e-navigation. It provides regular input to IMO on development of the SIP, as well as in many other related areas such as information on reporting and sharing of e-navigation test-bed results, and consideration of shore-side aspects of e-navigation.

As this clearly demonstrates, efforts are underway in many different areas; but the work is focused and centralized at IMO's Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR).

The NCSR Sub-Committee met most recently in March this year, when some good progress was made on e-navigation. Amendments to the MSC resolution on guidelines and criteria for ship reporting were finalized. These include updates to references to other IMO instruments and provisions to encourage the use of automated electronic means of ship reporting. Brazil, Norway and Singapore provided the outcome of their joint test-bed on automated ship reporting.

The Guidelines for the harmonized display of navigation information received via communications equipment are still under development, but the third and last of the e-navigation outputs, i.e. additional modules to the Revised Performance Standards for Integrated Navigation Systems relating to the harmonization of bridge design and display of information, was closed as the issues were dependent on other future developments.

Looking ahead, in order to have an up-to-date roadmap, the NCSR Sub-Committee requested Member States to submit proposals for updating the SIP to its next session, NCSR 5. The SIP has not been updated since NCSR 1 in July 2014. It was also agreed that organizations working on e-navigation should be invited to report on their work and progress to IMO, so as to avoid duplication and to streamline the effort at IMO, as the lead organization for e-navigation.

This work on e-navigation is one of many areas in which collaboration and cooperation between IMO and IALA has proven very productive.

Since the late 1960s, for example, IALA has taken a leading role in the development of IMO recommendations and guidelines relating to VTS.

Other notable examples of IALA's work with IMO include the development of the Automatic Identification System (AIS), the Differential Global Positioning System and the unified Maritime Buoyage System, all of which have made valuable contributions to navigational safety.

Looking beyond technical developments, together with several other organizations, IMO and IALA collaborate in the very successful Joint Capacity Building Group, delivering capacity-building activities to improve the safety of navigation worldwide and thereby support the global Sustainable Development Goals. IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme and IALA World Wide Academy share much in common in this respect, and the work that your Academy does to ensure all

coastal States have the capacity to contribute to an efficient global network of marine aids to navigation and services for the safety of navigation is greatly appreciated.

Ladies and gentlemen, 2016 was another year of considerable progress on many key areas of IMO's work. In time, it will have a considerable positive effect on the environment, the ocean and human health. Looking ahead, in the future we will continue to pursue an ambitious programme. Traditional issues such as the human element, training and education will continue to develop but within new contexts such as enhanced digital connectivity, cyber security and the increasingly urgent search for green technologies.

This year, I am particularly keen to highlight the importance of 'joined-up' maritime strategies across all sectors, and how this can bring great benefits in terms of development, especially in the context of the global Sustainable Development Goals.

With this in mind, IMO's theme for this year is "Connecting Ships, Ports and People" and we will be using it as an opportunity to highlight the value of integration in the maritime and logistics sectors – both from a policy and a practical perspective.

Navigational aids of all kinds are an essential element in the interface between ships and ports and I hope that IALA, too, will see its valuable work in this broader context. The contribution made by IALA to maritime safety is well understood and clearly recognized by IMO – indeed, all the IALA national members are also IMO Member States!

IALA was among the first international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be granted consultative status at the IMO, in 1961 – four years after the Association was formed.

Which means, if my counting is correct, that I must congratulate you on the 60th anniversary this year of the signing of the IALA Constitution: and I understand this year is also the 40th anniversary of the inauguration of IALA's unified Maritime Buoyage System, when the first buoy was established on the Sandgate station (N Cardinal) by a Trinity House tender.

Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a world of change. The potential hazards involved in navigating ships are many – grounding, collision, weather damage and so on – are all still with us. But the traditional hardware designed to prevent them – lights, buoys, channel markers and the like – is being supplemented and gradually superseded by a new generation of information-based tools – VTS, AIS, GPS, electronic charts, vessel reporting schemes, satellite tracking and others. IALA has been leading the maritime community in embracing these changes and in seeking ways to attain the maximum benefit from them.

As you look ahead towards your Diplomatic Conference to determine your future status, I wish you well in your deliberations and hope that you will reach the most appropriate decision. And, whatever the outcome, I look forward to continuing and strengthening the collaboration between our two organizations as we move forward together.

Thank you.