

Report of the first meeting of the IMO NCSR sub-committee

The first meeting of the new IMO NCSR sub-committee (Navigation, Communications, and Search and Rescue), NCSR1, was held at IMO headquarters, London, from Monday 30 June to Friday 4 July. This new sub-committee of the IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) combines the previous COMSAR and NAV sub-committees. IALA was represented at NCSR 1 by the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General, Dr Nick Ward of the GLAs RRNAV, and Dr Alan Grant of Trinity House.

Matters of particular interest to IALA included, e-Navigation, maritime radio-communications and the World Radio Conference in 2015, the review and modernisation of the GMDSS, maritime safety information, the use of AIS, and a mandatory code for ships operating in polar waters.

In his opening address to the meeting, the IMO Secretary-General, Mr Koji Sekimizu, described the reasons for amalgamating the two previous committees into NCSR, and noted that it was the outcome of extensive consideration for maximising efficiency and securing the expected level of outcomes. He particularly noted the work of the new sub-committee on ships routing and ship reporting, on e-Navigation, on the review and modernisation of the GMDSS, on the proposal to recognise Iridium as a service provider for GMDSS, and on matters related to the Polar Code.

Mr Sekimizu emphasised the importance of prompt finalization of the e-Navigation strategy implementation plan in order to start with the implementation of e-navigation as soon as possible, and was sure that both the industry and users are eager to see the real, tangible results of discussions on e-navigation after eight years of consideration. He encouraged interested member states to submit proposals for new planned or unplanned outputs to the Committee in order to progress the e-navigation-related tasks that would need to be performed during the coming years in accordance with the plan.

On the first day of the meeting, Mr C. Salgado of Chile was elected Chairman of the NCSR 1 sub-committee, and Mr R. Lakeman of The Netherlands was elected vice-chairman. On the final day of the meeting Messrs Salgado and Lakeman were re-elected to these positions for 2015.

As the meeting progressed, Working Groups were established to consider matters related to:

- Search and rescue
- Ships' routing and ship reporting
- Technical items

A Drafting Group was created for the finalisation of draft circulars and resolutions.

e-Navigation

The important matter of the development of e-Navigation was addressed by the sub-committee in its consideration of the draft Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP), prepared by the IMO e-Navigation Correspondence Group, which had been led by Norway. IALA had provided considerable input to this draft plan.

The sub-committee agreed to refer the draft SIP, after editorial work, to the MSC for approval. It also established a new Correspondence Group under the coordination of Australia, with the single purpose of consolidating three of the draft guidelines in the SIP (on software quality assurance,

usability, and human-centred design) into a single document. The sub-committee agreed the draft guideline in the SIP on harmonisation of test bed reporting. This draft guideline was a copy of IALA Guideline number 1107, which had been provided by IALA to the IMO Correspondence Group.

Australia, supported by a considerable number of other member states, was concerned to ensure that IMO retained a coordinating role for e-Navigation after 2015, and this discussion is likely to continue during the next MSC meeting in November 2014.

IALA will continue its e-Navigation work at the 15th meeting of its ENAV Committee in October.

Working groups of the Committee have met in August at a shore architecture Workshop in Hamburg, and at IALA HQ in September to progress development of the VDES (VHF data exchange system) communications plan.

IMO-IALA Zero Accident Campaign

The sub-committee noted the proposal to make awards, to VTS services on a regional basis, to be known as the IMO-IALA Zero Accident Campaign, and agreed to forward this to the MSC for endorsement. This campaign was originally suggested by the IMO Secretary-General during the IALA VTS Symposium in Istanbul in 2012, and subsequently developed by IALA and IMO. The IALA VTS Committee will hold its 38th meeting in October.

Satellite communications systems

In response to a proposal from the USA, the sub-committee discussed the Iridium satellite communications system as a possible service provider for GMDSS. A large number of delegations spoke in favour of the proposal, but the sub-committee noted that some technical questions had been raised. It was decided that the MSC should be asked to appoint a suitable body to carry out the technical and operational evaluation necessary, and that the report of this body would be received by the NCSR sub-committee, with the eventual outcome of a satisfactory report being an MSC resolution recognising the new Maritime Mobile Satellite Services provider.

Satellite positioning systems

The BeiDou Satellite system (BDS) was agreed by the sub-committee as a suitable future component of the WWRNS (World Wide radio Navigation System), and the MSC will consider this at its next meeting, with a view to a draft resolution being put to the next IMO Assembly. The sub-committee noted that India would soon provide information on its satellite navigation system called “GAGAN”.

Shipboard navigation receivers

IALA was a co-sponsor, with Australia, France, Korea, USA, and CIRM, of a draft performance standard for a multi-system shipboard navigation receiver. The proposal received a positive response. Additional papers from China and the European Space Agency proposed minor changes, and after consideration it was determined that interested states and organisations would cooperate to submit a revised draft to NCSR 2. IALA offered to help coordinate this work.

LRIT

The European Commission introduced a paper describing its experience over five years, noted that data use was lower than envisaged when the system was established, and suggesting that revision of the LRIT should be made. The subsequent discussion included system costs, the need for audits, the

frequency of ship transmissions, and whether satellite-received AIS could be used. The need for a review of the LRIT system was supported a number of states and since this would be a policy matter, member states were invited to submit proposals to the MSC.

Polar code

The sub-committee carried out work on specific parts of the draft Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code), namely on chapter 10 of the draft (Safety of Navigation) and chapter 11 of the draft (Communication). The draft chapter 10 of the Polar Code now includes requirements related to visually detecting ice at night, reception and display of current ice information, carrying of two, separated, echo sounder transducers, and the carrying of two non-magnetic means of determining heading.

Other topics

Other matters discussed at NCSR1 included ship routing and ship reporting, ECDIS, guidelines for the on-board operational use of AIS, modernisation of the GMDSS, and search and rescue.