VTS40 Input.paper

Agenda item 8

Author(s) / Submitter(s) Secretariat

IALA and irregular mixed migration

# Summary

Recent international events and initiatives on the growing irregular mixed migration issue show that cooperation between governments and the relevant international organizations is vital. One of the difficulties with this matter is the early identification and subsequent monitoring of the vessels or boats involved in this activity.

At a conference on irregular mixed migration in Istanbul 5 September 2015 it was among other discussed what role IALA could play in this area, and the Secretary-General (SG) mentioned that IALA would review the recommendations and guidelines related to this subject.

Representatives from the Italian and Turkish Coast Guard made it clear that irregular mixed migration is also a huge Search and Rescue (SAR) operation that stretches the resources to the maximum extent.

## Purpose of the document

The VTS Committee is requested to consider the possibilities for VTS to play a more important role in dealing with irregular mixed migration for instance by reviewing IALA Guideline No. 1102 VTS on Interaction with Allied or Other Services and IALA Recommendation V-127 on Operational Procedures for VTS .

# Background/Discussion

At a recent conference on irregular mixed migration in Istanbul it was discussed what role VTS can play in migration measures and operations and the potential impact of new e-Navigation technology on this same matter. VTS, with its technical and operational capabilities and operator experience, can play an important role in supporting other concerned authorities and agencies when vessels engaged in illegal immigration enter an area where a VTS is capable of identification and tracking.

Today’s sensor and computer technology improves our technical and operational capabilities in identification of vessels or boats used for irregular mixed migration and the recognition of their anomalous behaviours, but existing harbour VTS systems are generally not intended, nor designed and operated, for detection of smaller craft at great distances. Therefore early identification will need a joint effort by all concerned authorities and agencies.

The SG also mentioned that IALA-net could enhance the Coastal States capabilities in Maritime Awareness if more countries joined the net especially in the Mediterranean, where almost all coastal states are members of IALA.

It is likely that the ability and capabilities of authorities and stakeholders, including VTS will be enhanced in the near future by e-Navigation and harmonized collection, integration, analysis and exchange marine data and information.

E-navigation might also play a role introducing MSPs that could make SAR operations more efficient.

An inter-agency high-level meeting to address unsafe mixed migration by sea took place at IMO Headquarters on 4 and 5 March 2015. The subject was also discussed during MSC 95 in April 2015. The relevant parts of the two reports are attached.

It was stated that in 2014 over 3,000 migrants death were reported in the Mediterranean alone as a result of unsafe, irregular and illegal sea passages. Moreover, in 2014, over 700 merchant vessels were diverted from their routes in order to recover and rescue migrants crossing the Mediterranean.

Seven proposals were put forward by the various Member States, NGOs and agencies attending the meeting, among other to:

* enhance port and coastal States monitoring, including monitoring ships in transit;
* develop joint databases on migrant incidents and on suspected smuggler vessels; and
* ensure closer cooperation between States of origin, transit and destination, and other relevant actors including flag state Administrations, port authorities and coast guards of countries where small craft or ships with migrants on board may depart on sea passages.

VTS is not directly mentioned, but it is clear that VTS could be covered by the proposal.

# References

1. MSC 95/21/4/Rev.1 Outcome of the Inter-agency High-level meeting to address unsafe mixed migration by sea.
2. Report of the MSC on its 95 meeting (page 80 – 83)
3. IALA Guideline 1102 on VTS Interaction with Allied or Other Services, edition 1 Dec 2013

# Action requested of the Committee

# The Committee is requested to;

# consider the possibilities for VTS to play a more important role in dealing with irregular mixed migration by sea for instance by reviewing IALA Guideline 1102 on VTS Interaction with Allied or Other Services; and

# consider the expanding role of VTS on recognition, monitoring and action regarding abnormal behaviour of the vessels and unidentified sea objects detected while reviewing IALA Recommendation V-127 on Operational Procedures for VTS.

# Appendix

References 1 and 2.