

# DRAFT REVISED ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON GUIDELINES FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES

# (Input to VTS47)

**THE ASSEMBLY**,

**RECALLING** Article 28(b) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization (IMO) concerning the functions of the Committee,

**RECALLING ALSO** Article 15(j) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization concerning the functions of the Assembly in relation to regulations and guidelines concerning maritime safety and the prevention and control of marine pollution from ships,

**BEARING IN MIND** the responsibility of Governments for the safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment in areas under their jurisdiction,

**BEING AWARE** that vessel traffic services are provided worldwide and make a valuable contribution to safety of navigation, improved efficiency of traffic flow and the protection of the marine environment,

**RECOGNIZING** that various organizational, operational and technological developments have taken place globally in a rapidly changing maritime domain since the adoption in 1997 of resolution A.857(20) entitled *Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services* and the revision of the current Guidelines became necessary,

**RECOGNIZING ALSO** that the level of safety and efficiency in the movement of maritime traffic within an area covered by a vessel traffic service is dependent upon close cooperation between those operating the vessel traffic service and participating ships,

**RECOGNIZING FURTHER** that the use of differing procedures may cause confusion to ship masters moving from one vessel traffic service area to another and therefore vessel traffic services should be established and operated in a harmonized manner and in accordance with internationally approved guidelines,

**NOTING** that the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) has contributed significantly to the development of internationally harmonized guidance for vessel traffic services,

**HAVING CONSIDERED** the recommendation made by the Maritime Safety Committee at its [102nd] session,

1. **ADOPTS** the revised *Guidelines for vessel traffic services* set out in the annex to the present resolution;

2. **INVITES** Governments to take account of the annexed Guidelines when planning, implementing and operating a vessel traffic service in accordance with SOLAS regulation V/12;

3. **RECOMMENDS** Governments to encourage masters of ships navigating in an area for which a vessel traffic service is provided to make use of such a service;

4. **ENCOURAGES** Governments that operate vessel traffic services to consider technical and other developments recognized by the Organization relating to vessel traffic services;

5. **REQUESTS** the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of all Contracting Governments to the SOLAS Convention and to Members of the Organization which are not Contracting Governments to the Convention;

6. **AUTHORIZES** the Maritime Safety Committee to keep the annexed Guidelines under review and amend them, as appropriate;

7. **REVOKES** resolution A.857(20).

**ANNEX**

**GUIDELINES FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES**

**1 INTRODUCTION**

1.1 These Guidelines are associated with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS) regulation V/12 and should be complied with when planning, implementing and operating a vessel traffic service under national law**.**

1.2 IMO, in its role in regulating the planning, implementation and operation of vessel traffic services, is responsible for providing guidance on its establishment, operation, qualification and training. This includes a leadership role in providing a forum and framework for cooperation among Governments to facilitate the consistent and harmonized delivery of vessel traffic services worldwide.

1.3 IALA is recognized as an important contributor to IMO’s role and responsibilities relating to vessel traffic services.

1.4 In complying with these Guidelines Governments should take account of applicable IMO instruments and refer to the relevant international guidance prepared and published by appropriate international organizations.

**2 DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS**

The following terms are used in connection with a vessel traffic service:

2.1 *Vessel traffic service (VTS)* means a service implemented by a Government with the capability to interact with vessel traffic and respond to developing situations within a vessel traffic service area to improve the safety and efficiency of navigation, safety of life at sea and to support the protection of the environment.

2.2 *Competent authority* means the authority made legally responsible by the Government for vessel traffic services.

2.3 *VTS provider* means the organization or entity legally empowered by the Government or Competent authority for the provision of a vessel traffic service.

2.4 *VTS area* means the delineated, formally declared area for which the vessel traffic service provider is legally empowered to deliver a vessel traffic service.

2.5 *VTS personnel* means persons performing tasks associated with vessel traffic services, trained in vessel traffic service operations and holding qualifications as appropriate.

2.6 *Allied services* means services other than VTS involved in the safe and efficient passage of a vessel through a VTS area, such as pilotage, tugs and linesman.

2.7 *Participating ship* means a ship [legally] required to participate with the VTS.

**3 REGULATORY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

3.1 Under the general provisions of treaty law and of IMO conventions, Contracting Governments are responsible for promulgating laws and regulations and for taking all other steps which may be necessary to give those instruments full and complete effect.

3.2 Vessel traffic services are recognized internationally as a navigational safety measure through SOLAS regulation V/12.

3.3 The establishment of a VTS is dependent on national law, recognizing factors such as the volume of traffic, degree of risk, geographic and environmental conditions.

3.4 A VTS may be established beyond the territorial seas of a coastal State on the basis of voluntary participation. Such a VTS may be established in association with an IMO adopted ships’ routeing system or mandatory ship reporting system, in accordance with SOLAS regulations V/10 and V/11, respectively.

3.5 Contracting Governments should ensure that ships flying their flag comply with the requirements of vessel traffic services. Those Contracting Governments which have received information of an alleged violation of a VTS by a ship flying their flag should provide the Government which has reported the offence with details of any appropriate action taken.

**4 VTS RESPONSIBILITIES**

**4.1 [Contracting] Governments**

The [Contracting] Government should:

.1 [promulgate laws and regulations to] establish a legal basis for VTS that gives effect to international law and SOLAS regulation V/12;

.2 appoint and authorize a competent authority for VTS;

.3 take appropriate action against a ship flying its flag that is reported not to have complied with the provisions of a VTS; and

.4 take account of future technical and other developments recognized by the Organization relating to VTS.

**4.2 Competent authority for VTS**

The Competent authority should:

.1 establish a regulatory framework for establishing and operating VTSs in accordance with relevant international conventions and IMO instruments, IALA standards and national law;

.2 authorize a VTS provider to operate a VTS within a delineated VTS area in accordance with national and international law;

.3 ensure that VTS training and certification is accredited and approved in accordance with the IALA standards; and

.4 establish a compliance and enforcement framework with respect to violations of VTS regulatory requirements.

**4.3 VTS provider**

The VTS provider should:

.1 ensure the VTS conforms with national law and the regulatory framework set by the Competent authority for VTS;

.2 set operational objectives for the VTS that are consistent with improving the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and protection of the environment. The objectives set should be routinely evaluated to demonstrate they are being achieved;

.3 ensure that appropriate equipment, systems and facilities are provided;

.4 ensure that a VTS is adequately staffed and that VTS personnel are appropriately trained and qualified; and

.5 ensure that information regarding requirements and procedures of the VTS and the categories of vessels required to participate in the VTS are promulgated in appropriate nautical publications.

**5 PURPOSE OF A VTS**

5.1 The purpose of vessel traffic services is to contribute to safety of life at sea, safety and efficiency of navigation and the protection of the marine environment within the VTS area by mitigating the development of unsafe situations through:

.1 The provision of timely and relevant information on factors that may influence the ship's movements and assist on-board decision making. This may include:

.1 position, identity, intention and movements of ships;

.2 maritime safety information;

.3 limitations of ships in the VTS area that may impose restrictions on the navigation of other ships (e.g. manoeuvrability), or any other potential hindrances;

.4 other information such as reporting formalities and ISPS International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) code details; and

.5 support to, and cooperation with, allied services.

.2 The monitoring and management of traffic to ensure the safety and efficiency of ship movements. This may include:

.1 forward planning of ship movements;

.2 organizing vessels underway;

.3 organizing space allocation;

.4 establishing a system of traffic clearances;

.5 establishing a system of voyage or passage plans;

.6 providing route advice; and

.7 ensuring compliance with and enforcement of regulatory provisions for which they are empowered.

.3 Responding to developing unsafe situations, which may include:

.1 a ship unsure of its route or position;

.2 a ship deviating from the route;

.3 a ship requiring guidance to an anchoring position;

.4 a ship that has defects or deficiencies, such as navigation or manoeuvring equipment failure;

.5 severe meteorological conditions (e.g. low visibility, strong winds);

.6 a ship at risk of grounding or collision; and

.7 emergency response or support to emergency services.

5.2 To achieve its purpose, a VTS should provide information or issue advice, warnings and instructions as deemed necessary.

**6 RESPONSIBILITIES OF Participating ships**

6.1 In a VTS area, participating ships should:

.1 provide reports or information required by the VTS;

.2 take into account the information provided, or advice and warnings issued, by the VTS; and

.3 comply with the requirements and instructions given to the ship by the VTS unless contradictory safety reasons exist.

6.2 Ships [and vessels] not designated as participating ships may take part in a VTS subject to complying with the requirements of the VTS and any guidance issued by the VTS provider.

6.3 Masters may be required to report on their actions should they decide to disregard any instruction given by a VTS.

**7 GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

7.1 Nothing in these Guidelines change the Master’s ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the operation of the vessel including the responsibility for safe navigation.

7.2 VTS communications should be timely, clear, concise and unambiguous.

7.3 VTS operates within a comprehensive environment in which ships, ports, allied services and other organizations fulfil their respective roles, as appropriate.

7.4 Effective harmonized data exchange and information sharing is fundamental to overall operational efficiency and safety.

8 **QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING**

A major factor in the operation of a VTS is the competence of its VTS personnel. It is recommended that Governments use the IALA standards for training and certification of VTS personnel.

**9 IALA STANDARDS**

To achieve worldwide harmonization of VTS, IALA publishes standards and associated recommendations, guidelines and model courses specifically related to the establishment and operation of VTS. These are suitable for direct use and citation by parties involved in VTS.

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| **Note**: Some editorial and formatting changes have been made and some remain to be completed to ensure compliance with the IMO Style Guide. |