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Agenda item [[1]](#footnote-2) 6.0

Technical Domain / Task Number 2 7.1.7 MRN documentation

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Inter-committee/inter-sessional task group on MRN

Report of MRN task group

# Summary

The inter-committee/inter-sessional task group on MRN had two online meetings on 26 June 2025 and 4 September 2025 to discuss the way forward on MRN documentation. Input from various committees as well as the pending submission to IMO were discussed.

This paper is to be considered as an **input paper** for the ARM committee to proceed with modification of the existing guidelines on MRN.

This paper may be considered **informational** for the VTS, DTEC and ENG committees.

## Purpose of the document

This document reports on the discussions within the inter-committee/inter-sessional task group on MRN (ARM task 7.1.7)

## Related documents

The following documents were discussed and considered during the meetings:

* Guideline G1143
* Guideline G1164
* ARM19-8.4.4 Liaison note ARM on MRN v1.2 (DTEC3-11.2.1.2).docx
* ARM19-8.4.4.1 Draft Input to NCSR on Use of MRN Circular (DTEC3-11.2.1.2.1).docx
* ARM19-8.4.4.2 Draft Circular to MSC on Harmonisation of identifiers using MRN (DTEC3-11.2.1.2.2).docx
* ARM19-8.4.6 Liaison Note to ARM on input paper to NCSR on MRN v1 (VTS56-12.3.2).docx
* ARM19-11.3.4 Liaison note to PAP and all committees on MRN intersessional work.docx
* ARM20-8.4.1 Canadian MRN Guidance-March-2025.docx
* ARM20-8.4.1.1 DRAFT\_Canadian MRN Guidance\_March 19 2025.pdf
* ARM20-8.4.7 Liaison note to ARM on MRN Intersessional work (DTEC4-15.2.1).docx

# Discussion

The task group discussed the following topics:

## Use of ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 in OID

G1164 states:

*OIDs must not use ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 country codes as written. This does not prevent any particular sequence of letters that may be an ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 code to be used as part of an OID. For instance, “nam” cannot be an OID as it is an existing ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 code, but “namea” could be requested and used as an OID.*

Despite this, 2 OID’s have been assigned as an OID, “kor” and “fin”. See <https://www.iala.int/technical/data-modelling-mrn/>.

The rationale behind the limitation in the guideline is that it is often difficult to determine which organisation is to be considered a national authority and should, as a result, “own” the country code as an OID in the MRN.

The task group recognises that revoking the assignments of the alpha-3 codes is not feasible, as the registered organisations are likely already in the process of implementation. Furthermore, it is not possible to fully harmonise all namespaces under the OID of international organisations. Therefore, national authorities will need to maintain their own OIDs and ensure their proper use.

The task group also recognises that G1164 was developed in the period when IALA was an NGO. Now that IALA, as the organisation responsible for assignment of OID’s, is now an IGO, it can better determine if an organisation requesting an OID is representing a national member. For that reason, the task group suggests to remove the limitation of assigning ISO 3166-1 alpha-3 country codes as OID from the guideline.

## Responsibilities of the IALA secretariat

It was reconfirmed that there are 2 distinct responsibilities of the IALA secretariat in regards to MRN;

1. Management of the IALA OID and namespace
2. Assignment of OID’s to organisations (or national members)

The task group further discussed this and concluded that the guidelines should better reflect these roles. Responsibility 1 is described in G1143 and responsibility 2 is described in G1164.

G1143 could be considered the “internal IALA handbook” for managing the IALA namespace.

G1164 is the primary resource for organisations implementing MRN and/or an own namespace and recommends to develop an own guideline where G1143 can be used as an example.

At this point, the task group feels that this distinction is not clear in the 2 guidelines and that they should be updated accordingly. It is suggested that an annex will be added to G1164 to be used as a template for developing a guideline for organisations implementing their own namespace.

It was noted that G1143 is referenced as the “main guideline on MRN” in many IALA-internal and external documents and for that it may be good to retain this identification as such. With respect to the above, it may be needed to partly swap the contents of G1143 and G1164.

## Incorporation of existing numbering schemes in MRN

A question from the VTS committee was how to incorporate an existing numbering scheme in MRN. More concrete, [EuRIS](https://www.eurisportal.eu/?KL=en) was used as an example.

The simple answer is that an MRN OID could be registered for this purpose, for example urn:mrn:***euris***:, which allows to include existing databases or schemes to put in this namespace.

This does, however, introduce the risk of duplicate MRN’s leading to the next topic.

The matter was not discussed with the person(s) asking the question in the VTS committee during the inter-sessional meetings

## Uniqueness and multiple MRNs for the same resource

The task group identified a potential issue when multiple MRN’s are assigned to the same resource.

While the existing guidance allows multiple MRN’s to be assigned to the same resource, there is no mechanism to handle identification of these. In extreme situations there may be 10 MRN’s in different namespaces for the same resource. If these are all used in different contexts, for example on nautical charts, in manuals, in MCP, on the ECDIS and in a mariner’s handbook, this will lead to confusion and potentially safety risks if i.e. an AtoN cannot be identified by a mariner.

There have been discussions on the creation of a “Maritime Resource Register” to address this issue. Also the MCP may be able to (partly) address it.

The conclusion in the task group was that there is currently no solution that solves this risk.

It was, however, also noted that it may not be a risk at all as different MRN namespaces are implemented for different purposes. For instance: a lighthouse may have an MRN, but also a street address, so 2 different identifiers. It is clear that the MRN will be used on nautical maps and the street address will be used by the postal services and that these do not interfere. Multiple MRN’s may exist in an analogue situation without really causing any confusion or risk.

The recommendation of the task group is to keep this risk in mind during further MRN development and reconsider a “Maritime Resource Register” again when there are concrete examples.

## Submission to IMO

After updating the guidelines, the MRN is to be submitted to IMO. There are already 2 concept documents for that. There is, however, some confusion on the way the submission should be performed (reference LN DTEC3-11.2.1.2 (output) / ARM19-8.4.4 (input)).

This paper should provide clear and concise examples, address all of the questions raised above, and present best practices to guide implementation.

## Other notes

The task group noted the following:

IHO NIPWG is working on the MRN guidelines. There is quite a bit of documentation on the IHO Portal that may be beneficial for the future work of IALA on MRN.

The Canadian guidance (ARM20-8.4.1.1) states that IALA MRN syntax is urn:mrn:OID:OSS:OSNID:OSNS where actually G1143 defines it as urn:mrn:OID:OSS where OSS then is OSNID:OSNS making the syntax shortform be urm:mrn:OID:OSNID:OSS and thus the IALA and IHO MRN syntax is identical. This may need to be corrected in the Canadian guidance.

The question was raised if the MRN is included in the S-201 documentation at this moment, and if not, it may be considered to include it.

# Action requested of the Committee

The ARM Committee is requested to:

1. Consider the conclusions and recommendations in this document as input for revision of guidelines G1143 and G1164;
2. Revise the draft submission of the MRN to IMO according to the revised guidelines and submit it to IMO after coordination with the IMO secretariat.

The other committees are requested to take note of the discussion within the task group.

1. Leave open if uncertain [↑](#footnote-ref-2)