

Agenda item 13 – INTERNATIONAL

13.1 IMO

13.1.1 Documents to note

13.1.1-1 COMSAR 17

Report by the IALA Secretariat

The 17th meeting of the IMO COMSAR Sub-Committee to place at IMO Headquarters in London from 21 to 25 January 2013. IALA was represented by the Deputy Secretary General.

In order to carry out its work, the Sub-Committee established working and drafting groups covering technical matters related to maritime communications, Search and Rescue (SAR), e-Navigation and LRIT, and the development of a mandatory Polar Code.

The meeting considered the need for changes to IMO resolutions A.705(17) and A.706(17) which are concerned with the Promulgation of Maritime Safety Information and A.706(17), and the World-Wide Navigational Warning Service. The IMO Secretariat will, as a result, prepare draft revisions of these resolutions for submission to MSC 92 later in the year.

VHF Data Exchange (VDE)

Of particular interest to IALA was the consideration by COMSAR 17 of matters related to IALA's work on VHF data exchange (VDE). Specifically the meeting examined the necessity for additional frequencies for AIS arising from increasing loading of the two AIS frequencies AIS1 and AIS2, and the possibility of a satellite segment within VDE. These two matters were part of IMO's ongoing preparation for the 2015 World radio Conference, WRC-15. Information provided by Japan on VDL loading supported the need for additional frequencies. ESA provided information on possible use of satellite communications to provide a downlink within VDE, and this paper complemented a similar input paper to the meeting of ITU WP5b in November 2012. These matters will likely be taken further at the meeting of the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group to be held in London from 14 to 18 October 2013.

IALA continued its work on developing the IALA VDE plan at an inter-session meeting of the AIS and Communications Working Group of the IALA e-Navigation Committee in Sarasota, USA, during the week commencing 25 March and at the IALA e-Navigation Committee meeting of March 2013.

Search and Rescue

An important SAR matter discussed was the sale of non-original batteries for use in COSPAS-SARSAT 406 MHz EPIRBs. These non-original batteries typically do not meet the life requirements of a 406 MHz EPIRB and thus carry potential for causing loss of life in a SAR event. The Sub-Committee invited Member Governments to take note of this problem

and consider national measures to address the matter. It also invited COSPAS-SARSAT to explore means of reducing energy use and maximising battery service life.

Also in connection with COSPAS-SARSAT beacons, the Sub-Committee endorsed a recommendation from the SAR Working Group that a simplified beacon coding system for the next generation beacons should include potential use of the country code, a TAC code, and the serial number as a beacon unique ID. This would be subject to the MMSI number also being broadcast.

Consideration was given by the meeting of other SAR-related matters, including the ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group on the Harmonisation of Aeronautical and Maritime SAR, Mass Rescue Operations, development of the global SAR plan, the establishment of MRCCs in Central America, SAR training, and recovery techniques.

Devices using AIS technology

Closely related to IALA's work on AIS technology and use was consideration by the Sub-Committee of Man Overboard (MOB) and similar devices using AIS technology. This matter was referred by the Sub-Committee to the ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group for development of detailed guidance for Administrations on how to respond to reports of an AIS-SART signal (including search planning) and for the Joint Working Group to develop clarifications and recommendations for possible actions by Administrations. Additionally, the Sub-Committee endorsed a draft SN.1 Circular on the display of AIS-SART, AIS MOB, and AIS-EPIRB devices and invited the MSC to approve this document. Further, the Sub-Committee invited Member Governments to submit proposals on devices using AIS technology to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee and to submit proposals on display symbols for AIS-SART, AIS MOB, and EPIRB-AIS devices to NAV 59 or to the Correspondence Group on this matter established by NAV 58. This Correspondence Group is chaired by Commander Hideki Noguchi of the Japan Coast Guard who is well known for his work in IALA Committees.

e-Navigation

The Sub-Committee considered the possible use of the LRIT shore infrastructure as a platform for the exchange of e-Navigation between Administrations. Some delegations supported this idea, but other delegations were of the view that the Sub-Committee should proceed with caution and that the adding of additional functions to the LRIT shore infrastructure might adversely affect the functioning of its primary purpose.

Draft Polar Code

IMO Committees are presently working on a draft mandatory code for ships operating on polar waters. The COMSAR Sub-Committee, at this meeting, continued its work on a contribution to this code. Matters discussed included tracking, equipment for locating on each survival craft, design temperatures for communications equipment, "expected maximum time to rescue", and the use of AIS and LRIT. After consideration by, and advice from, Technical and SAR Working Groups, the Sub-Committee established a drafting group to prepare advice to be sent to the IMO DE Sub-Committee (Ship Design and Equipment).

The advice to be sent by COMSAR to the DE Sub-Committee includes the following points.

- The existing LRIT system can be used in polar waters and so no additional requirements for tracking of ships was considered necessary
- Survival craft do not require tracking systems, but do need locating systems to allow SAR assets to find them

Restructuring of Sub-Committees

The IMO Council, 109th Session in November 2012, endorsed in principle, a restructuring of IMO's Sub-Committees, in order to better address the technical and operational issues

covered by IMO regulations, as part of a review and reform process initiated by Secretary-General Mr. Koji Sekimizu aimed at ensuring the Organization meets current challenges as a forward-looking, efficient and cost-conscious Organization.

The Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications, Search and Rescue (COMSAR) and the Sub-Committee on Navigation (NAV) will be amalgamated, into a combined single sub-committee, reflecting the fact that there is increasing commonality in much of the work of COMSAR and NAV, relating to the operation of IT-based equipment, its use and its integration, including e-Navigation.

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