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| From: VTS Committee | PAP58-2.3.3  (VTS57-12.1.2) |
| To: PAP | 27 March 2025 |

LIAISON NOTE

Update on additional guidance on interaction between VTS and participating ships

# INTRODUCTION

At Transitional Council 03 the VTS Committee’s draft *Guideline on VTS interaction with a mix of conventional, automated and autonomous ships* completed at VTS56, as part of the VTS Committee’s 2025 - 2027 Work Programme, was not approved following comment from Councilors suggesting a better approach would be to have one combined guideline with annexes instead of one guideline per committee.

The Council decided to send the Guideline back to VTS Committee for further work and then to PAP, MASS Task Force for further review.

# BACKGROUND

Since the start of work period 2018 - 2022 the VTS Committee had a task to *Develop a Guideline on the implications of maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS) from a VTS perspective* (Task 1.2.5). The work on this task began at VTS50 in March 2021 and continuous work on the task has been done until now, although the task number was changed to 1.1.3 with the 2023 - 2027 Work Programme. In this work there has been developments of guiding principles, a discussion paper, as well as a list of case studies. At VTS54 it was concluded that no further work was required on the discussion paper and that focus should be directed to preparing a *Guideline on Provision of VTS to Autonomous and Conventional Ships*. In order to recognize the importance of interaction, situational awareness and management when there is mixed traffic in a VTS area, the title was changed at VTS55 to *VTS Interaction with a Mix of Conventional, Automized and Autonomous Ships*.

The VTS Committee has also, through active participation in the MASS Task Force since its establishment in August 2021, supported and contributed to the development of an IALA Recommendation and Guideline for MASS.

The VTS Committee has communicated to the MASS Task Force the compelling need for guidance to assist VTS providers ensuring the safety of navigation in the VTS area with increasing interaction in a mixed environment of automated and autonomous functions on-board the participating ships.

# DISCUSSION

VTS Committee participants noted with concern the outcome of TC03 at VTS57 and that there were no objection to the content but to formalities. Furthermore, drafts of the proposed guideline had been forwarded to PAP, MASS Task Force and the other IALA committees in recent times, mentioning in particular the need for additional guidance for achieving appropriate situational awareness, interaction and systems processes and procedures in this changing environment.

Following the Council’s decision, and PAP’s request to pause any work on MASS until the overarching IALA Recommendation on MASS has been agreed, the VTS Committee suspended further work on MASS at VTS57.

The Committee is of the view that there is a critical need for additional guidance on interaction to ensure VTS continues to achieve its purpose as prescribed by the IMO and their regulatory responsibilities under national law.

Noting this, at VTS57, the Committee commenced preparations of new guidance material on interaction between VTS and participating ships to assist VTS providers:

* Facilitate planning for changes that may be required to procedures, business rules, communications etc. with increasing mix of traffic in the VTS area.
* Facilitate understanding emerging functional requirements that may need to be considered for existing Decision Support Tools, or when considering procurement processes for a new Decision Support Tool.
* Ensure interaction continues to be undertaken in a manner that ensures VTS achieves its purpose of contributing to the safety of life at sea, improves the safety and efficiency of navigation and supports the protection of the environment within a VTS area by mitigating the development of unsafe situations through:
  + providing timely and relevant information on factors that may influence ship movements and assist onboard decision-making.
  + monitoring and managing ship traffic to ensure the safety and efficiency of ship movements.
  + responding to developing unsafe situations.

# ACTION REQUESTED

PAP is invited to note the information above.