



MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Aids to Navigation in Arctic Waters

**Submitted by the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and
Lighthouse Authorities (IALA)**

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document provides information on a meeting organized by IALA with the five countries responsible for marking the Arctic shipping routes, Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States, in order to find the best way forward for achieving an internationally agreed system for providing the necessary Aids to Navigation in Arctic areas. The Resolution adopted by the five countries in conclusion of the meeting is annexed. The issues raised in the document should also be considered in relation to the development of a Code for ships operating in Polar waters

Strategic direction: 5

High-level action: 5.1

Planned output: 5.1.3

Action to be taken: Paragraph 9

Related document: MSC 86/26, paragraph 23.32

1 The conditions for maritime navigation in the Arctic areas are changing fast and can be expected to lead to new seasonal shipping routes opening due to the reduction in the area covered by ice during the summer months.

2 In Arctic waters, maritime infrastructure and services for prevention of incidents and accidents are especially important due to the potential serious consequences of an incident in remote waters with limited infrastructure for SAR operations and combating of oil spills.

3 However, in Arctic areas it is difficult to obtain reliable systems based on traditional Aids to Navigation due to the extreme distances, sea ice and climate. Buoys and other installations may be damaged and/or moved by ice, etc. Furthermore, shipping routes have to be flexible and able to be moved at short notice to take into account the shifting weather and ice conditions and local hydrographical conditions.

4 To establish safe and efficient maritime transport corridors in Arctic waters there is therefore a need to develop and implement electronic maritime navigation, communication and traffic monitoring infrastructure, including i.a. radio-navigation aids, GNSS, AIS satellite. Development of virtual aids to navigation is one solution that should be given strong consideration.

5 Whatever solutions will be adopted, it is of utmost importance that new methods to mark safe waterways are internationally coordinated and agreed in order for mariners to experience one single internationally agreed system. On this background, IALA organized a fact-finding meeting for the five countries responsible for marking the Arctic shipping routes, Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States, in order to identify the best way forward for achieving an internationally agreed system for providing the necessary Aids to Navigation in Arctic areas.

6 All the five countries responded positively to the IALA initiative and the meeting was held at IALA headquarters in St Germain-en-Laye, from 10 to 12 February 2010, and was attended by 23 delegates, including an observer from IHO.

7 The meeting was seen as a first step towards the development of a common approach to addressing the risks inherent in the expansion of maritime traffic in Arctic waters. The five countries concerned adopted a Resolution and requested IALA to forward it to IMO and to the Arctic Council. It was also agreed that IALA will provide a forum for subsequent discussions relevant to safety of navigation issues in Arctic waters.

8 There was general agreement that the meeting had been both fruitful and timely and that it would be useful for the forum to meet at least annually.

Action requested of the Committee

9 The Committee is invited to note the information provided above as well as the Resolution annexed to the present document and take action as appropriate.

ANNEX

Resolution of the meeting between Canada, Denmark, Norway, Russian Federation, the United States of America and IALA on 10-12 February 2010

THE SAID NATIONS AND IALA:

RECALLING the national responsibility under the SOLAS Convention, Chapter V, for Safety of Navigation and the MARPOL Convention for the protection of the marine environment;

RECOGNISING that the conditions for marine navigation in the Arctic are changing rapidly and can be expected to lead to new seasonal shipping routes opening as a result of the reduction in the area covered by sea ice during the summer months;

RECOGNISING ALSO that due to the extreme distances involved as well as ice and climate conditions in the Arctic, it is difficult to maintain a reliable, conventional Aids to Navigation system, given that buoys and other installations may be damaged and/or moved by ice etc.;

RECOGNISING FURTHER the potential consequences of a serious incident in remote waters with little or no maritime infrastructure and limited hydrographic services;

NOTING that shipping routes need to be flexible and be capable of being moved at short notice, taking into account ice and local hydrographic and meteorological conditions;

NOTING ALSO that development of virtual aids to navigation should be given strong consideration as an adjunct to conventional aids to navigation for use in Arctic waters;

NOTING FURTHER that provision of an effective virtual aids to navigation system depends on adequate hydrographic services as well as the provision of appropriate Maritime Safety Information systems and communications infrastructure;

CONSIDERING that one of the aims of IALA is to foster the safe, economic and efficient movement of vessels and the protection of the marine environment through the improvement and harmonisation of aids to navigation and Vessel Traffic Services;

TAKING INTO ACCOUNT the outcome of the meeting between the said nations and IALA held from 10 to 12 February 2010;

AGREE that it is necessary to adopt a harmonised approach in addressing current and future risk, as described above, in Arctic waters;

ENVISION that the said nations should, in Arctic waters, take the opportunity to:

- initiate the establishment of a common Arctic ship reporting and data sharing system;
- develop a common approach to marine traffic awareness and monitoring;
- move towards a single, harmonised system of marine aids to navigation;
- anticipate and mitigate risk to maritime traffic and the marine environment;

RECOMMEND that, for Arctic waters, IALA support the said nations in relation to:

- enhancing marine traffic awareness and providing a forum for those establishing ship reporting and data sharing systems;
- the marking of polar routes and development of virtual aids to navigation;
- the application of risk management methodology; and
- the importance of improving hydrographic services in the region.
