



## Note by the Secretariat

### Report on IMO NCSR 4

The IMO Sub-committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) held its fourth session from 6<sup>th</sup> March to 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017, chaired by Mr R. Lakeman (Netherlands). The provisional agenda and work programme for the session, as published prior to the meeting, was adopted.

The IALA delegation was headed by the Secretary-General, Francis Zachariae, supported by the Deputy Secretary-General, Michael Card, and the Seconded Officer, Mahdi Al Mosawi.

### Opening remarks by IMO Secretary General

In welcoming delegates, the IMO Secretary-General, Mr Kitack Lim, referred to this year's World Maritime Day theme, 'Connecting Ships, Ports and People'. The theme builds on that of 2016, 'Shipping: indispensable to the world', and aims to encourage and assist Member States to develop and implement maritime strategies that invest in a joined-up, interagency approach to address a range of issues. These include facilitation of maritime transport, increasing efficiency, and improving navigational safety, protection of the marine environment and maritime security. He expressed the belief that the theme will provide a good opportunity to improve cooperation between ports and ships and help develop a closer partnership between the two sectors. This would raise global standards and set norms for the safety, security and efficiency of ports whilst standardising port operational procedures through identifying and developing best practice guidance and training materials. He went on to assert that operational aspects related to navigation and communications are important elements in ensuring safety of navigation, particularly in busy shipping approaches to ports, as well as the safety of human life at sea and ashore. **In this respect the modernisation of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) and the implementation of e-navigation assume particular significance.** Professional and comprehensive consideration of all technical matters related to these aspects is a principal objective of the NCSR Sub-Committee, together with the development of necessary amendments to relevant conventions and other instruments.

### Communications matters

A Working Group (WG) on Communications was established early on during the first day of the meeting and instructed by the Plenary to start work immediately under the chairmanship of Mr A. Schwarz (Germany). **The WG was asked to commence work on Agenda item 10, Performance Standards for shipborne GMDSS equipment to accommodate additional providers of GMDSS satellite services, and Agenda item 15, Response to matters related to the radio-communication ITU-R study group.**

The background to Agenda item 10 is the ongoing consideration of the **recognition of Iridium as a provider of GMDSS satellite services**. At present, only Inmarsat provides this service. Recognition of Iridium would introduce a second global satellite service for GMDSS. In his opening remarks the Secretary-General had mentioned the possibility that additional GMDSS satellite services could be either global or regional. (No mention of another global or regional satellite service was made during the meeting, as far as the IALA delegation was aware.)

The WG commenced its work on GMDSS satellite services with the draft text provided in document NCSR 4-10, Performance standards for shipborne GMDSS equipment to accommodate additional providers of GMDSS satellite services, and provided an agreed modified version of the draft Performance Standards to



the plenary session of the Sub-Committee later in the week. The Sub-Committee agreed to submit this to the next session of the Maritime Safety Committee for its approval. (MSC 98 is scheduled to take place from 7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017.)

The present timetable envisaged by the International Mobile Satellite Organization (IMSO) for **recognition of Iridium as a GMDSS satellite service provider** is for the IMO MSC to recognise Iridium as a service provider at its 99<sup>th</sup> session in May 2018, and for Iridium to commence provision of its services in January 2020.

IALA presented its paper (document NCSR 4-16-1) advising the Sub Committee, in plenary, of the new IALA Guideline 1117, **VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) Overview**. Malta, Japan, Denmark, and Sweden expressed support for the VDES concept. The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) also was in favour but wished to see more information on data capacity and performance. The Chair noted the support for VDES and also the wish of the Sub Committee for the IMO to develop a position on VDES for the World Radio Conference in 2019 (WRC-19).

As regards **autonomous AIS devices**, there was no plenary discussion and the Chair noted that no decision on these was needed from the Sub Committee at present.

A submission from Japan (document NCSR 4/INF.11) on **NAVDAT coverage**, which provided information on predicted geographical coverage of a NAVDAT station compared with a Navtex station, suggested a much reduced coverage. **Some administrations expressed concern with the NAVDAT concept as a result** and were also concerned that no instruction was given to the Communications WG in connection with NAVDAT. It appeared from these interventions that NAVDAT has a much less certain future.

### Search and Rescue matters

Also on the first day of the meeting **a Working Group on Search and Rescue (SAR) was established** under the chairmanship of Mr N Clifford (New Zealand). It was instructed to commence its work on Agenda item 18, **Developments in GMDSS satellite services**, on Agenda item 20, **Further development of the provision of global maritime SAR services**, on Agenda item 21, **Guidelines on harmonised aeronautical and maritime search and rescue procedures including SAR training matters**, and on Agenda item 23, **Revised Guidelines for preparing plans for cooperation between search and rescue services and passenger ships**.

Upon receiving the WG report, the Sub-Committee took action as follows:

- Noted information provided by the Cospas-Sarsat Secretariat on the International 406-MHZ beacon registration database (IBRD), which will be undergoing a comprehensive redevelopment shortly. The IBRD is available at no cost to users lacking access to national registration facilities or who wish to upload their national records to the IBRD to ensure 24/7 access for RCCs.
- Encouraged Member States to lend support to non-responsive SAR Points of Contact (SPOCs) in their region with a view to improving the Cospas-Sarsat system.
- Informed Member States of a model agreement available on the Cospas-Sarsat website which could be used in improving and clarifying the relationship between a SPOC and a MCC.
- Noted the invitation of the USA to interested parties to provide comments, inputs and sponsorship of a revised EPIRB performance standard for submission of a joint proposal to NCSR 5.
- Noted comments on the need for all parties to make available further operational testing results for EPIRBs operating on 406 MHz, before considering adoption of revised performance standards,



and sharing the results at the forthcoming Joint IMO-ITU Experts Working Group (JWG) meeting, prior to reporting at NCSR 5.

- Urged all Member States to provide relevant information in the Global SAR Plan module of GISIS, keeping it updated, particularly including SPOCs, within both the GISIS and Cospas-Sarsat databases.
- Urged Member States and organisations to involve their maritime SAR experts in functions, meetings and other relevant events with a view to enhancing the development and implementation of joint initiatives taken by IMO, ICAO and Cospas-Sarsat.
- Accepted the need to explore reliable and practical ways to solicit better SAR input into the GISIS database, in which information currently is rarely complete and up to date.
- Recommended that Member States encourage the use of the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) as a resource to improve dissemination of lessons learned.
- Drew attention of Member States to the risks associated with light-emitting diodes (LEDs) used in emergency equipment, navigation aids and obstruction lighting, some of which are not detectable by night vision equipment.
- Approved a provisional agenda for the next IMO-ITU Experts JWG session (scheduled for 10-14 July at IMO Headquarters).
- Approved the revised SAR.7 circular on the List of documents and publications which should be held by a Maritime or Joint Rescue Coordination Centre.
- Agreed to forward proposed amendments of the IAMSAR Manual to the next session of the JWG for consideration and inclusion in the 2019 edition of the Manual.
- Endorsed the proposed revised MSC/Circ.1079 on Guidelines for preparing cooperation plans between SAR services and passenger ships (SOLAS Regulation V/7.3).
- Approved proposed terms of reference for the revision of Model Course 3.14 on SAR Mission Coordinator, and to appoint New Zealand as the Review Group coordinator whilst inviting other interested parties to contribute to the revision of the model course.

A submission from the USA (document NCSR 4-12-3) extolled the virtues of the AIS-SART over the Radar-SART. Some administrations agreed but others were less convinced. (It is important to note that IALA and IALA members were much involved in trials and development of the AIS-SART concept.)

### Navigation matters

A Working Group on Navigation was established under the chairmanship of Captain Moises De Gracia (Panama). An important task for this WG was consideration of the precise objectives for the joint IMO-IHO Harmonisation Group on Data Modelling (HGDM).

The WG also considered draft guidelines on multi-system receivers for resilient Positioning, Navigation and Timing (PNT) on board ship. This agenda item was directly related to e-Navigation SIP Solution 3, which concerns improved reliability, resilience and integrity of bridge equipment and navigation information. The WG took account of submissions from Germany, China, Ukraine, Norway, and the IHO.



Upon receiving the WG report, the Sub-Committee decided to:

- Prepare guidelines on PNT.
- Postpone discussion on the maturity of the provisions and any related decisions on additional Modules for the INS Performance Standard.
- Establish a correspondence group to draft guiding principles for new guidelines for the display of navigation information received via communication equipment.
- With regard to the Revised Guidelines and Criteria for Ship Reporting Systems, clarify the type and purpose of the reported information.
- Further discuss, with regard to the unified interpretation of provisions on IMO safety, security and environment-related conventions, the sidelights for large vessels.
- With regard to the terms of reference and timeline for the Joint IMO-IHO HGDM, to give consideration to:
  - a Common Maritime Data Structure (CMDS) for Maritime Service Portfolios (MSPs);
  - MSP use cases;
  - harmonization of the S-100 related registry; and
  - other work items that may require further consideration.

Especially the positive outcome on guidelines for PNT is welcome news for IALA and confirms the successful work in the ENAV Committee. The guidelines pertaining to ship reporting and the work of the HGDM will have an impact on the work of the ENAV Committee, to be discussed at ENAV21.

The IALA Secretariat would like to put on record its sincere appreciation of Dr Axel Hahn for his active participation in NCSR 4 on behalf of IALA.