

UN Secretary-General's annual report on Oceans and the Law of the Sea (2007)

MARITIME SECURITY AND SAFETY.

During 2007, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) has continued to develop its ocean products with regard to providing up-to-date, timely and relevant information to customers in member states. The basis for this information is the data from the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS). Data standards, operational data transfer and product dissemination is organized by the Joint Commission on Oceanography and Marine Meteorology (JCOMM) of IOC and WMO. Besides the routine description and forecast of ocean conditions in particular areas, these products are used by an increasing community for warning and alerting purposes of extreme conditions in coastal and regional areas. For the maritime transport industry and its coastal infrastructure these products are also disseminated in co-operation with IMO and WMO using the Global Marine Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS).

Relevant products are still being developed or introduced at operational quality. For the safety requirements of the maritime industry they range from leisure yachting, offshore industry and installations to port facilities of the transport and the fishing industry. They also vary from information or warnings of hurricanes, tropical cyclones, storm surge heights and arrival times, to coastal inundation information, pollution, including harmful algal blooms, prevention and mitigation, through abnormal current conditions in harbour approaches and roads to forecasts of tsunami-related^[1] arrival times and sea level heights at specific locations or areas.

As these services are finding a larger clientele and cross national boundaries and agency responsibilities the UN system is increasingly asked to provide the co-ordination mechanisms, to set standards and enhance the capacity of member states to share the production and use of these services. Both IOC and WMO, also through their JCOMM, and in co-operation with IMO and IHO are strengthening their service capacities.

As part of its effort on tsunami warning and mitigation systems, IOC has initiated a dialogue with IMO to address the effects of tsunamis on coastal and harbour operations and propose adequate remedial action. New guidance instruments may be required to assist Member States in developing strategies for addressing tsunami-related evacuation measures for harbours.

^[1] Further information on the IOC's Tsunami Warning Systems can be found at:
<http://www.ioc.unesco.org/tsunami/tsunami-documents>