

CONTRIBUTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION TO THE UN SECRETARY- GENERAL'S REPORT ON OCEANS AND THE LAW OF THE SEA

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Pursuant to the request made by the Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Counsel, in a letter dated 13 January 2021, this contribution focuses on main developments on ocean issues and the law of the sea within the areas of competence of IMO between September 2020 and June 2021 (inclusive).

In particular, this report highlights the way in which General Assembly Resolution 75/239 on Oceans and the Law of the Sea has been implemented by referring to the relevant paragraphs of the resolution.

MARITIME SAFETY AND SECURITY

REGULATORY SCOPING EXERCISE FOR THE USE OF MARITIME AUTONOMOUS SURFACE SHIPS (MASS)

(paragraphs 114-116 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) finalized the process of assessing the applicability of IMO conventions to ships with varying degrees of autonomy and approved the outcome of the regulatory scoping exercise for the use of MASS at its 103rd session in May 2021 (MSC.1/Circ.1638).

The review of mandatory instruments under the purview of the MSC was conducted from May 2018 to May 2021. The MSC identified 4 degrees of autonomy: ship with automated processes and decision support, remotely controlled ship with seafarers on board, remotely controlled ship without seafarers on board, fully autonomous ship.

The mandatory instruments relate to safety (SOLAS); collision regulations (COLREG); loading and stability (Load Lines); training of seafarers and fishers (STCW, STCW-F); search and rescue (SAR); tonnage measurement (Tonnage); safe transport of containers (CSC); and special trade passenger ship instruments (SPACE STP, STP).

Due to time constraints related to a remote conduct of meetings, the Legal Committee, in December 2020, postponed its discussion on MASS, however the Committee will finalise the regulatory scoping exercise of conventions under its purview with regard to MASS in July 2021.

Furthermore, the Facilitation Committee continued with the review of the Facilitation Convention as part of the regulatory scoping exercise for the use of MASS, using the same process. The aim is to complete the review and analysis for consideration by the Facilitation Committee at its 46th session in 2022.

GOAL-BASED STANDARDS AND GOAL-BASED REGULATION DEVELOPMENT

(paragraphs 114-116 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

The *Goal-based ship construction standards for bulk carriers and oil tankers (GBS)* (resolution MSC.287(87)) which were adopted in 2010, require that rules for the design and construction of bulk carriers and oil tankers of an organization recognized by the Administration, or the national rules of an Administration, shall conform to the GBS.

The GBS further require that the abovementioned rules shall be verified as conforming to the goals and functional requirements. In order to establish such verification, the GBS Audit Programme was initiated which, so far, has confirmed that the ship construction rules of 13 Recognized Organizations (ROs) conform to IMO's GBS, as promulgated in MSC.1/Circ.1518/Rev.1. The annual audits (maintenance audits) that started in 2018 after the successful initial verification of those 13 ROs will in future follow a new three-year maintenance audit cycle which will commence in April 2022.

In addition to the GBS which set "rules for rules" with respect to ship construction standards for bulk carriers and oil tankers, IMO has developed new instruments that follow a set process for the development, verification, implementation and monitoring of goal-based standards (GBS) to support regulatory development within IMO, as set out in the *Generic guidelines for developing IMO goal-based standards* (MSC.1/Circ.1394/Rev.2).

Examples of IMO instruments that were developed under the aforementioned goal-based framework are the *International Code of Safety for Ships using Gases or other Low-flashpoint Fuels* (IGF Code) and the *International Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters* (Polar Code). Current instruments under development which follow a goal-based framework are the draft SOALS chapter XV and the associated draft International Code of Safety for Ships Carrying Industrial Personnel (IP Code), as well as the Mandatory goal-based technical and operational measures to reduce carbon intensity of international shipping under MARPOL Annex VI.

SAFETY OF FISHING VESSELS AND IUU FISHING

(paragraphs 122-123 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

Having successfully concluded the Ministerial Conference on Fishing Vessel Safety and Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing, which took place in Torremolinos, Spain, in October 2019, with the participation of 125 States, four representatives of the United Nations and specialized agencies, and 30 international organizations, the Organization has continued to take decisive steps to promote the entry into force of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement, relating to fishing vessel safety and combating IUU fishing.

To date, 16 States have ratified the Agreement (Belgium, Congo, Cook Islands, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Peru, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa and Spain), versus 22 States needed for entry-into-force.

To continue the momentum of the 2019 Ministerial Conference, IMO has been organizing associated regional webinars during the pandemic, as well as bilateral discussion with the States that signed the Torremolinos Declaration adopted during the Conference, which contains a commitment for signatories to ratify the Agreement by the tenth anniversary of its adoption, i.e. 11 October 2022. These Declaration States are offered legal and technical assistance to support their efforts in ratifying and implementing the Agreement. Additionally, the Organization has been closely cooperating with ILO and FAO with respect to combatting IUU fishing and tackling modern slavery at sea, in collaboration with other sectoral partners.

MEASURES TO IMPROVE DOMESTIC FERRY SAFETY

(paragraphs 114 and 190 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

MSC approved in principle the basic structure of framework Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety, subject to ongoing review and noted that the provisions of the model regulations once adopted by the Committee in 2022 may be adapted by interested countries on a voluntary basis and directly incorporated into national law with assistance from IMO's International Maritime Law Institute, upon request. The overarching framework model regulations, which are primarily goal-based, highlight the obligations to be met, yet provide flexibility on how to meet them, while acknowledging indigenous solutions and experts. Upon approval of the model regulations, expected for 2022, the development of an explanatory manual will commence to assist countries in a better understanding and implementation of the model regulations.

The Committee endorsed the Bangkok Declaration on Enhancing Domestic Ferry Safety in Asia and the Pacific Region and the Development of Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety, which inter alia provides the definition of a domestic ferry and was the outcome of the Expert Group Meeting on Improving Domestic Ferry Safety in Support of Safe Maritime Connectivity in Asia and the Pacific, which met virtually in March 2020.

A Working Group on Domestic Ferry Safety is expected to be established at MSC 104 (October 2021) to further develop the model regulations, with a view to final approval. The IMO Secretariat has continued to closely liaise with stakeholders, including INTERFERRY and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), to address this important matter.

SAFETY OF SHIPS IN POLAR WATERS

(paragraph 189 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refers)

Following the adoption, in 2017, of the Polar Code, which applies to ships subject to SOLAS which intend to operate in polar waters, the MSC agreed to develop non-mandatory guidelines containing recommendations for safety measures for non-SOLAS ships operating in polar waters. The types of vessels considered for such safety measures were fishing vessels, pleasure yachts above 300 GT not engaged in trade and cargo ships below 500 GT down to 300 GT.

The development of guidelines for fishing vessels and pleasure yachts has been finalized with their approval by MSC 103 in May 2021, i.e. *Guidelines for safety measures for fishing vessels of 24 m in length and over operating in polar waters* (MSC.1/Circ.1641) and *Guidelines for pleasure yachts of 300 gross tonnage and above not engaged in trade operating in polar waters* (MSC.1/Circ.1642). As a next step, the Committee is expected to consider any proposals submitted for the development of guidelines for commercial yachts and cargo ships of 300 GT and above but less than 500 GT operating in polar waters.

SAFETY ISSUES RELATING TO THE 2020 SULPHUR LIMIT

(paragraphs 114-116 and 194-198 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

MSC intensified its efforts to consider issues relating to the 2020 sulphur limit under a new output on "Development of further measures to enhance the safety of ships relating to the use of fuel oil". MSC 101 took urgent action to address the safety implications associated with the use of low-sulphur fuel oil and adopted resolution MSC.465(101) on *Recommended interim measures to enhance the safety of ships relating to the use of oil fuel*, in particular to recommend that SOLAS Contracting Governments take action as appropriate against oil fuel suppliers in confirmed cases of deliveries of oil fuel that does not comply with the SOLAS requirements. The Committee also encouraged the widest possible application of the latest editions of relevant industry standards and guidance to enhance the safety of ships related to supply and use of oil fuel.

In addition, the Committee prepared a set of long-term solutions to enhance the safety of ships relating to the use of fuel oil and MSC 101 endorsed an action plan for measures to enhance the safety of ships relating to the use of oil fuel. Following the work plan, MSC 103 made good progress in developing relevant mandatory requirements relating to the reporting of cases where fuel suppliers do not meet SOLAS requirements and on action against such suppliers. Progress was also made on developing regulations for the documentation of the flashpoint of the actual fuel batch when bunkering. MSC 103 re-established a correspondence group to further develop, with a view towards finalization, draft SOLAS amendments; agreed to an updated work plan which foresees finalization of measures related to the flashpoint of fuel oil by MSC 105 and measures to enhance the safety of ships relating to the use of fuel oil by MSC 106, both scheduled for 2022.

It should be noted that, it has now been over a year since the entry into force of the 2020 MARPOL regulations on sulphur limit. Indications suggest that the transition has been extremely smooth with no significant safety issues associated with new blended fuels, a testament to the thorough preparation from all stakeholders prior to the new rules becoming effective.

MARITIME SECURITY

(paragraphs 114-116, 127-130 and 149-150 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

Maritime security plans

MSC continues to emphasise the need for flag States and shipowners and operators to review the maritime security plans for their ships and implement necessary measures, including IMO guidance and industry Best Management Practices to address the heightened security risk to ships from piracy, armed robbery and other illicit acts, and supported Member States in strengthening maritime, port and ship security through its extensive Global Maritime Security, Djibouti Code of Conduct and West and Central Africa capacity building programmes.

Piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea

With respect to piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea, IMO called for increased collaboration and action to tackle an escalation in the number and severity of attack in the region, which threatens the lives and well-being of seafarers and the safety of shipping. In this context, MSC adopted resolution on Recommended action to address piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea (MSC.489(103)).

MARINE ENVIRONMENT

REDUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM SHIPS

(paragraphs 235 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

Mandatory measures to cut shipping carbon intensity

Postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the seventy-fifth session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC), originally scheduled from 30 March to 3 April 2020 was held remotely from Monday, 16 November to Friday, 20 November 2020. MEPC 75 approved amendments to MARPOL Annex VI laying down new mandatory measures to cut the carbon intensity of ships by at least 40% by 2030, compared to 2008, building on current mandatory energy efficiency requirements to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping.

The eighth session of the Intersessional Working Group on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships, established by the MEPC, met remotely from 24-28 May 2021 and was attended by nearly 400 representatives from over 60 Member States and associate members as well as from the UNFCCC, UNCTAD, the European Commission, and around 30 non-governmental organizations.

The Working Group agreed on a comprehensive set of guidelines accompanying the new mandatory measures providing support to Administrations and industry in implementing the new technical requirements on the Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index (EEXI) and operational carbon intensity indicator (CII) as well as rating mechanism.

The draft amendments will be considered, in view of their adoption by MEPC 76 in June 2021, in parallel with a comprehensive assessment of possible impacts of the amendments on States and the technical guidelines.

Despite the difficulties imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and postponements of meetings during the first half of 2020, IMO Member States worked constructively to ensure that the Organization would remain on track with the implementation of the short-term measures identified in the 2018 Initial IMO GHG Strategy.

Resolution on national action plans adopted

MEPC 75 also adopted a resolution on national action plans. The resolution urges Member States to develop and update a voluntary National Action Plan (NAP) with a view to contributing to reducing GHG emissions from maritime transport by supporting actions at national level, such as cooperation between the ports and shipping industry as well as along the maritime value chain.

Fourth IMO GHG Study approved

The Committee approved the Fourth IMO GHG Study 2020. The study contains an overview of GHG emissions from shipping 2012-2018, developments in carbon intensity of international shipping and projections of GHG emissions from international shipping towards 2050. The study has been published on the IMO website, see: [Fourth Greenhouse Gas Study 2020 \(imo.org\)](https://www.imo.org/en/About/Pages/press.aspx).

Amendments to MARPOL Annex VI to further strengthen the EEDI adopted

Furthermore, MEPC 75 adopted amendments to MARPOL Annex VI to significantly strengthen the Energy Efficiency Design Index (EEDI) "phase 3" requirements, with expected entry into force date of 1 April 2022.

The amendments bring forward the entry into effect date of energy efficiency design requirements for new built ships (EEDI phase 3) to 2022, from 2025, for several ship types, including gas carriers, general cargo ships and LNG carriers.

Amendments to MARPOL Annex VI on sulphur content definition and sampling adopted

MEPC 75 also adopted amendments further supporting the enforcement of IMO2020 (global 0,50% sulphur cap) which entered into force on 1 January 2020, specifying procedures for on board and in use fuel sampling of bunker fuels as well as the fuel verification procedure in MARPOL Annex VI.

IMO Data Collection System

In March 2021, IMO published the aggregated results of the 2019 fuel consumption data of over 27,000 ships that are subject to IMO's mandatory data collection system.

Data for reporting year 2019 were submitted by 107 Administrations reporting just over 213 million tonnes of fuel in 2019 in total on a quantity basis. The majority of fuel oil was consumed by three ship types: bulk carriers, tankers, containerships. The fuel consumption data will reinforce IMO's decision making on future energy efficiency measures.

BALLAST WATER MANAGEMENT TREATY IMPLEMENTATION

(paragraphs 231- 232 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

The *International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments, 2004* (BWM Convention), entered into force in September 2017 and has been ratified, to date, by 86 countries, representing 91.19% of world merchant shipping tonnage. The BWM Convention aims to stop the spread of potentially invasive aquatic species in ships' ballast water and requires ships to manage their ballast water to remove, render harmless or avoid the uptake or discharge of aquatic organisms and pathogens within ballast water and sediments. In October 2019, the *Code for Approval of Ballast Water Management Systems* (BWMS Code) became mandatory. The main focus of IMO now is on the effective and uniform implementation and application of the BWM treaty.

The MEPC adopted amendments to the BWM Convention concerning commissioning testing of ballast water management systems and the form of the International Ballast Water Management Certificate. The amendments shall be deemed to have been accepted on 1 December 2021 and shall enter into force on 1 June 2022; notwithstanding this, the MEPC had endorsed the view that commissioning testing should begin as soon as possible, in accordance with the already approved *Guidance for the commissioning testing of ballast water management systems* (BWM.2/Circ.70). In this connection, to support the effective and uniform implementation of commissioning testing, which becomes mandatory through the aforementioned amendments, the MEPC approved BWM.2/Circ.70/Rev.1 on *2020 Guidance for the commissioning testing of ballast water management systems*.

The MEPC also approved BWM.2/Circ.42/Rev.2 on *2020 Guidance on ballast water sampling and analysis for trial use in accordance with the BWM Convention and Guidelines (G2)*.

ANTI-FOULING SYSTEMS TREATY IMPLEMENTATION

(paragraph 194 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refers)

The *International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships, 2001* (AFS Convention), entered into force in September 2008 and has been ratified, to date, by 91 countries, representing 95.93% of world merchant shipping tonnage. The AFS Convention aims to prohibit the use of harmful substances in anti-fouling paints used on ships. In the first instance this includes organotin compounds and the Convention also established a mechanism to prevent the potential future use of other harmful substances in anti-fouling systems. In this regard, in 2017 the MEPC approved a new output to amend Annex 1 to the AFS Convention to include controls on cybutryne.

In this context, MEPC 75 adopted amendments to the AFS Convention concerning controls on cybutryne and the form of the International Anti-Fouling System Certificate. The amendments will enter into force on 1 January 2023.

ADDRESSING MARINE PLASTIC LITTER FROM SHIPS

(paragraphs 217 and 233 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

Having recognized the ongoing problem of marine plastic pollution, as addressed in MARPOL Annex V, and that further consideration was required as part of a global solution within the framework of ocean governance, in pursuance of the target of Sustainable Development Goal 14 to prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds by 2025, IMO continues to make progress on developing the actions agreed within the IMO Action Plan to Address Marine Plastic Litter from Ships (resolution MEPC.310(73)), through the MEPC and its subsidiary bodies. The aim of the IMO Action Plan is to enhance existing IMO regulations and introduce new supporting measures to reduce marine plastic litter from ships.

Concomitantly, the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP) has established the Working Group on sea-based sources of marine litter (GESAMP Working Group 43), co-sponsored by FAO and IMO, with additional support from UNEP. The overall objective of GESAMP Working Group 43 is to build a broader understanding of sea-based sources of marine litter, in particular from the shipping and fishing sectors, including the relative contribution of different sources, analysis of plastic use and management within both industries and the range and extent of impacts from sea-based sources of marine litter. The final report of the Working Group will be available in the second half of 2021 on www.gesamp.org.

CARGO RESIDUES AND TANK WASHINGS OF NOXIOUS LIQUID SUBSTANCES CLASSED AS PERSISTENT FLOATERS

(paragraph 240 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refers)

Amendments to MARPOL Annex II (resolution MEPC.315(74)) entered into force on 1 January 2021. These Amendments strengthen, in specified sea areas (Western European waters, North West European waters, Norwegian waters north of 62°N, and the Baltic Sea), discharge requirements applicable to chemical tankers in relation to cargo residues and tank washings containing persistent floating products with a high-viscosity and/or a high melting point that can solidify under certain conditions (e.g. residues and tank washings of certain vegetable oil cargoes and of paraffin-like cargoes).

DUMPING OF WASTE AT SEA

(paragraphs 249-250 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

The forty-second Consultative Meeting of Contracting Parties to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972 (London Convention) and the fifteenth Meeting of Contracting Parties to the 1996 Protocol to the London Convention, 1972 (London Protocol) were concurrently held by a combination of correspondence and a virtual session, from 5 October to 23 December 2020 (document LC 42/17).

The governing bodies considered the report of the forty-third meeting of the London Convention Scientific Group and the fourteenth meeting of the London Protocol Scientific Group, that were held concurrently by correspondence from 6 July to 18 September 2020. The report of the joint session of the Scientific Groups has been issued as document LC/SG 43/16.

The Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP)

The Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection (GESAMP), for which IMO provides the secretariat services through a dedicated GESAMP Office, held its 47th annual session from 8 to 11 September 2020, by virtual means. GESAMP reviewed progress by its eight currently active working groups and decided to establish a new Working Group on climate change impacts on contaminants in the ocean (GESAMP Working Group 45) under the lead of IAEA (co-sponsored by UNEP, IOC-UNESCO and IMO).

In the intersessional period, GESAMP published its 107th report in the Report and Studies series, on the topic of "Global Trends in Pollution of Coastal Ecosystems". All reports published by GESAMP are available on www.gesamp.org.

FRAUDULENT REGISTRATION

ADDRESSING FRAUDULENT REGISTRATION AND FRAUDULENT REGISTRIES OF SHIPS

(paragraphs 134 and 186 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

Following the adoption, by the IMO Assembly, at its thirty-first session, in December 2019, of resolution A.1142(31) on Measures to prevent the fraudulent registration and fraudulent registries of ships, the Legal Committee at its 107th session in November 2020 embarked on developing draft Assembly resolution to encourage Member States and all relevant stakeholders to promote concrete actions for the prevention and suppression of fraudulent acts in the maritime sector. The draft resolution will be finalised at the 108th of the Legal Committee in July 2021 and adopted at the 32 session of the Assembly in December 2021.

The above-mentioned resolution A.1142(31) includes a procedure for communicating the information on fraudulent registration to IMO, including information on the name of national governmental body(ies) and authorized or delegated entities in charge of ship registration. The IMO Secretariat encourages Member States to provide this information for verification and inclusion in the comprehensive database of registries in the publicly available Contact Points Module in the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS).

WELLBEING OF SEAFARERS

(paragraph 125 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refers)

As a result of COVID-19 pandemic the global shipping industry is facing significant challenges. Due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, large numbers of seafarers are having to extend their service on board ships after many months at sea, unable to be replaced after long tours of duty or be repatriated back to their home countries. Shipping is vital to the maintenance of global supply chains, but the current situation is unsustainable for the safety and wellbeing of ship crew and the safe operation of maritime trade.

In April 2020, in response to the growing concern over the crew change crisis, the IMO Secretary-General established the Seafarer Crisis Action Team (SCAT), to address the matter. The COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant restrictions on the ability of shipowners to change crews had put seafarers around the world in precarious situations. During 2020, over 400,000 seafarers on board ships were affected worldwide. A similar number of seafarers were waiting to join ships, unable to work. Travel restrictions through ports, airports and inland meant

thousands of seafarers could not leave their ships, be repatriated home, have crew changes or, in some instances, get urgent medical assistance. In addition, many seafarers have seen their contracts unilaterally terminated or have been quarantined on board ships or onshore often for more than 14 days, without getting paid.

In 2021, the numbers of seafarers requiring repatriation after finishing their contracts declined to around 200,000, as of April 2021, with a similar number waiting to join ships as part of a crew change. However, there is still a long way to go before the return to a normal crew change regime. In addition, COVID-19 related abandonment cases have increased dramatically, further exacerbating the crew change situation.

United Nations General Assembly resolution A/75/17 on International cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to support global supply chains, adopted on 1 December 2020, calls for seafarer key worker designation and implementation of the industry Recommended Framework of Protocols. In addition, ILO Governing Body 340/resolution (rev.2) concerning maritime labour issues and the COVID-19 pandemic, adopted on 8 December 2020, aims to address the dire situation of seafarers trapped on board ships because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, IMO coordinates with ILO, ICAO and WHO to call on Member States to prioritize seafarers in their national COVID-19 vaccination programmes.

Moreover, IMO organized a series of regional seminars on the challenges seafarers face due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the webinars, a round table meeting was held for the Pacific Islands to provide the necessary support to Member States in addressing the issue of repatriation specifically. The round table meeting was more interactive and focused on supporting Fiji as hub for repatriation of stranded seafarers in various regions and countries and sought alternative solutions. Like the regional webinars, the Pacific round table meeting was also supported by UN agencies such as the UN Resident Coordinators, Fiji and Samoa, ILO, World Food Programme and other organizations such as ICS and ITF.

CAPACITY BUILDING

(paragraphs 10, 19, 20, 30, 31, 36 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refer)

Although the Covid-19 pandemic has heavily impacted IMO's technical cooperation activities, the Organization adapted its working practices, to continue the delivery of technical assistance to those Member States most in need. During the period under review, priority was thus given to technical assistance which could be delivered virtually and focused on human resources development and institutional capacity-building with emphasis to support the special shipping needs of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) as well as coastal African States. As far as possible, the Organization also continued the delivery of activities under its long-term thematic projects using virtual delivery modes. Moreover, considerable work has been done to develop e-learning and distance learning programmes to be used for the delivery of IMO's technical assistance.

International Maritime Law Institute and World Maritime University

Utilizing the capacity of its two global maritime training institutions, namely, the World Maritime University (WMU) located in Malmö, Sweden and the IMO International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) based in Malta, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, IMO continued to offer the international maritime community the possibility to access high level post graduate maritime education. The operations of both WMU and IMLI continued virtually uninterrupted since the start of the pandemic. Both training institutions' lectures were carried out remotely via virtual learning and both entities have tried to improve their delivery of course content and interaction with students

through various applications to ensure the very best service to their students. Members of Faculty and the institutions' staff have also been working online. This enabled both WMU and IMLI to complete the academic year 2019-2020 successfully and commence the academic year 2020-2021.

Women in maritime sector

Through its Women in Maritime programme, under the slogan: "Training-Visibility-Recognition", IMO has taken a strategic approach towards enhancing the contribution of women as key maritime stakeholders. In December 2019, the IMO Assembly adopted resolution A.1147(31) on Preserving the legacy of the World Maritime Theme for 2019 and achieving a barrier-free working environment for women in the maritime sector. The resolution urged further firm action in coming years to advance gender equality throughout the maritime sector and reach a barrier-free environment. Through its technical cooperation programme, IMO continued to provide ongoing support to the seven Women in Maritime Associations (WIMAs) launched through the programme, and to improve gender balance in the shipping industry.

In January 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was concluded between IMO and The Women's International Shipping and Trading Association (WISTA International) on promoting greater diversity and inclusion through enhanced cooperation activities in the maritime field. An IMO-WISTA International study to collect and analyse data on the number of women employed in the maritime sector was launched in January 2021.

Other capacity building activities

Through its fellowships programme, IMO funded fellowships for Government nominated suitably qualified candidates particularly from SIDS and LDCs to attend post-graduate maritime education courses at WMU and IMLI as well as short-term training courses provided by other training institutions. On a regional basis, IMO organised virtual webinars to promote the importance of the maritime sector within national strategies and initiatives formulated within the umbrella of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) and participated also actively in meetings of the UN Office of the Special Adviser on African Affairs on strategies to address the impact of COVID-19 on Africa. A live-dashboard was created for updates on the work of relevant UN Agencies and Organizations in relation to Africa and COVID-19.

Furthermore, IMO assisted the Federal Government of Somalia to establish a maritime administration to support the country and its Regional Authorities in the enhancement of its human and institutional capacities in the maritime sector following more two decades of civil strife which destroyed the country's maritime infrastructure and resources.

MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC FOR INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING

(paragraph 125 of the UN General Assembly Resolution 75/239 refers)

In addition to addressing the crew change crisis caused by the pandemic (see section "wellbeing of seafarers above), IMO has worked in close cooperation with Member States, other UN agencies and the shipping industry on measures to address the fallout of the pandemic for the global maritime community, realizing that many Member States wished to have uniform recommendations on how to address certain issues.

Central repository of all COVID-19 related information is the IMO website (www.imo.org) which contains, in a special section entitled "COVID-19 information resources", statements by the Secretary-General, press briefings, technical advice issued by Circular Letters, summaries of COVID-19 related notifications received from Member States and WHO advice, as well as links to various information resources.

Technical advice has been issued by means of Circular Letter No.4204 and its addenda, disseminating a wide variety of guidance and measures to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on maritime trade and transport, including joint statements with other UN agencies such as WHO, ILO, ICAO and WCO, and guidance developed by the shipping industry. The guidance issued addresses, inter alia, the contribution of international trade and supply chains to a sustainable socio-economic recovery in COVID-19 times; collaborative action in support of keeping ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing during the COVID-19 pandemic; accelerating digitalization of maritime trade and logistics; guidance for flag States regarding surveys and renewals of certificates during the COVID-19 pandemic; and preparing for post COVID-19 operations: considerations and practicalities for port community systems, single window and other electronic exchange platforms.
