

News from IMO

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This contribution presents a compilation of information on current work of selected IMO bodies in the period preceding the publication of this issue of ToMs. The outcome of IMO bodies responsible for safety and environment protection has been covered, aiming at informing readers on the decisions taken, as well as on the IMO instruments and/or their amendments that have entered into force.

KEY WORDS

- ~ IMO
- ~ Safety
- ~ Environment protection

INTRODUCTION

The beginning of 2016 marked the change at the helm of IMO - Mr. Kitack Lim (Republic of Korea) started his four-year tenure as the new Secretary-General of the Organization. Mr. Kitack Lim is the eighth elected Secretary-General of IMO.

The World Maritime Day theme for 2016 is "Shipping: indispensable to the world". The theme was chosen to focus on the critical link between shipping and global society and to raise awareness of the relevance of the role of IMO as the global regulatory body for international shipping. The importance of shipping to support and sustain today's global society gives IMO's work a significance that reaches far beyond the industry itself.

The 29th session of the IMO Assembly met in London at the IMO Headquarters from 23 November to 2 December 2015. Selected decisions and outcome of discussions of the Assembly have been presented in this review, along with a number of amendments to the mandatory IMO instruments that entered into force since the last issue of ToMS.

Whilst news presented in this contribution only highlight the selected topics, complete information on the outcome of various IMO bodies is available in their reports, which can be found on the Organization's IMODOCS website (<http://docs.imo.org/>). More information and highlights on the work of the Organization can be found on its public website (<http://www.imo.org>), including press briefings and meeting summaries available in "Media Centre" area. In addition, most of the Organization's technical and operational data, some of which is available to the public, is stored in the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS), which is also accessible via a public website (<https://gisis.imo.org>).

29th session of the IMO Assembly (A 29)

Fishing vessel safety

The resolution on entry into force and implementation of the 2012 Cape Town Agreement calls for the early acceptance of the treaty, as a means to address the alarmingly high number of fishermen's lives and of fishing vessels lost every year.

It is thought that as many as 24,000 lives are lost annually in the fishing sector worldwide.

The entry into force of an internationally binding agreement for the safety of fishing vessels is predicted to have a positive impact on safety in the sector as a whole, as flag and port State Administrations would be required to develop legal and administrative frameworks, as well as processes, for the implementation of provisions related to survey and certification, casualty investigation and port State control.

The Cape Town Agreement aims to implement the provisions of the 1993 Protocol relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977. In ratifying the 2012 Agreement, Parties agree to amendments to the provisions of the 1993 Protocol, so that they can come into force as soon as possible thereafter.

The Cape Town Agreement of 2012 will enter into force 12 months after the date on which not less than 22 States the aggregate number of whose fishing vessels of 24 m in length and over operating on the high seas is not less than 3,600 have expressed their consent to be bound by it. To date, only five countries have accepted the agreement.

Recognition for merchant vessels involved in rescuing mixed migrants at sea

The Assembly commended all merchant vessels and their crew participating in the rescue of mixed migrants at sea for their bravery, professionalism and compassion, upholding the highest traditions of the sea. It requested the Secretary-General to issue special certificates, retroactively from 1 January 2014, to any merchant vessel and its crew participating in the rescue of mixed migrants at sea, recognizing the risks involved to both rescuers and the rescued, in particular in those cases involving multiple survivors.

From January 2014 to December 2015, in the Mediterranean Sea alone, more than 1,200 merchant vessels were diverted from their intended voyage to rescue more than 50,000 mixed migrants in danger of being lost at sea, a number unprecedented in history.

The resolution expressed grave concern about the current worldwide crisis of migration, involving the greatest movement of displaced persons in nearly 70 years. The transport of mixed migrants by sea in grossly overloaded, unsafe vessels has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives.

Other resolutions

A number of other resolutions were adopted, including several aimed at updating various guidance documents, inter alia:

- resolution A.1104(29) on Survey Guidelines under the Harmonized System of Survey and Certification (HSSC), 2015;
- resolution A.1105(29) 2015 Non-exhaustive list of obligations under instruments relevant to the IMO Instruments Implementation Code;
- resolution A.1106(29) on revised guidelines for the onboard operational use of shipborne automatic identification systems (AIS); and
- resolution A.1108(29) on amendments to the Recommendations on pilot transfer arrangements (A.1045(27)).

Amendments to mandatory IMO instruments that entered into force

Audits under the IMO Member State Audit Scheme became mandatory

Amendments to a number of treaties covering safety, training, prevention of pollution, load lines, tonnage measurement and collision prevention make the audits under the IMO Member State Audit Scheme mandatory for all IMO Member States from 1 January 2016.

Up to 25 Member State audits per year are expected under the audit scheme, which aims to provide a mechanism by which Member States can be assessed, in order to determine to what extent they are implementing and enforcing the applicable IMO instruments by identifying areas in need of improvement, as well as areas of good practices.

The idea behind the Scheme is to support the enhanced implementation of IMO instruments, as the Scheme will provide Member States with an overview of how well they are carrying out their duties as flag, coastal and port States, under the relevant IMO treaties. The process will also feed into IMO's extensive technical cooperation programme, to provide targeted assistance and capacity-building to States, as well as to the Organization's regulatory process.

The treaties amended are:

- SOLAS 1974;
- STCW 1978 and STCW Code;
- MARPOL annexes I through to VI;
- Protocol of 1988 relating to the International Convention on Load Lines, 1966 (LL PROT 1988);
- International Convention on Load Lines, 1966 (LL 1966);
- International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships, 1969 (TONNAGE 1969);
- Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (COLREG 1972).

Other SOLAS amendments

Other SOLAS amendments that entered into force on 1 January 2016 include:

- amendments to SOLAS regulations II-2/1, II-2/3, II-2/4, II-2/9.7 and II-2/16.3.3, to introduce mandatory requirements for inert gas systems on board new oil and chemical tankers of 8,000 dwt and above, and for ventilation systems on board new ships; plus related amendments to chapter 15 of the International Code for Fire Safety Systems (FSS Code) on inert gas systems.
- amendments to SOLAS regulation II-1/29 on steering gear, to update the requirements relating to sea trials.
- amendments to SOLAS regulation II-2/10, concerning fire protection requirements for new ships designed to carry containers on or above the weather deck.
- amendments to SOLAS regulation II-2/13.4, mandating additional means of escape from machinery spaces.
- new SOLAS regulation II-2/20-1, which provides additional safety measures for vehicle carriers with vehicle and ro-ro spaces intended for carriage of motor vehicles with compressed hydrogen or compressed natural gas in their tanks for their own propulsion as cargo.

Amendment 37-14 to the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code

The amendments to the IMDG Code became mandatory from 1 January 2016. They include updates to the provisions for radioactive material, reflecting the latest (2012) provisions from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), new marking requirements for “overpack” and “salvage” and updates to various individual packing requirements.

Carriage of stability instruments mandatory for tankers

Mandatory carriage requirements for a stability instrument for oil tankers and chemical tankers entered into force on 1 January 2016, under amendments to MARPOL Annex I, the

Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships carrying Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk (BCH Code), the International Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Dangerous Chemicals in Bulk (IBC Code) and the International Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Liquefied Gases in Bulk (IGC Code).

LSA Code lifejacket testing

The amendments to the International Life-Saving Appliance (LSA) Code relate to the testing of lifejackets. The requirements for testing adult lifejackets are updated and new paragraphs are added relating to the testing of infant lifejackets, including the possibility to substitute manikins for human test subjects.

Revised IGC Code

The completely revised and updated International Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Liquefied Gases in Bulk (IGC Code) entered into force on 1 January 2016, with an implementation/application date of 1 July 2016. The amendments were developed following a comprehensive five-year review and are intended to take into account the latest advances in science and technology.

Other MARPOL amendments

2014 amendments to MARPOL Annex I on mandatory carriage requirements for a stability instrument entered into force on 1 January 2016.

The following MARPOL amendments entered into force on 1 March 2016:

- 2014 amendment to MARPOL Annex I, regulation 43;
- 2014 amendment to MARPOL Annex III, Appendix – Criteria for the identification of harmful substances in packaged form; and
- 2014 amendments to MARPOL Annex VI, regulations 2 and 13 and the Supplement to the IAPP certificate.