

DRAFT REVISED ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION ON GUIDELINES FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES

THE ASSEMBLY,

RECALLING Article 28(b) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization concerning the functions of the Committee,

RECALLING ALSO Article 15(j) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization concerning the functions of the Assembly in relation to regulations and guidelines concerning maritime safety and the prevention and control of marine pollution from ships,

BEARING IN MIND the responsibility of Governments for the safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment in areas under their jurisdiction,

BEING AWARE that vessel traffic services are provided worldwide and make a valuable contribution to safety of navigation, improved efficiency of traffic flow and the protection of the marine environment,

RECOGNIZING that various organizational, operational and technological developments have taken place globally in a rapidly changing maritime domain since the adoption in 1997 of resolution A.857(20) entitled *Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services* and the revision of the current Guidelines became necessary,

RECOGNIZING ALSO that the level of safety and efficiency in the movement of maritime traffic within an area covered by a vessel traffic service is dependent upon close cooperation between those operating the vessel traffic service and participating ships,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the use of differing procedures may cause confusion to ship masters moving from one vessel traffic service area to another and therefore vessel traffic services should be established and operated in a harmonized manner and in accordance with internationally approved guidelines,

NOTING that the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) has contributed significantly to the development of internationally harmonized guidance for vessel traffic services,

HAVING CONSIDERED the recommendation made by the Maritime Safety Committee at its [102nd] session,

1. **ADOPTS** the revised *Guidelines for vessel traffic services* set out in the annex to the present resolution;
2. **INVITES** Governments to take account of the annexed Guidelines when planning, implementing and operating a vessel traffic service in accordance with SOLAS regulation V/12;
3. **RECOMMENDS** Governments to encourage masters of ships navigating in an area for which a vessel traffic service is provided to make use of such a service;
4. **ENCOURAGES** Governments that operate vessel traffic services to consider technical and other developments recognized by the Organization relating to vessel traffic services;

5. **REQUESTS** the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of all Contracting Governments to the SOLAS Convention and to Members of the Organization which are not Contracting Governments to the Convention;
6. **AUTHORIZES** the Maritime Safety Committee to keep the annexed Guidelines under review and amend them, as appropriate;
7. **REVOKES** resolution A.857(20).

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ANNEX

GUIDELINES FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC SERVICES

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 These Guidelines are associated with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS) regulation V/12 and should be complied with when planning, implementing and operating a vessel traffic service under national law.

1.2 IMO, in its role in regulating the planning, implementation and operation of vessel traffic services, is responsible for providing guidance on its establishment, operation, qualification and training. This includes a leadership role in providing a forum and framework for cooperation among Governments to facilitate the consistent and harmonized delivery of vessel traffic services worldwide.

1.3 IALA is recognized as an important contributor to IMO's role and responsibilities relating to vessel traffic services.

1.4 In complying with these Guidelines Governments should take account of applicable IMO instruments and refer to the relevant international guidance prepared and published by appropriate international organizations¹.

1 DEFINITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

The following terms are used in connection with a vessel traffic service:

2.1 *Vessel traffic service (VTS)* means a service implemented by a Government with the capability to interact with vessel traffic and respond to developing situations within a vessel traffic service area to improve the safety and efficiency of navigation, safety of life at sea and to support the protection of the environment.

2.2 *Competent authority* means the authority made legally responsible by the Government for vessel traffic services.

2.3 *VTS provider* means the organization or entity legally empowered by the Government or Competent authority for the provision of a vessel traffic service.

2.4 *VTS area* means the delineated, formally declared area for which the vessel traffic service provider is legally empowered to deliver a vessel traffic service.

2.5 *VTS personnel* means persons performing tasks associated with vessel traffic services, trained in vessel traffic service operations and holding qualifications as appropriate.

2.6 *Allied services* mean services, other than a vessel traffic service, supporting vessel traffic.

3 REGULATORY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Under the general provisions of treaty law and of IMO conventions, Contracting Governments are responsible for promulgating laws and regulations and for taking all other steps which may be necessary to give those instruments full and complete effect.

3.2 Vessel traffic services are recognized internationally as a navigational safety measure through SOLAS regulation V/12.

¹ See section 8 (IALA standards).

3.3 The establishment of a VTS is dependent on national law and factors such as the volume of traffic and degree of risk, and geographic, and environmental conditions.

3.4 A VTS may be established beyond the territorial seas of a coastal State on the basis of voluntary participation. Such a VTS may be established in association with an IMO adopted ships' routing system or mandatory ship reporting system, in accordance with SOLAS regulations V/10² and V/11³, respectively.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Contracting Governments

4.1.1 The Contracting Government should:

- .1 promulgate laws and regulations to establish a legal basis for VTS that gives effect to international law and SOLAS regulation V/12;
- .2 appoint and authorize a competent authority for VTS;
- .3 take appropriate action against a ship flying its flag that is reported not to have complied with the provisions of a VTS; and
- .4 take account of future technical and other developments recognized by the Organization relating to VTS.

4.2 Competent authority for VTS

4.2.1 The competent authority should:

- .1 establish a regulatory framework for establishing and operating VTSs in accordance with relevant international conventions and IMO instruments, IALA standards and national law;
- .2 authorize a VTS provider to operate a VTS within a delineated VTS area in accordance with national and international law;
- .3 ensure that VTS training and certification is accredited and approved in accordance with the standards acceptable to the Organization⁴; and
- .4 establish a compliance and enforcement framework with respect to violations of VTS regulatory requirements.

4.3 VTS provider

The VTS provider should:

- .1 ensure the VTS conforms with national law and the regulatory framework set by the competent authority for VTS;

² Refer to *General Provisions on Ships' Routing* (resolution A.572(14), as amended).

³ Refer to *General Principles for Ship Reporting Systems and Ship Reporting Requirements, including Guidelines for Reporting Incidents Involving Dangerous Goods, Harmful Substances and/or Marine Pollutants* (resolution A.851(20)) and *Guideline and Criteria for Ship Reporting Systems* (resolution MSC.433(98));

⁴ Refer to the standards published by IALA. See also *IALA standards for training and certification of vessel traffic service (VTS) personnel* (MSC.1/Circ.1065, as amended).

- .2 set operational objectives for the VTS that are consistent with improving the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and protection of the environment. The objectives set should be routinely evaluated to demonstrate they are being achieved;
- .3 ensure that appropriate equipment, systems and facilities are provided;
- .4 ensure that VTS personnel are appropriately trained and qualified; and
- .5 ensure that information regarding the requirements and procedures of the VTS are promulgated in appropriate nautical publications.

4.4 Participating ships

Participating ships in a VTS area should:

- .1 provide information required by the VTS;
- .2 take into account advice provided by the VTS; and
- .3 comply with the provisions and instructions given to the ship by the VTS unless contradictory safety reasons exist. Masters may be required to report on their actions should they decide to disregard any instruction, advice or request given by a VTS.

5 PURPOSE OF A VTS

5.1 The purpose of vessel traffic services is to contribute to safety of life at sea, safety and efficiency of navigation and the protection of the marine environment.

5.2 To achieve its purpose, a VTS should manage the safe and efficient transit of ships within the VTS area and mitigate the development of unsafe situations through:

- .1 The provision of timely and relevant information on factors that may influence the ship's transit and to assist on-board decision making. This may include:
 - .1 position, identity, intention and movements of ships;
 - .2 Maritime Safety Information;
 - .3 limitations of ships in the VTS area that may impose restrictions on the navigation of other ships (e.g. manoeuvrability), or any other potential hindrances;
 - .4 other information such as reporting formalities and ISPS details; and
 - .5 support to, and cooperation with, allied services.
- .2 The monitoring and management of traffic to ensure the safety and efficiency of ship movements. This may include:
 - .1 forward planning and organizing ship movements;
 - .2 organizing the allocation of space;
 - .3 forward planning of ship movements;
 - .4 establishing a system of traffic clearances or sailing plans, or both;

- .5 providing route advice; and
 - .6 ensuring compliance with and enforcement of regulatory provisions for which they are empowered.
- .3 Responding to developing unsafe situations to assist the decision-making process on board. This may include:
- .1 a ship unsure of its route or position;
 - .2 a ship deviating from the route;
 - .3 a ship requiring guidance to an anchoring position;
 - .4 a ship that has defects or deficiencies, such as navigation or manoeuvring equipment failure;
 - .5 severe meteorological conditions (e.g. low visibility, strong winds);
 - .6 a ship at risk of grounding or collision; and
 - .7 emergency response or support to emergency services.

6 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

6.1 Decisions concerning the navigation and the manoeuvring of the ship remain with the master. Nothing in these Guidelines changes the master's responsibility for all aspects of the operation of the ship.

6.2 VTS communications should be timely, clear, concise, not open to misinterpretation and made in accordance with the standards adopted by the Organization⁵.

6.3 VTS communications should take into account bridge resource management principles.

6.4 VTS operates within a comprehensive environment in which ships, ports, allied services and other organizations fulfil their respective roles, as appropriate.

6.5 Effective data exchange and information sharing between participants is fundamental to the overall operational efficiency and safety.

7 QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

7.1 A major factor in the operation of a VTS is the standard of competence of its VTS personnel. IMO is responsible for the international standards for VTS qualifications and training.

7.2 It is recommended that Governments use the standards for training and certification of VTS personnel acceptable to the Organization⁶.

⁵ Refer to, for example, *IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases* (resolution A.918(22)).

⁶ Refer to the standards published by IALA. See also *IALA standards for training and certification of vessel traffic service (VTS) personnel* (MSC.1/Circ.1065, as amended).

8 IALA STANDARDS

8.1 To achieve worldwide harmonization of VTS, IALA publishes standards and associated recommendations, guidelines and model courses specifically related to the establishment and operation of VTS.

8.2 IALA standards⁷ provide the framework for coastal States to harmonize VTS worldwide and these are suitable for direct use and citation by parties with an interest in VTS.

Note: Some editorial and formatting changes have been made and some remain to be completed to ensure compliance with the IMO Style Guide.

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7 IALA standards are non-mandatory and contain normative and informative provisions.