

Input paper for the following Committee(s): check as appropriate

☒ ARM                      ☒ ENG                      ☒ PAP  
☒ ENAV                      ☒ VTS                      ☒ LAP

Purpose of paper:

☐ Input  
☒ Information

Agenda item                                              9.1  
Technical Domain / Task Number                      Task 1.1.1.....  
Author(s) / Submitter(s)                                      VTS Committee Task Group 1.1.1.2.....

## New IMO Resolution – Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services

### 1 SUMMARY

IMO Resolution A.857(20) *Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services* is in the process of being updated. A revised draft was agreed at MSC102 and is to be considered by the IMO Assembly at the end of the year. Assuming adoption, it is expected that the new Resolution will be published in Q1 2022 and will come into force with immediate effect. IALA has prepared an updated version of Guideline 1089 - *Provision of a VTS* ready for issue on publication of the new Resolution.

#### 1.1 Purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to provide a brief to those with an interest in, or responsibilities for, VTS setting out some of the more significant implications of the new Resolutions so that appropriate preparations can be made.

#### 1.2 Related documents

1. Extract from the MSC102 report – Draft Assembly Resolution *Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services*
2. Draft IALA Guideline G1089 – *Provision of a VTS* (For issue on adoption of the new Resolution)

### 2 DISCUSSION

As it is expected that the new Resolution will be published in Q1 2022 and will come into force with immediate effect, IALA Committee members are recommended to consider whether there are any preparations that they should be making. The brief at Annex is being circulated to all committees and sets out the more significant issues. Those with responsibilities for VTS and, in particular, competent authorities and VTS providers (VTS authorities) may wish to study the enclosed drafts of the new resolution and the associated revised IALA Guideline G1089 – *Provision of a VTS* in greater detail.

### 3 ACTION RECOMMENDED

This information paper is being distributed to all Committees, PAP and LAP. Committee members are recommended to circulate it to those with an interest in, and responsibilities for, VTS.

**ANNEX** - VTS Update - Revision to IMO Resolution A.857(20)

### ENCLOSURE

1. Extract from the MSC102 report – Draft Assembly Resolution *Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services* and Draft IALA Guideline G1089 – *Provision of a VTS* (For issue on adoption of the new Resolution)

### **VTS Update - Revision to IMO Resolution A.857(20)**

At MSC 102 (4-11 Nov 20), the draft revision to IMO Resolution A.857(20) – *Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services* was approved by MSC for submission to the IMO Assembly in November/December 2021 with a view to its adoption. Those familiar with the current IMO Resolution will note that this is a much simplified and better laid out document. Key points of this revision for competent authorities and VTS providers (VTS authorities) to note are as follows:

- The document has been set at a high level, leaving details of implementation specialist authorities. The whole structure has been simplified and made to flow logically from section to section.
- IALA has been identified as the key specialist authority and clear links provided from SOLAS through to the new resolution and then to IALA Standards, thus, giving clear recognition of IALA documentation.
- All reference to “Types of Service” have been removed. The new Resolution emphasises the role of all VTSs in providing information, monitoring and managing ship traffic and responding to developing unsafe navigational situations. (See section 3 of the new resolution headed “Purpose of a VTS”).
- Clarification is provided on VTS beyond territorial seas and the potential conflict with SOLAS V/12. A VTS in support of an IMO adopted ships’ routing system or mandatory ship reporting system is identified, recognising that its legal status is supported by the provisions of the system itself. A VTS beyond territorial seas of a coastal State solely on the basis of voluntary participation, but without the backing of an IMO adopted system, is also identified, recognising that, beyond territorial seas, a VTS can only be established on the basis of voluntary participation and is unlikely to be empowered to regulate or issue instructions.
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- Differentiation between a coastal and port VTS has also been removed. This recognises that the basic principles in the delivery of a VTS is the same in both circumstances.
- The existing reference to instructions to vessels being “result-oriented only” has been removed and replaced with a requirement for clear and concise VTS communications, particularly when responding to developing unsafe situations.
- The entire existing annex 2 on recruitment, qualifications and training has been removed and replaced with a high-level statement of requirements leaving the detail to the IALA subordinate documentation.
- VTS Authorities will, in future, be known as VTS providers to ensure a clear differentiation between VTS providers and competent authorities.

To ensure that IALA documentation remains in step with the new resolution, the IALA Guideline G1089 has been rewritten to reflect the changes relating to the Provision of a VTS.

Copies of both of these documents are enclosed. It should be noted, however, that these are provisional documents. It is possible, but highly unlikely, that the IMO Assembly might reject the revised Resolution. Assuming its adoption in December 2021, it is anticipated that it will be issued with immediate implementation in Q1 2022. Whilst Guideline G1089 has been approved by IALA Council, it may also need minor adjustment to reflect any changes made by IMO to the final version of the Resolution. Circulating these documents now will give those with an interest in, or responsibilities for, VTS the opportunity to review their VTS against the new guidance to assess any changes needed to ensure that they are compliant once the new Resolution is adopted.

It is suggested that note is taken of the following significant changes:

- The current IALA guideline 1089 highlights the fact that, even now, it would be normal for a VTS to offer all three Types of Service (INS, TOS & NAS), however, many VTSs have been reluctant to declare NAS and some have not declared the provision of TOS. The language of the new Guideline deliberately avoids the previous inference that the provision of assistance in navigational safety is in any way synonymous with “remote or shore-based pilotage”. From the adoption of the new Resolution there will be no “optional” Types of Service; either it is a VTS or it is a Local Port Service. All VTSs will be expected to provide the capabilities described in section 3 of the new Resolution – “Purpose of a VTS”. In addition to any internal changes that may result from this change, for many VTSs there will also be a need to amend the details promulgated to mariners in nautical publications.
- Aligned to the above, the IALA Guideline, identifies a further circumstance when a VTS might “respond to developing unsafe situations”. In addition to such support being provided when the VTS “observes a developing navigational situation” or “at the request of a member of a ship’s bridge team or an embarked pilot”, the guideline now also recognises situations when navigational support from a VTS forms part of a specific local operational procedure agreed to between participants; this addresses procedures such as those currently in place in some ports where a count-down of distance to run to a critical turn is provided by the VTS to the embarked pilot.
- The reference to “result-oriented” instructions has been interpreted by some VTSs and training institutions so literally that many VTS Operators have ended up tying themselves up in knots when attempting to provide appropriate navigation advice and recommendations. The term has been removed from the Resolution and communications guidance limited to a high-level statement that “*VTS communications should be timely, clear, concise and unambiguous*”. Detailed guidance on general communications principles, appropriate phrases and, in particular, communications when a VTS might need to respond to developing unsafe situations has been left to IALA to provide in the appropriate documentation (see below).

## Other Developments

Closely related to this is an update to IALA Guideline G1132 which is now entitled “*VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology*”. This has just been issued and can be downloaded from the IALA website. The need for global consistency in VTS communications and the inadequacy of the IMO’s Standard Marine Communications Phrases (SMCP) for VTS use has long been a concern. IALA has developed guidance to address this important issue and the previous version of guideline G1132 has been rewritten to provide updated general principles and expanded to include some standard phraseology for use in operational circumstances when time is critical or where misunderstandings might compromise safety. Accommodating the diverse views of different nations has been challenging and compromise necessary; indeed, those of us whose first language is English may find some of the proposed phrases unfamiliar and unnatural. In recognition of the impending removal of the term “result-oriented”, the guideline stipulated that phrases that might be used on-board to con a ship must be avoided; it does not, however, rule out advice such as recommending a course or direction to steer. The removal of this confusion should be a welcome change for VTS personnel.