REPORT

**on**

**the 16th session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue**

**(COMSAR)**



Contents

# 1. Introduction.

**2. e-Navigation**

**3.** **Review of the GMDSS**

**4 ITU Maritime Radiocommunications matters**

**5 Revision of the recommendation for the protection of the AIS VHF data link (Resolution MSC.140(76)**

**6 LRIT related matters**

**7. Recommended actions by IALA**

**8. Date of the next session**

**Annex**

Proposed agenda of the Sub-Committee on Radiocommunication and Search and Rescue, 17th session (21 - 25 January 2013)

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# 1. Introduction.

The 16th session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue was held at the IMO Headquarter in London during the period 12 to 16 March, 2012. It was attended by representatives from 73 Member States and 28 Observer Organizations. Jean-Charles Leclair was representing the Association.

The item of the agenda for the session of most interest to IALA members was the continuation of the development of the concept of e-navigation. At this session, COMSAR had to make a final review and to validate the gap analysis as established by the IMO Correspondence Group. It was done but not in the best conditions for lack of time as the Working Group in charge of the task was also working on LRIT matters, although, in its introductory speech, the new IMO Secretary General, Mr. Koji Sekimizu, urged the Sub-Committee not to delay further its work on e-Navigation.

Independently of the development of the e-Navigation concept, the Sub-Committee finalized its discussions on the Work Plan for the revision and modernization of the GMDSS for submission to MSC 90 (May 2012) for approval. This issue would provide the opportunity to start an in depth review of the GMDSS to take into account of evolving technologies and to enhance safety communications for the future. The Sub-Committee also approved the draft amendment of the MSC Resolution 140(76) for the protection of the AIS VHF data link as proposed by IALA.

Other important items discussed were LRIT, in particular the cost of the audits for the countries hosting a Data Centre and the outcomes of the ITU’s World Radiocommunication Conference 2012.

**2. e-Navigation**

In its opening speech of the meeting, the Secretary General of IMO, Mr. Koji Sikimizu, made the following declaration:

*“The Development of an e-navigation strategy implementation plan is again on your agenda.*

*The timeline for the development of the plan has not been met and I am concerned that the gap analyses, which will form the basis for further work, and which should have been finalized last year, have still to be completed.*

*Progress on this matter has been slow and I urge you to review your work and define the way forward. Only with a clearly defined scope and strategy, will the Organization be in a position to deliver a realistic implementation plan, acceptable to Member Governments and within a reasonable time frame.”*

Despite this the Working Group in charge of discussing e-Navigation was merged with the Working Group responsible for the LRIT matters. The result was that the time dedicated to e-Navigation was much reduced. Netherlands with several other delegations, including the IALA delegation, expressed their great concern regarding that decision. To succeed to achieve the review of the gap analysis within the time allocated, the IMO Secretariat, prepared a document summarizing the table prepared by the Correspondence Group. That document was discussed for the only gaps identified with a communication interest and finally only minor modifications were proposed.

However, during the plenary meeting, before establishing the working group, several delegations express their concerns with regard to the inclusion of prescriptive training requirements in the gap analysis that did not reflect "user friendly" and "innovative" approaches that were widely accepted as being integral to the e-navigation process. In their opinion, the design of equipment should be such that there would be no need for training. There were also concerns expressed regarding the comments provided by the Correspondence Group on the “next generation” AIS (including satellite AIS) and its potential use for e-navigation. Several delegations were of the opinion that it was too premature to consider a possible new generation of AIS before demonstrating a compelling need through appropriate IMO instruments. The IALA delegation expressed the view that, at this stage, any new functions and tools should be discussed; the choice for their adoption would only be done after the achievement of the cost-benefit analysis and the risk analysis. Therefore, there was a need to discuss the future development of AIS, otherwise the idea would not be developed at all.

**3. Review of the GMDSS**

Following the MSC request to COMSAR to address GMDSS modernization via a scoping exercise to be completed during COMSAR 15 and COMSAR 16, and thanks to the work of a correspondence group and of the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group, the Sub-Committee was in a position to approve a draft revised work plan as a new unplanned output on the “Revision and modernization of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System". If the Committee approve it at its next session in May, a new correspondence group will be able to start the “real” work on the review of the GMDSS. The terms of reference of that correspondence group proposed to the Committee are as follow:

*“After the approval by MSC 90 (16 to 25 May 2012) of the Work Plan and the new unplanned output on the "Revision and modernization of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System" for the COMSAR Sub-Committee, and the inclusion of this agenda item on the agenda of COMSAR 17, the Correspondence Group on the Review of the GMDSS, taking into account the approved Work Plan, should:*

*.1 develop, in particular, the draft High-level review of the GMDSS; and*

*.2 submit its report by Friday, 21 September 2012, to the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group (8 to 12 October 2012) for its consideration and finalization of the draft High-level review of the GMDSS for submission to COMSAR 17.”*

**4 ITU Maritime Radiocommunications matters**

**4.1 Outcome of the World Radiocommunication Conference 2012 (WRC-12)**

The group considered the outcome of WRC-12, the ITU's World Radiocommunication Conference 2012 (23 January to 17 February 2012), taking into account a document prepared by the Secretariat. In view of the importance of the issue and the insufficient time available to analyse it properly, the group decided to invite the Sub-Committee to send it to the eighth session of the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group on Maritime Radiocommunication Matters. A detail analysis of the outcome of WRC-12 identifying major areas of interest for IMO in view of preparing initial position to WRC-2015 will be prepared by the Joint IMO/ITU Experts and submitted to COMSAR 17. However, COMSAR 16 was invited to note that WRC-12 had agreed:

.1 on the harmonization of the maritime mobile service in the frequency band 415-526.5 kHz, resulting in an exclusive worldwide allocation for the maritime mobile service in the frequency band 495-505 kHz and a co-primary allocation in the frequency band 510-525 Hz; and

.2 to place GMDSS modernization and the implementation of e-navigation on the preliminary agenda for WRC-18.

**4.2 NAVDAT – Digital system for broadcasting maritime safety- and security-related information in the 500 kHz band**

The Sub-Committee further considered a document submitted by several delegations presenting the main performances of a digital system for broadcasting maritime safety- and security-related information in the 500 kHz band, named NAVDAT, and providing some applications of the system. It was noted that the system was fully in line with IMO's approved position on relevant WRC-12 agenda items, in which IMO had supported an exclusive primary allocation to the maritime mobile service in the band 495-505 kHz to fulfil possible requirements in future. After discussions, the Sub-Committee invited interested Member Governments to submit a proposal for a new unplanned output to the Committee.

**5 Revision of the recommendation for the protection of the AIS VHF data link (Resolution MSC.140(76))**

The Sub-Committee considered a document submitted by IALA, proposing to update resolution MSC.140(76) on the protection of the AIS VHF Data Link, to take into account that several AIS devices have been permitted since its adoption in 2002. Indeed, when it was initially adopted, it was in anticipation of only the dissemination of a large volume of information from the class B devices.

The Sub-Committee endorsed the draft MSC resolution on "Recommendation for the protection of the AIS VHF data link" as proposed by IALA with very little changes, and, subject to the concurrence by the Committee, agreed to bring it to the attention of the NAV Sub-Committee for comments as appropriate with the view to approval by MSC 91.

**6 LRIT related matters**

The LRIT system is now fully operational. However, port and coastal States do not show enough interest and several flag States complained about the cost of the system due, in particular, to the fees requested by IMSO to audit national and cooperative data centers. Furthermore, IMSO proposed to increase the frequency of the audits, added further charges on the flag States. The Sub-Committee considering that the question of the cost of the system is more of political nature, decided to forward the question to the Committee.

**7 Recommended actions by IALA**

# It is recommended that:

# 7.1 The Council

* Note the arrangements make by IMO Secretariat to discuss e-navigation related matters (item 2)
* Note the review of the elements and procedures of the GMDSS (item 3)
* Note the adoption of the revision of the recommendation for the protection of the AIS VHF data link (Resolution MSC.140(76), as proposed by IALA (item 5)

**7.2 The e-Navigation Committee**

* Note the arrangements make by IMO Secretariat to discuss e-navigation related matters (item 2)
* Note the review of the elements and procedures of the GMDSS (item 3)
* Note the adoption of the revision of the recommendation for the protection of the AIS VHF data link (Resolution MSC.140(76), as proposed by IALA (item 5)

# 8. Date of the next session.

The 17th session had been scheduled to take place from 21 to 25 January 2013 at the IMO headquarters in London.

\* \* \*

J.Ch. Leclair.

Accredited IALA Representative to IMO

21 mars 2012.

# Annex

**Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR)**

**17th session – 21 - 25 January 2013**

**Agenda proposed to the Maritime Safety Committee**

Opening of the session

1 Adoption of the agenda

2 Decisions of other IMO bodies

3 Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)

1. Revision and modernization of the GMDSS
2. Further development of the GMDSS master plan on shore-based facilities
3. Consideration of operational and technical co-ordination provisions of maritime safety information (MSI) services, including review of the related documents

4 ITU maritime radiocommunication matters

1. Consideration of radiocommunication ITU-R Study Group matters
2. Consideration of ITU World Radiocommunication Conference matters

5 Consideration of developments in Inmarsat and COSPAS-SARSAT

6 Search and Rescue matters

1. Development of guidelines on harmonized aeronautical and maritime search and rescue procedures, including SAR training matters
2. Further development of the Global SAR Plan for the provision of maritime SAR services, including procedures for routeing distress information in the GMDSS

7 Developments in maritime radiocommunication systems and technology

8 Development of amendments to the IAMSAR Manual

9 Development of measures to protect the safety of persons rescued at sea

10 Development of an e-Navigation strategy implementation plan

11 Consideration of LRIT related matters

12 Biennial agenda and provisional agenda for COMSAR 18

13 Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for 2014

14 Any other business

15 Report to the Maritime Safety Committee