Input paper: [[1]](#footnote-1) VTS56-10.4.2

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

**□** ARM **□** ENG **□** PAP X Input

**□** DTECX VTS **□** Information

Agenda item[[2]](#footnote-2) 10.4

Technical Domain / Task Number2 VTS Training/Task 3.1.1

Author(s) / Submitter(s) China Maritime Safety Administration

Proposal to Develop Guidance for Dealing with Stress or Trauma in VTS Operations

# Summary

The Task 3.1.1 Develop guidance for dealing with stress or trauma in VTS operations (VTS54-13.1 Report) was established at the VTS 54 meeting. It is scheduled to commence at the VTS 56 meeting and to be completed at VTS 60 meeting. Based on the experience of VTS operation and the practice of VTS personnel management, China MSA proposes the draft framework of the guidance.

## Purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for the development of the Guidance for Dealing with Stress or Trauma in VTS operations.

See Annex 1 for details.

**1.2 Related documents**

VTS51-Draft - Task register proposal 2022-2026 - Dealing with Stress

VTS54-WG3 Report-draft vs2

VTS54-13.1 Report of VTS54

# Background

VTS personnel are responsible for maritime traffic safety. They not only have to work night shifts, but also have to be alert to dangerous situations that may occur at any time. VTS personnel are under physical and psychological stress, and prone to excessive psychological stress and trauma in the long run, which affects their physical and mental health and ability to perform their duties. This issue has attracted extensive attention from IALA and national authorities.

During the VTS 54 meeting, Singapore MPA highlighted the focus on the improvement of the mental well-being of VTS personnel. The Working Group agreed and planned to conduct the task at the VTS 56 meeting.

# Discussion

## About stress and trauma

Stress and trauma, as subjective feelings, are sometimes not easily detected by external observers, or even by those who are experiencing stress or trauma. Therefore, it is necessary to do qualitative analysis of stress and trauma for VTS personnel to confirm whether they are exposed to stress or trauma, as well as quantitative analysis to confirm the degree and scope of being exposed to, so as to provide a basis for the subsequent response. The questionnaires provided in this proposal are composed of scientific and accurate mental health test scales (Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Impact of Event Scale-revised (IES-R)) recognized by the current psychological field, which have strong clinical reference significance.

## Effects of stress and psychological trauma on VTS personnel

Article 2.1 of Staffing Levels at VTS Centres (G1045) and Article 4.1.4 of Human Factors and Ergonomics in VTS (G1171) both clearly point out the harm of excessive psychological stress on VTS personnel. There were also speakers sharing views regarding reducing the workload and work stress of VTS personnel at the IALA 18th Conference on Navigation Marking Knowledge and Innovation. In the report of the 2014 meeting of the IALA ENAV Committee (now DTEC), it was also mentioned that stress may lead to mistakes. In addition, an survey report released by IALA in August 2016 also addressed fatigue and stress among VTS personnel.

## Prospects for the next steps of work

We have conducted related surveys within maritime safety administrations of China. Considering the significant differences in the working conditions of VTS personnel across various countries and regions, such as shift systems, workload, vessel traffic patterns in VTS areas, and internal management practices, it is requested that Working Group conduct extensive research among member States to comprehensively to understand the psychological stress and trauma experienced by VTS personnel worldwide. This will lay the groundwork for subsequent initiatives. Additionally, during the application of the aforementioned two scales (EAP\IES-R), attention must be paid to their localization, ensuring they are closely tailored to the specific national and regional contexts, incorporating procedures for retesting and calibration.

# References

[1] G1045 STAFFING LEVELS AT VTS CENTRES

[2] G1171 HUMAN FACTORS AND ERGONOMICS IN VTS

[3] IALA. Aids to Navigation Knowledge and Innovation 18th IALA Conference[R].2018.

[4] IALA. e-Navigation Underway 2014 Conference Report[R].2014.

[5] IALA. Preliminary-Report-IALA-VTS-Questionnaire-Aug-2016[R].2016.

# Action requested of the Committee

1.The Committee is requested to consider this proposal and take appropriate action.

1. Input document number, to be assigned by the Committee Secretary [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Leave open if uncertain [↑](#footnote-ref-2)