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## Contents

### OPINION

A message to the world’s seafarers 5

### INTELLIGENCE

IMO adopts anti-piracy resolution 6
France first to sign ship-recycling convention 6
Republic of Korea continues financial support 7
Assembly elects new IMO Council 7

### FROM THE MEETINGS

26th IMO Assembly 8
Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping (STW 41) 12
Sub-Committee on Stability and Load Lines and Fishing Vessels’ Safety (SLF 52) 14

### FEATURE

Lost in translation 16
2009 IMO Awards for Exceptional Bravery at Sea 19

### IMO AT WORK

IMO launches “Year of the Seafarer” 22
SOLAS Consolidated Edition 2009 published 22
Secretary-General opens new Arab Academy branch 23
Panama Canal head wins International Maritime Prize 23
Hydrographic survey for MEH underway 24
2010 ISM Code now available 24
WMU hosts “ballast water week” 26
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The International Maritime Organization has decided to dedicate this year to you, the world’s seafarers, by choosing, as the theme for World Maritime Day, “2010: Year of the Seafarer”. Our intention is to pay tribute to you, the world’s 1.5 million seafarers – men and women from all over the globe – for the unique, and all-too-often overlooked, contribution you make to the wellbeing of all of us.

We will do so with deep appreciation, in recognition of the extraordinary service you render every day of your professional lives, frequently under dangerous circumstances, in delivering, to the more than 6.5 billion people of the world, the wheat that makes our daily bread, the gas and oil that warm our homes or move our vehicles and the products we share and enjoy with our families and friends.

At IMO, we are ever-conscious of the important role you play in helping us achieve safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans – the goals that we, as the United Nations specialized agency charged with the regulation of international shipping and as a member of the global maritime community, have set ourselves.

And so, we will celebrate this year’s World Maritime Day theme with much pride in your contribution to our objectives, to the facilitation of more than 90 per cent of the world’s trade, and to sustainable human development.

In so doing, we also seek to reassure you, at the “sharp end” of the industry, that we, who are responsible for the international regulatory regime and who serve shipping from ashore, do understand the extreme pressures that you face and that, as a result, we approach our own tasks with a genuine sympathy for the work that you carry out.

At the same time, we will seek to add impetus to the “Go to Sea!” campaign, which we launched in November 2008 to attract new entrants to the shipping industry and, in particular, to encourage young people to follow in your footsteps by becoming the seafarers of tomorrow. We launched that campaign in association with the International Labour Organization, the “Round Table” of shipping industry organizations (International Chamber of Shipping, BIMCO, International Association of Independent Tanker Owners and International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners) and the International Transport Workers’ Federation, all of whom are joining us in celebrating the Year of the Seafarer.

Last, but mostly importantly, we want to convey to you a clear message that the entire shipping community appreciates and cares for you – as shown by the efforts we make to ensure that you are fairly treated when ships on which you serve become involved in accidents; are looked after when you are abandoned in ports; are not refused shore leave for security purposes; are protected when your work takes you into piracy-infested areas; and are not left unaided when you are in distress at sea.

1.5 million seafarers serving the daily needs of more than 6.5 billion citizens of the world! It is a fact that goes unnoticed or is taken for granted by most, but one that should be trumpeted loud and clear. For seafarers the world over deserve our respect, recognition and gratitude and, during 2010, we at IMO are resolved to ensure that the world does take notice of your exceptional role and contribution and of the special debt that all of us owe to you. We thank you for that!

With best wishes for the Year of the Seafarer – and a safe return home.
On 2 December 2009 the 26th regular session of the IMO Assembly adopted a resolution on piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters off the coast of Somalia, which, among other things, condemns and deplores all such acts, irrespective of where they have occurred or may occur.

Building on resolution A.1002(25), adopted by the Assembly in 2007, the new resolution welcomes the decision, taken on 30 November by the United Nations Security Council (through resolution 1897 (2009)), to renew, for a period of 12 months, its previous authorizations for States and regional organizations co-operating with the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to enter Somalia’s territorial waters and use all necessary means to fight piracy and armed robbery at sea off the Somali coast, provided advance notification was given by the TFG to the United Nations Secretary-General.

The IMO Assembly resolution (A.1026(26)) supports the Security Council resolution by appealing to all parties that may be able to assist, to take action (within the provisions of international law) to ensure that all acts or attempted acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships are stopped and any plans for committing such acts are curtailed; and that hijacked ships and any persons on board are immediately and unconditionally released and that no harm is caused to them.

The resolution also recommends that, when navigating through the Gulf of Aden, ships should follow the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor and take the advice and guidance provided. States are strongly urged to take all necessary legislative, judicial and law-enforcement action to enable them to receive and prosecute or extradite any pirates or suspected pirates and armed robbers.

France became the first country to sign, subject to ratification, the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, 2009 when H.E. Mme. Odile Roussel, Ambassador of France to IMO, signed the Convention on behalf of her country at IMO Headquarters in London on Thursday, 19 November 2009.

The Hong Kong Convention was adopted at a diplomatic conference in May 2009, attended by delegates from 63 countries. It is aimed at ensuring that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risk to human health and safety or to the environment.

The Convention will enter into force 24 months after the date on which 15 States, representing 40 per cent of world merchant shipping by gross tonnage, have either signed it without reservation as to ratification, acceptance or approval or have deposited instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession with the IMO Secretary General. Furthermore, the combined maximum annual ship-recycling volume of those States must, during the preceding 10 years, constitute not less than 3 per cent of their combined merchant shipping tonnage.
The Republic of Korea has continued its long-term support for IMO’s technical co-operation activities with another generous financial donation.

On Tuesday, 24 November 2009, Mr Choi Jang Hyun, Vice-Minister of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs, handed over a cheque for more than US$650,000 to IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos, comprising US$50,000 from the Korean Shipowners’ Association, US$100,000 from the Korean Register of Shipping and US$508,683 from the Government of the Republic of Korea.

In making this year’s donation, Mr Choi expressed the wish that the resources be used, in particular, for projects relevant to the theme selected for this year’s World Maritime Day, namely “2010: Year of the Seafarer”.

In addition to the cash donation, the Republic of Korea pledged to continue its in kind support for the Organization through the provision of an Associate Professional Officer to the Secretariat, valued at some US$150,000 - US$200,000 annually.

The IMO Assembly has elected the following States to be Members of its Council for the 2010-2011 biennium:

**Category (a)** 10 States with the largest interest in providing international shipping services:
- China, Greece, Italy, Japan, Norway, Panama, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, United States.

**Category (b)** 10 States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade:
- Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden.

**Category (c)** 20 States not elected under (a) or (b) above, which have special interests in maritime transport or navigation and whose election to the Council will ensure the representation of all major geographic areas of the world:
- Australia, Bahamas, Belgium, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey.

The newly elected IMO Council for 2010-2011 elected Mr. Jeffrey G. Lantz (United States, above) as its Chairman and re-elected Mr. Dumisani Ntuli (South Africa) as its Vice-Chairman.
IMO Assembly agrees mandatory audit scheme

The IMO Member State Audit Scheme, participation in which is currently voluntary, is to be made mandatory under a plan to institutionalize the Scheme agreed by the Organization’s highest governing body, the Assembly, when it met for its 26th regular session from 23 November to 2 December 2009.

The Assembly also updated IMO’s Strategic Plan for the next six years and High-level Action Plan for the next two years; agreed the Organization’s budget for the 2010-2011 biennium and adopted a wide range of technical and other resolutions, addressing issues varying from piracy through to guidelines for ships operating in polar waters.

IMO Member State Audit Scheme

According to the plan adopted by the Assembly through resolution A.1018(26), the IMO Member State Audit Scheme would be phased in as an institutionalized, mandatory scheme, through the introduction of appropriate requirements in the relevant mandatory IMO instruments. Amendments to these instruments would be adopted in 2013, for entry into force in January 2015. A resolution on the Framework and Procedures for the Scheme would also be adopted by the IMO Assembly in 2013, while preparatory work for the commencement of an institutionalized scheme would be carried out during 2014.

The Assembly urged Member States that have not yet volunteered for audits under the current, voluntary, scheme to do so, so that lessons can continue to
be learned from it. It also requested the Secretary-General to take action, within the Organization’s Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme, to assist Member States to participate in the Scheme and with building capacity to address related needs.

The Assembly also adopted amendments to the Code for the Implementation of Mandatory IMO Instruments, 2007, which serves as the audit standard for the Voluntary IMO Member State Audit Scheme. The amendments update the Code, to take into account amendments to mandatory IMO instruments that have entered into force or become effective since it was last revised, in 2007.

**High-level Action Plan**

IMO’s High-level Action Plan for 2010-2011 sets out in detail the planned outputs for the biennium and links them to the six-year Strategic Plan. The new Strategic Plan supersedes the previous version, and identifies strategic directions that will enable IMO to achieve its objectives in the years ahead. High-priority areas reflected in the strategic directions and high-level actions include:

- addressing the prevention and repression of acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships, in particular off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, and promoting capacity-building for that purpose in the affected countries;
- strengthening consideration of the human element in the rule-making process, and making adequate preparations to support the effective implementation of the revised International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW Convention) and STCW Code, due to be adopted in June 2010;
- contributing to worldwide efforts to address the phenomena of climate change and global warming, through the introduction of appropriate measures to limit and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from ships;
- promoting and raising the profile, quality and environmental consciousness of shipping; and
- identifying and addressing any capacity-building or other needs related to the safety or environmental aspects of ships not covered by IMO instruments (e.g. small vessels or vessels engaged solely in domestic trade).

**IMO ready for challenges**

Speaking at the close of the Assembly, IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos commended the Assembly for its work and said that IMO stood ready to face any new challenges.

“...in the coming biennium we cannot afford to be complacent in any way or think that problems will, by themselves, find their solution. We need to plan and be ready. We need to be proactive in getting ourselves in a strong position to face any adversity that may come our way – either in the form of a major accident at sea or in the form of a security scare or in the form of a pollution incident. We should be prepared to foresee trends, developments and challenges and capable of managing any risk within our sphere of competence,” he told delegates, adding, in this regard, that the Council’s oversight and coordination of IMO’s affairs helped to move the Organization from strength to strength.

As ever, alumni from the World Maritime University made up a significant proportion of the delegates.

“**We cannot afford to be complacent in any way. We need to plan and be ready**”

Mr. Paul Clark, Shipping Minister, United Kingdom, welcomed delegates to the Assembly on behalf of the host Government.
**IMO Assembly background**

The 26th session of the IMO Assembly was held at IMO Headquarters, London, from 23 November to 2 December 2009 and was attended by some 1,200 delegates from IMO Member States, as well as international and non-governmental organizations.

The Assembly is IMO’s governing body. All 169 Member States and three Associate Members are entitled to attend, as are the intergovernmental organizations with which agreements of co-operation have been concluded, and non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO. The Assembly normally meets every two years in regular session. It is responsible for approving the work programme, voting the budget and determining the financial arrangements of the Organization. It also elects the Council.

**Wide range of resolutions adopted**

Altogether, 21 resolutions were adopted by the 26th Assembly, on a wide range of topics, including those highlighted below. A full list can be found on the IMO website at http://www.imo.org/home.asp?topic_id=144.

**Piracy off the coast of Somalia**

The Assembly adopted a resolution on piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters off the coast of Somalia, which, among other things, condemns and deplores all acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships, irrespective of where such acts have occurred or may occur.

Building on resolution A.1002(25), adopted by the Assembly in 2005, the new resolution welcomes the decision, taken on 30 November by the United Nations Security Council (through resolution 1897 (2009)), to renew, for a period of 12 months, its previous authorizations for States and regional organizations to cooperate with the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to enter Somalia’s territorial waters and use all necessary means to fight piracy and armed robbery at sea off the Somali coast, provided advance notification is given by the TFG to the United Nations Secretary-General.

The Assembly also adopted the revised Code of Practice for the Investigation of the Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships, updating the Code of Practice adopted by resolution A.922(22) in 2001.

**Guidelines for ships operating in polar waters**

These new guidelines are based on the Guidelines for ships operating in Arctic ice-covered waters but have been substantially updated and extended to cover also the sea area off the Antarctic. They are intended to be applied to ships constructed or on or after 1 January 2011, although Governments are invited to apply the guidelines, as far as possible, before that date.

**2009 MODU Code**

The new Code revises and updates the Code for the Construction and Equipment of Mobile Offshore Drilling Units adopted in 1989 (resolution A.649(16)) and provides an international standard for mobile offshore drilling units of new construction, to facilitate the international movement and operation of these units and ensure a level of safety for them, and for personnel on board, equivalent to that required by the SOLAS Convention and the 1988 Protocol to the Load Lines Convention for conventional ships engaged on international voyages. The 2009 Code is intended to be applied to MODUs constructed on or after 1 January 2012.

**Code on Alerts and Indicators, 2009**

Intended to provide general design guidance and to promote uniformity of type, location and priority for alerts and indicators required by the SOLAS Convention (including relevant performance standards) and by the MARPOL Convention, as well as by other associated instruments and codes, this new Code updates, revises and replaces the Code on Alarms and Indicators, 1995 (resolution A.830(19)).

**Bunkers Certificates for ships in bareboat registry**

This resolution aims to provide guidance to the Party responsible for the issuance of Bunkers Certificates in respect of ships registered in a bareboat registry (i.e., when a vessel is temporarily permitted to fly the flag of another country while ownership remains in the underlying registry), by recommending, in part, that all States Parties to the International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage, 2001, recognize that Bunker Certificates should be issued by the flag State if it is a Party to the Convention.

**Resolution of stowaway cases**

This resolution recognizes the need to revise the Guidelines on the allocation of responsibilities to seek the successful resolution of stowaway cases (resolution A.571(20), adopted in 1997) to align them with section 4 (on stowaways) of the Annex to the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, 1965, (FAL Convention) as amended, prescribing standards and recommended practices on matters relating to stowaways (which were adopted in 2002 and which entered into force on 1 May 2003).

The Maritime Safety and Facilitation Committees were requested to undertake the revision, to reflect developments in measures to prevent stowaways, as well as to provide guidance and recommendations, taking into account the FAL Convention provisions on stowaways (i.e. measures that may be implemented by vessels for preventing cases involving stowaways).
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Groundwork completed for Manila conference

Draft amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (the STCW Convention), and its associated Code, have been approved by the Sub-Committee on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping (STW) and are ready for submission to the Diplomatic Conference that will meet in Manila, Philippines, from 21 to 25 June 2010, for adoption.

The proposed amendments mark the first major revision of the two instruments since those adopted in 1995, completely revising the original 1978 Convention. Among current proposals are a number of important changes to each chapter of the Convention, including:

- In chapter I, General provisions: improving measures to prevent fraudulent practices associated with certificates of competency; strengthening the evaluation process (monitoring of Parties’ compliance with the Convention); and standards relating to medical fitness standards for seafarers;
- In chapter II, Master and deck department: certification requirements for able seafarer (deck); celestial navigation, automatic radar plotting aids and radar requirements; marine environment awareness training; leadership and teamwork; and vessel-traffic-services training;
- In chapter III, Engine department: near-coastal requirements; marine environment awareness training; leadership and teamwork; upgrading of competences for engineers; and certification requirements for able seafarer (engine);
- Chapter IV, Radiocommunications and Radio Personnel is renamed Radiocommunications and Radio Operators and updated to reflect current regulations, including reference to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual;
- In chapter V, Standards regarding special training requirements for personnel on certain types of ships: competence requirements for personnel serving on board all types of tankers, including liquefied gas tankers; and regulations for personnel on “ro-ro passenger” and “passenger ships” combined to cover all “passenger ships”;
- In chapter VI, Emergency, occupational safety, security, medical care and survival functions, amendments include new requirements for maintaining professional competence in areas where training cannot be conducted on board; and new requirements for security training, as well as provisions to ensure that seafarers are properly trained to cope if their ship comes under attack by pirates;
- In chapter VII, Alternative certification: changes in other chapters are reflected, including addition of requirements for certification of able seafarers and specifications for approved seagoing service;
training required for certification of candidates at support level in various functions;

- In chapter VIII, Watchkeeping: updated and expanded requirements on hours of work and rest and new requirements for the prevention of drug and alcohol abuse.

The Sub-Committee also approved, for submission to the June conference, 13 draft resolutions relating to:

- The contribution of the International Labour Organization;
- Development of guidelines to implement international standards of medical fitness for seafarers;
- Revision of model courses published by IMO;
- Promotion of technical knowledge, skills and professionalism of seafarers;
- Attracting new entrants and retaining seafarers for the maritime profession;
- Promotion of technical co-operation;
- Transitional provisions and early implementation of the revised STCW Convention and Code;
- Promotion of the participation of women in the maritime industry;
- Accommodation for trainees aboard ships;
- Verification of certificates of competency and endorsements;
- Standards of training and certification and ships’ manning levels;
- Future amendments and review of the STCW Convention and Code; and
- Recommendation on measures to ensure the competency of masters and officers on ships operating in polar waters.

Safe manning levels

The Sub-Committee also completed its review of the principles for establishing the safe manning levels of ships and agreed a draft Assembly resolution on Principles of Minimum Safe Manning, which would replace the Principles of Safe Manning (resolution A.890(21), as amended).

The draft resolution will be submitted to the Maritime Safety Committee for approval at its 88th session in November 2010, subject to comments by the Sub-Committee on Safety of Navigation (NAV) at its 56th session in July 2010.

The Sub-Committee also endorsed proposed draft amendments to SOLAS regulation V/14 Ships’ manning, to require Administrations to take into account the guidance on minimum safe manning adopted by IMO (with a footnote referring to the Assembly resolution on Principles of Minimum Safe Manning), with a view to approval by MSC 88, subject to comments made by NAV 56.

“The draft resolution will be submitted to the Maritime Safety Committee for approval at its 88th session in November 2010”
Sub-Committee addresses fishing vessel safety

Draft Safety Recommendations for decked fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length and undecked fishing vessels were agreed by the Sub-Committee on Stability and Load Lines and on Fishing Vessels’ Safety (SLF), when it met for its 52nd session.

The texts will be submitted to the 87th session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), in May 2010, for approval and concurrent endorsement by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

The safety recommendations, applying to fishing vessels under 12 metres in length, will complement the revised Code of Safety for Fishermen and Fishing Vessels, 2005 (applying to vessels over 24 metres in length), and the Voluntary Guidelines for the Design, Construction and Equipment of Small Fishing Vessels, 2005 (applying to vessels between 12 and 24 metres in length), which were also approved by ILO and FAO.

Implementation options

The Sub-Committee discussed the options available to tackle the lack of sufficient ratifications to the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol in order to bring this important treaty on fishing vessel safety into force. In particular, the following two options were considered:

- development of an agreement on the implementation of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol, amending certain of its requirements. Following this, countries could consider ratification of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol under the terms and conditions contained in the agreement (countries would declare that they accept the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol under the terms of the agreement, when they deposit an instrument of ratification); and

- development of an Assembly resolution to facilitate the implementation of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol, under which Parties to the Protocol would be able to implement the necessary amendments immediately following its entry into force, even before the amendments are formally adopted under article 11 of the Protocol and put into force.

The above agreement would be a new legally binding instrument, offering a firm foundation to implement the Torremolinos Protocol on fishing vessel safety is still not in force.

“Following this, countries could consider ratification of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol under the terms and conditions contained in the agreement”
the amended Torremolinos Protocol, but Parties that have already ratified the Protocol might have to ratify the agreement as well. On the other hand, an Assembly resolution, while not legally binding, would provide a reasonable basis for Member States to ratify the Protocol, in which case Parties that have already ratified the Protocol would not have to ratify it again.

A correspondence group was instructed to prepare both a draft agreement and a draft Assembly resolution, and list the pros and cons for each option, for consideration at SLF 53, in 2011. The correspondence group was also tasked further to develop amendments to the Protocol, which are needed to bring it up to date and thereby encourage ratification of the treaty.

New methods of measuring vessel tonnage are under consideration

The Sub-Committee also agreed that an intersessional meeting of the working group on fishing vessel safety should be held during 2010, to finalize the options for the implementation of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol and further develop the associated amendments, so that the final instrument(s) could be adopted at the Assembly, in late 2011, or by a conference.

The Torremolinos Protocol has, to date, been ratified by 17 States, with an aggregate fishing vessel fleet of approximately 3,000 vessels of 24 metres in length and over. It will enter into force one year after 15 States with at least an aggregate fleet of 14,000 vessels of 24 metres in length and over, have ratified the Protocol. The aggregate fleet total has yet to be reached.

Open watertight doors

The Sub-Committee agreed to the draft Guidance for the determination by Administrations of the impact of open watertight doors on ship survivability under SOLAS regulation II-1/22.4 and previous SOLAS regulation II-1/15.9.3 and forwarded it to the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Equipment (DE 54) for finalization in October 2010. The guidance is intended to be applied by Administrations after they have initially determined the need for a watertight door(s) to remain open during navigation.

New generation intact stability criteria

The Sub-Committee continued its work on the development of new generation intact stability criteria, which would aim to provide methods of assessing ships that may be vulnerable to particular stability failure modes not adequately assessed by the existing criteria, contained in the mandatory International Code on Intact Stability (IS Code), 2008, which will enter into force in July 2010.

The Sub-Committee agreed an updated work plan for the development of draft vulnerability criteria that identify the possible susceptibility of a ship to partial (excessive roll angles/accelerations) or total (capsizing) stability failures and draft direct stability assessment procedures for stability failures in different conditions.

A correspondence group was established to continue the work.

Safe return for passenger ships

The Sub-Committee reviewed issues relating to the stability and sea-keeping characteristics of damaged passenger ships in a seaway when returning to port by own power or under tow and agreed to establish a correspondence group to develop draft Operational information for masters of passenger ships for safe return to port by own power or under tow. This work follows the adoption, in 2006, of revised passenger ship safety standards in the SOLAS Convention, that focus on designing passenger ships for improved survivability so that, in the event of a casualty, persons can stay safely on board as the ship proceeds to port.

The Sub-Committee also considered the issues of safety provided by damage stability regulations of SOLAS chapter II-1 for ro-ro passenger ships, compared with those of the so-called SOLAS 90 regulations and the Stockholm Agreement concerning specific stability requirements for ro-ro passenger ships undertaking regular scheduled international voyages between or to or from designated ports in North West Europe and the Baltic Sea; and subdivision standards for cargo ships, to ensure consistency of the application of subdivision standards for cargo ships in the revised SOLAS chapter II-1.

Review of Tonnage Measurement convention

The Sub-Committee reviewed options to improve the effect of the 1969 TM Convention on ship design and safety and generally agreed to focus on preparing amendments to the interpretations of the provisions of the 1969 TM Convention (circular TM.5/Circ.5), rather than amending the Convention itself.

A correspondence group on the issue was re-established to further consider improving the effect of the 1969 TM Convention on the design of ships, in particular with reference to the effect on safety; to address the issue of crew accommodation; to consider the tonnage measurement of ships carrying deck cargoes and, in particular, of containerships; and to identify and investigate the benefits and disadvantages of the options for improving the convention. The options include, in order of preference by the Sub-Committee: option A – ensure the integrity and uniform implementation of the existing gross and net tonnage parameters; option B – promote use of existing net tonnage for tonnage-based fees but take no other action; option C – amend TM Convention to establish a third tonnage parameter, namely, adjusted net tonnage, that includes deck cargo volume; and option D – a “maritime real estate” concept (perhaps as a third tonnage value under the 1969 TM Convention), with an associated resolution recommending use of this value for tonnage-based fees.

“The Torremolinos Protocol has, to date, been ratified by 17 States, with an aggregate fishing vessel fleet of approximately 3,000 vessels of 24 metres in length and over”
Lost in translation
By James Brewer

By day, and often late into the night, a team of highly qualified and skilled translators at IMO translate more than 50,000 pages a year – and the quantity is increasing.

As a specialised agency of the United Nations, IMO adheres to the parent organization’s official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, of which English, French and Spanish are designated “working languages.” Everything has to be available in these three working languages. Given the ubiquity of English in the maritime sector, the bulk of the translation work is from English into French and Spanish. Nevertheless, countries can submit documents in any of the three working languages and, while most of the time they do so in English, there is also a stream of Spanish contributions from Spain and the Latin American countries, as well as a similar francophone input. Only IMO instruments are translated into Arabic, Chinese and Russian, as well as assembly resolutions, council decisions, and reports of the IMO committees.

Just over 60 years old, IMO began with two working languages of English and French, and added Spanish in 1986. Over the years, the translators have handled more than 50 international conventions and treaties and a swelling number of codes, protocols, instruments, recommendations, guidelines and other documents, which have to read clearly in the six official languages.

So, what does it take to become an IMO translator? IMO calls for a university degree in translation, or in another subject plus a linguistic qualification. Your mother tongue must be one of the six official languages, and you must have an excellent knowledge of another two, plus translation experience. Your mother tongue is the one into which you will be translating. A high standard of computer literacy is sought. Temporary translators are one source of recruitment.

It is obvious that all at IMO must possess a grasp of the terms and issues exercising the maritime world, but much more is required than that. As well as technical terms, translators are obliged to think in the diplomatic, legal and more general contexts. “We are both generalists and specialists,” says Eduardo Hernández-Martín, Deputy Director of the Translation Services at the Conference Division. “You need expertise in many different fields.”

Nor is this ordinarily a job for ex-mariners or maritime administrators. “It is very difficult to attract people with a maritime background because they have to be linguists, which is not just a matter of speaking a language or two, but of knowing a language thoroughly and being able to write a text in your own language as if it were an original,” explains one of the IMO experts.

As in any organization, clearly there is a career path, but the translators also have the motivation of contributing to the IMO’s core objectives and goals. “There is a huge commitment and shared dedication,” says Ariane Gireud, head of the French Translation Section. “You do your work because you are committed.”

The IMO could hire the most seasoned translator from an external berth, but he or she might find it very difficult to absorb the ways and the mores of the organization.
One of the team says: “You are moving from one subject to another every other week. You need to know something about everything: communications, life-saving, fire protection, training, stability, load lines, so many subjects, and all of them highly technical.”

Terminology requires a lot of research, and this means time and dedication. The first thing is to understand the concept. Sometimes a direct translation makes sense; sometimes an English term has to be imported. IMO translators must refer to reliable sources, including trade bodies and government ministries, and where necessary consult the delegates themselves and technical officers at IMO. The translators have to check for mistakes, such as quoting the wrong reference to a related document.

Mr Hernandez-Martin warns that there are a variety of risks now that so many things are done electronically. Sometimes a sentence presented for translation makes no sense at all because there are a couple of words missing. He also points out that documents can be written by experts whose priority is to put their case rather than construct a flowing, literary sentence. “There are many things implied when experts are talking to other experts on a particular subject,” he says.

Isabel del Rio, who heads the Terminology and Reference Section created nearly five years ago for the Translation Services, says that the terminology database, known as IMOTerm, originally using three languages, has been substantially revised and upgraded into an interactive tool for the six languages of the Organization, collecting, so far, around 35,000 terms. If we compare the amount of data in IMOTerm to the United Nations terminology database, UNTerm, with 80,000 terms and catering for the various UN offices, IMO’s term base is substantial. Whereas UNTerm is accessible to the public, the access to IMOTerm is restricted to a limited number of users, although the possibility of widening access beyond delegates and staff is under consideration.

Most of the terms and expressions in IMOTerm are defined in the three official languages, with Arabic, Chinese and Russian entries increasing rapidly. Entries are based on the ongoing work, but if Ms del Rio and her colleagues encounter elsewhere terms or titles from other organizations or sources that could be useful, they are entered too.

The recent ship-recycling conference convened by IMO in Hong Kong needed a 40-page glossary of terms included in IMOTerm, which is becoming more than just a terminology database: it is a knowledge base, giving background support, references and information for the translator and other users.

“My section is a port of call for any request from any other UN agencies for information,” explains Ms del Rio. “In the same way, if translators or terminologists from another UN agency need something, they can refer to the network, the fraternity, of all the translation and reference sections in the UN.”

There are countless traps for translators. They have to take great care with acronyms, where three or four letters are used in a variety of fields and may mean something different each time. Increasingly, documents are submitted with acronyms, so the IMO people have to keep well informed about how they are applied, and what is the context.

Even such words as ‘requirements’ and ‘performance’ take on nuances in various languages. There is a difference between ‘including’ and ‘including, but not limited to...’.

“Last but not least” can acquire a new shade of meaning when translated; ‘several’ has to be separated from ‘a few,’ and ‘some’ and ‘many’ can be confused.

Often there are no direct equivalents. English is much more concise and its structure is quite different from the other official languages. It is very difficult to translate legal texts: ideally, the translator has to adhere to punctuation, for referring to an earlier ‘second sentence’ might turn out to correspond to a different sentence. A change in one word might mean a change to the whole sentence.

Even the term ‘security’, as defined in the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, posed a problem when it came to translating it into other languages. For instance, the Spanish word ‘seguridad’ means both safety and security, so a word for word translation would not have done the job. After some thought, it was decided that “security” should be translated as “protección” in Spanish.

No-one describes this skill as a creative task, for the translators must be scrupulously true to the original, but they must have a creative brain, and the ability to push beyond the latest technical dictionaries. In private conversation with any one of this talented group, this gift shines through. In contrast to the competence and craft these people deploy daily, language-machine translation offerings will always require significant revision by a professional translator.

As one of the team sums up the task of ensuring that texts are intelligible to the IMO’s constituency: “There is much research to be done, but the satisfaction is that, in the end, we are facilitating human communication.”

This article first appeared in BIMCO Bulletin

“There is a huge commitment and shared dedication,” says Ariane Gireud, head of the French Translation Section. “You do your work because you are committed.”
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2009 IMO Awards for Exceptional Bravery at Sea

The 2009 IMO Awards for Exceptional Bravery at Sea have been presented to a professional rescue swimmer who, in Arctic conditions, single-handedly rescued eight crew members of a foundered vessel in the Bering Sea, and to two amateur sailors who rescued three people from a sunken yacht in very heavy weather off a remote South Pacific coral reef.

The Award, a silver medal depicting on one side a search-and-rescue operation with a sinking ship in the background and a helicopter rescuing survivors from the sea in the foreground, and with the IMO logo on the reverse side, was presented to the winners by IMO Secretary-General Mitropoulos, at a special ceremony at IMO Headquarters on 23 November 2009, during the 26th session of the Organization’s Assembly.

Coast Guard hero
AST2 Abram A. Heller is a professional rescue swimmer with the United States Coast Guard. In the early hours of 23 March 2008, in arctic weather conditions, he single-handedly rescued eight crew members of the foundered F/V Alaska Ranger. He then gave up his place in the rescue helicopter to enable five rescuees to be taken to safety and waited, on a liferaft, for more than an hour for the return of the helicopter, along with three further survivors whom he had pulled into it. In so doing, he was deemed to have acted over and above the standard expected of a professional rescuer, particularly on his first deployment.

If these bald facts are impressive enough, the full account of the rescue that appears on the “Coast Guard Heroes” section of the United States Coast Guard website reveals the full extent of AST2 Heller’s bravery:

“On the morning of March 23, 2008, the fishing vessel Alaska Ranger, a 192-foot catch-processor with 47 persons on board, sank in the Bering Sea, 125 miles west of Dutch Harbor, Alaska. Arriving on scene in a Coast Guard helicopter amidst blowing snow and 30-knot winds, Petty Officer Heller witnessed an epic scene of blinking strobe lights that stretched across the cresting waves.

Knowing that the crewmembers of the Alaska Ranger had an ever-decreasing chance of survival, Petty Officer Heller rapidly deployed into the 15-foot waves and recovered three survivors. Continuing his search for victims, he carefully picked his way through debris and located two additional crewmembers who were completely entangled in the sunken vessel’s fishing gear. Working tenaciously beneath the dark and icy waters, he disentangled the victims from the netting and placed them into the helicopter’s rescue basket.

Recognizing that his recovery of the fifth survivor left no room in the helicopter for himself, he courageously remained behind in the wind-swept seas. With the helicopter perilously low on fuel, the cabin completely filled with survivors and more victims in sight, he requested the helicopter’s crew rescue raft for use in the water.

As the helicopter departed into the darkness and blowing snow, Petty Officer Heller, alone and undaunted, used all of his physical strength, instinct, and experience to assist three severely hypothermic fishermen into the life-raft. Over the next hour, he worked doggedly to keep the victims conscious.

As another rescue helicopter arrived, despite being severely hypothermic himself, he returned to the frigid waters and placed the victims, one at a time, into the basket for recovery.”

Family fortunes
The story of the other award recipients, the Conti family, is no less dramatic. The Contis were sailing their yacht, Ocealys, in the

“Working tenaciously beneath the dark and icy waters, he disentangled the victims from the netting and placed them into the helicopter’s rescue basket.”
South Pacific, with their two small children, when they picked up a distress call from the yacht *Timella*, which had struck a reef, two and a half hours’ sailing time away.

The Contis made contact with authorities in New Zealand and Fiji but, in the absence of marine or aviation rescue assets being available in time, they planned and executed the rescue of the three *Timella* crew members themselves, in the early morning of 13 October 2008, exposing themselves to considerable risk in the process.

Mr Conti’s own words, in an account sent to the Southland times, best describe the dramatic sequence of events of that night, from hearing the Mayday call to the actual rescue.

“We were awoken by something that every mariner dreads: “Mayday, mayday, mayday, Mayday, mayday, mayday. This is the sailing vessel *Timella*. We have struck a reef and we need assistance. Mayday, mayday, mayday.” I waited for some seconds to see if someone more appropriate than us would answer, like the authorities, or a passing cruise ship. No answer came.

The Contis attempted to alert SAR authorities, all the while keeping in radio contact with the *Timella* crew. They managed to raise the New Zealand High commission in Suva, New Zealand Search and Rescue authorities, police in Suva and the Fijian navy. Eventually, it became clear that Fijian SAR teams would not be able to reach the *Timella* in time. The lives of the *Timella*’s crew were now in the hands of Mr and Mrs Conti.

At 03.00 hours, *Timella*’s crew advised that the yacht was sinking. At that point, the Contis realised they had no choice: they had to try and rescue the crew of the doomed yacht themselves. Sailing directly into the storm, the *Ocealys* reached the scene at 5.30 a.m. and, in rough seas and high winds, the Contis managed to launch a dinghy to pick up the three *Timella* crew members, who, by now, were in the water, clinging to a deflated and partially sunken dinghy and rapidly running out of strength.

Speed was of the essence. So, too, was keeping calm and avoiding panic. Mr Conti recounts how, when he arrived on the scene, a line from an old film came into his head – the perfect line to ease the tension: “Good morning ladies and gentleman. My name is Maurice and I’ll be rescuing you today.”

Mr Conti estimates that, from the time he arrived on scene with the dinghy, to when the three *Timella* crew members were lying safely on the floor of the dinghy, no more than 90 seconds elapsed.

Nevertheless, the rescue itself was both difficult and dangerous. Mrs. Conti took the helm of *Ocealys*. She held the boat in a stationary pattern as close to the reef as safety permitted, all the while fighting the strong current swirling around the reef and aware that a wave might slam *Ocealys* herself against the reef, or throw someone in the water, or even crush them between the two boats.

But Mrs Conti was able to find the perfect heading and the *Timella* survivors, Liz, Ali and Cameron were taken aboard with little incident, although Cameron almost got a leg caught in the water, pulling it up just in time to avoid a serious injury.

Once everyone was on board and the dinghy was secured, *Ocealys* headed for the coast of Viti Levu. With the three survivors safely aboard, the Contis navigated for four hours in 25 to 30 knot winds to Likuri Harbor where the *Timella* crew, thankful for their lives, could finally disembark to the safety of dry land.

The IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea was established by the Organization to provide international recognition for those who, at the risk of losing their own life, perform acts of exceptional bravery in attempting to save life at sea or in attempting to prevent or mitigate damage to the marine environment – and, by so doing, help to raise the profile of shipping and enhance its image.

Efforts to repress piracy acknowledged with certificates to navies

In a linked ceremony, the Secretary-General also presented Certificates for Exceptional Services Rendered to Shipping and Mankind to the Commanding Officers, Officers, Petty Officers and Crews of navy ships that have participated in the international efforts to repress piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, thanking them “for their dedication, their courage, their commitment and for the sacrifices they make”.

Certificates were presented to Commanding Officers (or their representatives) of ships from Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, India, Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States.

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IMO launches “Year of the Seafarer”

IMO launched the theme for this year’s World Maritime Day – “2010: Year of the Seafarer” – at an event held at its London headquarters on 11 January 2010, co-hosted with the International Shipping Federation (ISF) and the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF).

Speaking at the event, Secretary-General Mitropoulos said 2010 promised to be an auspicious and important year for the seafaring profession, with a diplomatic conference meeting in Manila in June to adopt amendments that will bring the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (the STCW Convention), and its associated Code, fully up to date with today’s expectations.

Mr Mitropoulos said that designating 2010 as the Year of the Seafarer would help to reassure those who work at the “sharp end” of the industry – the seafarers themselves – that those responsible for the international regulatory regime understand the extreme pressures seafarers face and that they approach their task with a genuine sympathy for the work that seafarers carry out. The theme had also been chosen, he said, to allow the maritime community to pay tribute to seafarers for their unique contribution to society and in recognition of the vital part they play in the facilitation of global trade. It would also add impetus to the “Go to Sea!” campaign, which was launched by IMO in November 2008, in association with the International Labour Organization, the “Round Table” of international shipping associations and ITF;

SOLAS Consolidated Edition 2009 now available from IMO

A new consolidated edition of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), the most important of all the international conventions dealing with maritime safety, has been published by IMO. It provides an important reference for maritime administrations, ship builders, ship owners and operators, shipping companies, equipment manufacturers, training institutes and all others concerned with the SOLAS requirements.

SOLAS is one of the oldest maritime safety conventions, the first version having been adopted in 1914 following the sinking of the Titanic. Since then, there have been four more versions of the Convention. The present version was adopted in 1974 and entered into force in 1980, and has subsequently been amended many times to keep it up to date.

The SOLAS Consolidated Edition 2009 provides a consolidated text of the SOLAS Convention, its Protocols of 1978 and 1988 and all amendments in effect from 1 July 2009. It includes new regulations adopted since the 2004 edition was published, including regulation V/19-1 on long-range identification and tracking of ships; regulation II-1/3-8 on mooring and towing equipment; and regulation II-1/35-1 on bilge pumping arrangements.

The SOLAS provisions for corrosion protection have been updated and expanded, with the new requirements incorporated in a revised chapter II-1, which includes probabilistic requirements for subdivision and damage stability.

The appendix containing the “form of certificates” includes the fully revised safety certificates for nuclear passenger and cargo ships. The revised “list of certificates and documents required to be carried on board ships” is also included.

SOLAS Consolidated Edition 2009 is available from authorized distributors of IMO publications (http://www.imo.org/Publications/mainframe.asp?topic_id=429) and via IMO’s online bookshop.

Technical details:
432 pp A4, product code: IE110E, ISBN: 978-92-801-1505-5, price £75. Also available on CD (DG110E, 978-92-801-7029-0, £75), and as an annual online subscription (S110E, £99).
 IMO Secretary-General opens new branch of the Arab Academy

IMO Secretary-General Mitropoulos formally opened an extension to the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport (AASTMT) on a new 77-acre site in Port Said, Egypt, on Saturday, 9 January.

Contrary to global trends, in recent years the AASTMT has seen an increase in demand from students seeking to join its maritime navigation and marine engineering courses. As a result, the number of students at the College of Maritime Transport and Technology has increased from 400 students in 2005 to a remarkable 2800 students in 2009.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the new branch in Port Said, Mr Mitropoulos drew attention to the vital role that the Academy and other training establishments must play as shipping addresses its much-heralded labour supply problem.

“The opening, today, of this new facility will be welcomed not just in the Arab world but in the maritime industry as a whole. For it comes at a time when shipping is coming to grips with its long-predicted labour supply shortage. There is no doubt that shipping needs to re-launch itself as a career of choice for today’s young people, and modern, sophisticated training establishments such as this will be essential elements if that process is to succeed,” he said.

The Academy has a strong track record of offering assistance to those less fortunate. Every year since 2003, it has made available two scholarships for candidates from Africa, leading to the award of a Bachelor’s degree in maritime navigation. In 2009, this was increased to 10 full scholarships, enabling candidates from Africa to enrol in the Academy. Moreover, from 2003 to 2008, the Academy made a welcomed financial contribution to the implementation of IMO’s Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme of US$10,000 annually. In July 2009, this contribution was extended to US$100,000 for the 2010-2011 biennium.

Panama Canal head gets International Maritime Prize

The prestigious International Maritime Prize for 2008 has been presented to Mr. Alberto Alemán Zubieta (right), Administrator of the Panama Canal Authority, for his contribution to maritime safety, security and prevention of pollution from ships.

The International Maritime Prize is awarded annually by IMO to the individual or organization judged to have made the most significant contribution to the work and objectives of the Organization. The 102nd session of the IMO Council in June 2009 took the decision to award the prize to Mr. Alemán.

Mr. Alemán has degrees in Civil Engineering and Industrial Engineering from Texas A&M University and was Chief Executive Officer of one of Panama’s largest construction companies before becoming, in 1996, Chief Executive Officer and Administrator of the Panama Canal Commission, the United States Government federal agency which administered the Canal until 31 December 1999. In 1998, he was appointed as the Panama Canal Authority’s Administrator, a role which he performed simultaneously with that of Administrator of the Commission. He has led the Panama Canal Authority since it took over the running of the Canal in 2000.
Hydrographic survey for MEH underway

A hydrographic survey within the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, to produce an updated electronic navigation chart of the area, is now underway, as part of the Marine Electronic Highway (MEH) Demonstration Project, a regional project of the Global Environment Facility (GEF)/World Bank, being executed by IMO.

The specially-refitted survey vessel MV Anila Adni sailed on 10 February 2010 from the Loyang Offshore Supply Base in Singapore to the survey site, with surveyors and crew from GEMS Survey Limited and the MEH Project Oversight Team, which includes six hydrographers from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore.

The surveyors will use shallow-water multi-beam and side-scan sonar technology to acquire accurate hydrographic survey data, including the location of any obstructions such as wrecks, covering an area of 621.28 km² around the One Fathom Bank, around 14 per cent of the total area of the TSS. The target area to be surveyed has a depth of less than 25m. Some parts of the target area have been resurveyed at various times between 1972 and 2005, but this survey will provide completely up-to-date data.

A US$2.754 million contract for the hydrographic survey in the Straits was signed on 20 May 2009 between GEMS and IMO. Altogether, the survey will take a total of 50 days, including two port calls in Port Klang, Malaysia.

The MEH Project aims to establish a regional mechanism in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore for enhanced maritime safety and marine environment protection, in a co-operative arrangement with the three littoral States (Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore) as well as the Republic of Korea, the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO) and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS).

The demonstration project will link shore-based marine information and communication infrastructure with the corresponding navigational and communication facilities aboard transiting ships, while also being capable of incorporating marine environmental management systems. The MEH is being built on a network of electronic navigational charts using electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS) and environmental management tools, all combining in an integrated platform covering the region that allows the maximum amount of information to be made available both to ships and shippers as well as to shore-based users, such as vessel traffic services.

The overall system – which will also include positioning systems and real-time navigational information like tide and current data, as well as providing meteorological and oceanographic information – is designed to assist in the overall traffic management of the Straits and provide the basis for sound marine environmental protection and management.

The funding for the hydrographic survey comes out of a US$6.86 million grant agreement signed in June 2006 between the GEF/World Bank and IMO.

2010 edition of ISM Code NOW AVAILABLE

The 2010 edition of the International Safety Management (ISM) Code, which includes all related guidelines and consolidates all amendments to the Code adopted since the last edition was published in 2002, is now available from IMO.

The 2010 edition provides a valuable reference for maritime administrations, ship builders, owners and operators, shipping companies, academia, engine and equipment manufacturers and others with interest in ensuring safety at sea and avoidance of damage to the environment. It includes:

- Guidelines on implementation of the ISM Code by Administrations (IMO Assembly resolution A.1022(28);
- The complete text of SOLAS chapter IX Management for the Safe Operation of Ships, as amended in 2000 and 2005;
- Guidelines for the operational implementation of ISM Code by companies (MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.5);
- Guidance on the qualifications, training and experience necessary for undertaking the role of the designated person under the provisions of ISM Code (MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.6); and
- Guidance on near-miss reporting (MSC-MEPC.7/Circ.7)


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Leading scientific experts engaged in the fight against alien species transported in ships’ ballast water came together in January at the World Maritime University (WMU) in Sweden, in a week-long series of ballast water management-related meetings. The event was jointly organized by the GloBallast Partnerships Programme, IMO’s Global Industry Alliance for Marine Biosecurity (GIA) and WMU.

The first Global R&D Forum on Emerging Ballast Water Management Systems brought together maritime industry, academia and technology-development leaders in the field of ships’ ballast water management for a comprehensive overview of this rapidly expanding area of research and development and technology commercialization.

Earlier, the first Global Expert Forum on Ballast Water Treatment Test Facility Harmonization brought together all the major ballast water treatment test facility operators to discuss the latest in technology-testing approaches and the need for harmonization. This represented a proactive effort, by IMO, to establish efficient and comparable systems’ testing as part of the approval process for ballast water management systems, under the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships’ Ballast Water and Sediments (BWM Convention), which was adopted by the Organization in 2004.

Although the convention has not yet entered into force, a number of ballast water management systems that meet the standards set out in the convention have already been approved by national Administrations. Comprehensive guidelines on the approval process for such systems have been adopted by IMO.

On 26 January, WMU also hosted a workshop to discuss the outcomes of a major study, sponsored by the GIA, that provides a first review of the scientific basis for establishing environmental equivalency between traditional treatment systems, such as those using mechanical, physical and chemical treatment of ballast water, and emerging alternative concepts. The development of guidelines for establishing such equivalency is expected to remove the last barriers against new and innovative ideas coming to the market to complement current treatment-based technologies.

Additionally, on 29-30 January, WMU hosted the European Union-supported Ballast Water Opportunity project’s first annual conference. WMU is one of the leading partners in the project and the GloBallast Partnerships Programme is an affiliated partner.
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