

IMO is a technical organization and most of its work is carried out in a number of committees and sub-committees, overseen by the Council and Assembly.

All the committees and sub-committees of IMO are open to participation by all Member Governments on an equal basis.

The IMO Secretariat is headed by the Secretary-General, assisted by a staff of some 300 international civil servants. The Secretary-General is appointed by the Council, with the approval of the Assembly.

Implementation

IMO adopts international shipping standards regulations and it is the responsibility of Governments to implement them. Implementation of IMO standards is crucial to achieving IMO's objectives.

The flag State of the ship has the ultimate responsibility for ensuring the ship meets applicable standards and for issuing certificates confirming the ship is seaworthy and the crew properly trained.

Port State control exists to catch the ships that slip through the flag State net of inspections and surveys. Most IMO conventions contain provisions allowing for port State control officers to inspect ships flying foreign flags when in port. IMO has encouraged the development of regional port State control organizations, where countries involved share information on ships inspected, so sub-standard ships can be targeted and ships that are up to standard will not be detained by unnecessary inspections.

Technical assistance

Countries that are having difficulties in implementing IMO conventions can request assistance under IMO's Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme. The main emphasis of the programme is on training and IMO has three international training institutes under its auspices: the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden; the International Maritime Law Institute in Malta; and the International Maritime Academy in Trieste, Italy.

IMO Conventions and Protocols

The Conventions and Protocols adopted by IMO enter into force after a minimum number of States have given their consent to be bound by the instrument. In some cases, the minimum number of States must also represent a minimum percentage of the world's registered tonnage of merchant shipping (for example, 15 representing 50 per cent of the world's tonnage).

Most of the Conventions have been updated and amended to keep them up to date and many contain a provision for a tacit acceptance procedure, for adoption of amendments to the technical provisions of the instrument, following consideration by an IMO body such as the Maritime Safety Committee, Marine Environment Protection Committee or Legal Committee. Once adopted, the amendments are deemed accepted by a certain date unless a specified number of countries state their objections to the amendments. In other cases, amendments are adopted by means of a Protocol to the existing Convention and this has to be ratified by a specified number of countries before it can enter into force.

Selected list of Conventions and Protocols which have been adopted under the auspices of IMO:

Maritime safety

International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974
SOLAS Protocol 1978
SOLAS Protocol 1988

Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREG), 1972

International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978

International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F), 1995

What is IMO

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the specialised agency of the United Nations with responsibility for safety and security at sea and the prevention of marine pollution from ships.

Established by means of a Convention adopted in 1948, IMO first met in 1959 and is the only United Nations agency with its headquarters in London. Over the years IMO has adopted some 40 Conventions and Protocols and numerous Codes and recommendations relating to safety, pollution prevention, security measures, liability and compensation issues and facilitation of international maritime traffic.

IMO: Safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans

International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR), 1979

International Convention on Load Lines (LL), 1966
LL Protocol 1988

Special Trade Passenger Ships Agreement (STP), 1971
Protocol on Space Requirements for Special Trade Passenger Ships, 1973

International Convention for Safe Containers (CSC), 1972

Convention on the International Maritime Satellite Organization (INMARSAT), 1976

The Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels (SFV), 1977
SFV Protocol 1993

Marine pollution

International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL 73/78) Annexes I/II (Oil/Noxious liquid substances) are mandatory for States who consent to be bound by MARPOL 73/78

Annex III (Goods in packaged form) is optional

Annex IV (Sewage) is optional

Annex V (Garbage) is optional
MARPOL Protocol 1997 Annex VI (Air pollution) is optional

International Convention Relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties (INTERVENTION), 1969
INTERVENTION Protocol 1973

Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (LC), 1972
LC Protocol 1996

International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation (OPRC), 1990

International Convention on the Control of Harmful Anti-fouling Systems on Ships (AFS), 2001

Liability and compensation

International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage (CLC), 1969

CLC Protocol 1976
CLC Protocol 1992

International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Compensation for Oil Pollution Damage (FUND), 1971

FUND Protocol 1976

FUND Protocol 1992

FUND Protocol 2000

FUND Protocol 2003

Convention relating to Civil Liability in the Field of Maritime Carriage of Nuclear Material (NUCLEAR), 1971

Athens Convention relating to the Carriage of Passengers and their Luggage by Sea (PAL), 1974
PAL Protocol 1976

PAL Protocol 1990

PAL Protocol 2002

Convention on Limitation of Liability for Maritime Claims (LLMC), 1976
LLMC Protocol 1996

International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (HNS), 1996

Protocol on Preparedness, Response and Co-operation to Pollution Incidents by Hazardous and Noxious Substances (HNS Protocol), 2000

International Convention on Civil Liability for Bunker Oil Pollution Damage, 2001

Other subjects

Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL), 1965

International Convention on Tonnage Measurement of Ships (TONNAGE), 1969

Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Maritime Navigation (SUA), 1988
Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf, 1988

International Convention on Salvage (SALVAGE), 1989



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