

## International Maritime Organization (IMO) History

Since the mid-19th century a number of international treaties were adopted to improve safety at sea, however several countries proposed that a permanent international body should be established to promote maritime safety more effectively. The Convention establishing the International Maritime Organization (IMO) was adopted on March 17, 1948, implemented in 1958, and met for the first time in January 1959. In 1982, the name was changed from Intergovernmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO) to IMO.

The IMO is a specialized agency of the United Nations. The purpose of the organization, as noted in Article 1(a) of the Convention, is “to provide machinery for cooperation among Governments in the field of governmental regulation and practices relating to technical matters of all kinds affecting shipping engaged in international trade; to encourage and facilitate the general adoption of the highest practicable standards in matters concerning maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of marine pollution from ships.” The organization is also empowered to deal with administrative and legal matters related to these purposes. The IMO motto sums up its objectives: “Safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans.”

As a major maritime nation, the United States (U.S.) has always been involved with the development of international conventions to protect the safety of life at sea and the marine environment. The U.S. has been a prime force within the IMO since its inception. Over the years, the U.S. has ratified most of IMO’s conventions and takes seriously its responsibility to apply these instruments to U.S. vessels engaged in international trade. Similarly, the U.S. also asserts its rights as a Port State to enforce the conventions regulations on non-U.S. ships calling in its ports.

IMO currently has 170 Member States and 3 Associate Members.

For more information, visit the [IMO homepage](#).