

International Maritime Organization (IMO) Process

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) works under United Nations (UN) working protocol, and all meetings are conducted according to a published agenda. All member countries, associate members, and non-governmental organizations may introduce submission (position papers) to the committees and sub-committees for consideration.

Initial work is done in a sub-committee by their own initiative or under recommendation from a committee. The committees dictate the work program for all sub-committees.

Committees and sub-committees can divide the work into working groups, drafting groups, and correspondence groups.

For conventions or protocol, the work is normally done by a committee or sub-committee. The draft instrument is submitted to a conference, to which delegations from all UN member states, including those which may not be IMO members, are invited. The conference adopts a final text, which is submitted to governments for ratification.

Once adopted, an instrument comes into force after fulfilling certain requirements, which always include ratification by a specified number of countries. Implementation of the requirements of a convention is mandatory for countries that are parties to it.

Any amendments to existing IMO conventions adopted by the MSC would enter into force on a predetermined date unless they were objected to by a specific number of states.

For code, resolutions, or recommendations, the work is normally done by a committee or sub-committee. Work performed by a sub-committee is forwarded to its respective committee. The draft instrument is submitted to the IMO Assembly for adoption. Once adopted by the Assembly, the instruments are not binding on a government, but their contents can be very important.