



SUBMISSION TO THE NINTH MEETING OF THE UN CONSULTATIVE PROCESS ON “MARITIME SECURITY AND SAFETY”

1 Information regarding the activities currently undertaken by IMSO related to maritime security.

One of the latest initiatives taken by the international community to contribute to the enhancement of the maritime security is the establishment of the long-range identification and tracking of ships system (LRIT). Proposals for long-range identification and tracking of ships first came after the development of special measures to enhance maritime security in the wake of 9/11 terrorist attacks. However it was recognised from the beginning that the implementation of a global LRIT system would present numerous challenges: politically, legally and technologically. After numerous meetings of the different bodies of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), that Organization incorporated regulations for LRIT within the Convention of safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS Convention), by introducing amendments to its Chapter V and adopting performance standards and functional requirements for the LRIT system.

New SOLAS regulation V/19-1 on long-range identification and tracking of ships was adopted by IMO Resolution MSC.202(81), on 19 May 2006, and will enter into force on 1 January 2008. This regulation establishes that all ships subject to the SOLAS Convention will be obliged to transmit information on their identity, location and date and time of the position, normally four times a day.

IMO also adopted Resolution MSC.210(81) on performance standards and functional requirements for the long-range identification and tracking of ships, and Resolution MSC.211(81) on arrangements for the

timely establishment of the long-range identification and tracking system.

The architecture of the LRIT system is based around the idea of distributed data centres. These centres could be established by individual countries (national centres), or several countries could cooperate to form a regional or cooperative centre. Those countries that will not host a national centre or will not participate in a regional or cooperative centre will have the opportunity to use an international centre to be designed by IMO.

All ships subject to SOLAS Convention requirements shall transmit the LRIT information using a communication system which provides coverage in all areas where the ship operates. In practice, ships will use mobile satellite communication systems to transmit LRIT information. The shipborne equipment should be set to automatically transmit the ship's LRIT information at 6-hour intervals to the LRIT Data Centre identified by the Administration, unless the LRIT Data User requesting the provision of LRIT information specifies a more frequent transmission interval.

The exchange and routing of LRIT information between LRIT centres to the relevant governments and Search and Rescue (SAR) authorities will be the responsibility of an International Data Exchange.

Governments will be entitled to receive LRIT information of ships in several different capacities. As flag state, a government can receive LRIT information of all ships under its flag wherever there are. As a port state, a government can receive LRIT information of all ships that have reported destination to any of its ports and terminals. As coastal state, a government can receive LRIT information of all ships transiting within one thousand miles from its coast. In addition, the search and rescue services can obtain LRIT information of any ship involved in a SAR operation.

To ensure that the LRIT system is implemented in accordance with the standards established by IMO, certain aspects of the performance of the system are to be overseen, reviewed and audited by an LRIT Co-ordinator.

In December 2006, IMO appointed the International Mobile Satellite Organization (IMSO) as the LRIT Co-ordinator, to act on behalf of all SOLAS Contracting Governments.

The role of IMSO as LRIT Co-ordinator is established in section 14 of Resolution MSC.210(81), and includes assistance in the establishment of the International LRIT Data Centre and International LRIT Data Exchange by participating in the development of technical specifications; issuing requests for the submission of proposals for the establishment and operation of the International LRIT Data Centre and International LRIT Data Exchange; evaluating the management, operational, technical and financial aspects of the proposals received; and participating in the initial developmental testing of the LRIT system.

IMSO, as the LRIT Co-ordinator, should also perform some administrative functions, such as: investigation of disputes and operational, technical and invoicing difficulties and make recommendations for their settlement to the parties concerned; participation in the testing for the integration of new LRIT Data Centres into the LRIT system; and participation in the testing of new or modified procedures or arrangements for communications LRIT Data Centres.

IMSO will also undertake a continuing review of the performance of the LRIT system. In this respect, IMSO should review the performance of Application Service Providers providing services to the International LRIT Data Centre; audit the performance of all LRIT Data Centres based on archived information and their fee structures; audit the performance of the International LRIT Data Exchange and its fee structure; and verify that Contracting Governments and Search and rescue services receive the LRIT information they have requested and are entitled to receive.

IMSO is now preparing itself to accomplish these new functions. In particular, it is seeking sources of start-up funding, hiring the necessary staff and developing some of the technical documentation that will be needed to specify the audit and review procedures. IMSO is also preparing standard texts for the legal documentation that will define the Organization's relationship with those commercial and governmental agencies that will be subject to the audit and review process.

2 Information regarding the activities currently undertaken by IMSO related to maritime safety.

The current primary role of IMSO is the oversight of certain public satellite maritime safety communication services. These public services include:

- services for maritime safety within the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) established by the International Maritime Organization (IMO);
- distress alerting;
- search and rescue co-ordinating communications;
- maritime safety information (MSI) broadcasts; and
- general communications.

IMSO is established under the provisions of the Convention on the International Mobile Satellite Organization which also defines the public services, such as satellite services for the GMDSS, that are subject to international oversight.

The Organization has a form of public-private partnership contract with Inmarsat Ltd through a Public Services Agreement which sets out the obligations of Inmarsat Ltd in respect of the relevant public services, as well as defining the oversight mechanism that exists between Inmarsat and IMSO. A Public Services Committee which meets every three months provides formal regular contact between the company and the organization. Similar arrangements will be put in place when IMO recognises other mobile satellite service providers for participation in the GMDSS, as has been provided for a recent new resolution which is in the process of being adopted by the IMO.

IMSO also owns a “special share” in Inmarsat Ltd which provides a mechanism to ensure that any commercial decisions taken are not detrimental to the public services.

IMSO works closely with UN, IMO, ICAO, ITU and other interested international organizations, as well as Inmarsat Ltd itself, in developing recommendations, standards and operational practices that support and may improve the public services. The Organization's special relationship with IMO is fostered and maintained by regular reports to the IMO Maritime Safety Committee on the provision and quality of satellite services for the GMDSS, and continuing detailed work on the establishment of the International LRIT System.

The Organization operates through:

- the Assembly of Parties, integrated by its 91 member States, which generally meets every two years;
- the Directorate, headed by the Director, who is the Chief Executive Officer and legal representative of IMSO; and
- an Advisory Committee, comprising a number of Member States, appointed by the Assembly, which meets regularly.

3 Suggested recommendations with an emphasis on areas where coordination and cooperation at intergovernmental and inter-agency levels could be enhanced.

There is continuing pressure on the use of the radio spectrum for all purposes today. This is leading to potential problems concerning the re-allocation of spectrum currently used by the satellite services for maritime distress and safety purposes. It is a unique feature of these services that the only way to achieve change is through the launching of new satellites - those currently in orbit and used to provide these services cannot be modified while in space. Evolution of the use of spectrum therefore requires considerable specialist understanding and careful management. The level of co-ordination and co-operation presently seen between the key agencies involved does not obviously result in sufficient primacy being given to these services, which are essential for the safety of life and property at sea, and IMSO believes there is considerable scope for enhanced understanding and practice in this respect.