IMO HYBRID SYMPOSIUM
"MARITIME SINGLE WINDOW 2024 – A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITIES"
18-19 JANUARY 2023

The IMO, in partnership with IAPH and BIMCO, held an IMO Symposium on the
"**Maritime Single Window 2024 – Window of opportunities for shipping and ports**"
which took place in hybrid mode on 18 and 19 January 2023 at IMO Headquarters in
London. This acknowledged adoption of amendments by the IMO's Facilitation Committee
to the Facilitation (FAL) Convention which will make the single window for data exchange
mandatory in ports around the world, marking a significant step in the acceleration of
digitalisation in shipping.

The mandatory obligation for Member States to establish systems for electronic data
exchange and to implement maritime single window (MSW) enters into force on 01
January 2024, presenting a window of opportunity for shipping and ports to use robust
international standards in accelerating digitalisation, communicating better between ships
and shore, improving port call efficiencies and ultimately reducing emissions.

The symposium brought together experts from Governments, ports, the shipping industry,
and standards organisations, to discuss the key challenges and opportunities from
implementation of MSWs. Speakers with hands-on experience shared success factors and
lessons learnt to date during the development, implementation and operation of the MSW.
Attendees also heard about MSW project scoping, stakeholders' engagement, key
performance indicators on the use and benefits of the MSW, the institutional framework
required, and coordinated border management practices. The symposium was conducted
in English without interpretation but was also made available on the IMO YouTube
Channel.

Governments, port authorities, industry associations, shipowners, and solution providers
were encouraged to attend the Symposium in person, but where this was not possible, to
join the proceedings on-line, given the hybrid nature of the event.

Welcoming addresses were given by :

Kitack Lim, Secretary General – IMO;

Subramaniam Karuppiah, President – IAPH; and,

Nikolaus Schües, President Designate – BIMCO

The Symposium consisted of six Panels, administered by an Administrator, comprising
[generally] 5/6 pertinent experts as follows:

PANEL 1. Maritime Single Window (MSW) as part of the national digitalisation strategy
and the greening of shipping objective.

Speakers addressed the broader context of the MSW, questioning where the MSW fits into the overall digitalisation strategy of Member States. They surmised how it might improve the maritime supply chains resilience and sustainability but pondered where the MSW would fit within broader initiatives such as single window environment. They also speculated how the MSW fits in with the green and digital shipping corridors concept and what might be the role of MSW in a broader, single window environment.

PANEL 2. Pragmatic approach towards MSW implementation – from vision to realisation.

In this session, speakers shared both success factors and challenges faced during the development, implementation and operation of the MSW. The audience learned about MSW project scoping and stakeholders' engagement; key performance indicators on the use and benefits of the MSW; the institutional framework required; and, coordinated border management practices from hands-on experienced practitioners.

PANEL 3. Possible architectures for MSW: either as a standalone system, a module of national single window, or as part of a port community system.

This session considered the suitable MSW structures applicable to countries and ports in order to achieve their trade facilitation objectives. It also aimed to clarify the characteristics between an MSW and other forms of single windows used in maritime-related ship-shore communication including a national single window (NSW) and port community system (PCS).
In his summing up, the Moderator of the Panel felt that the MSW could either stand-alone or be integrated into the PCS but that the overall goal should be to share information between ship and shore. In his view, the MSW architecture should follow the functionality of existing systems and to avoid them overlapping, also the soft/analogue sides of the equation need to be taken into account.

PANEL 4. INTEROPERABILITY: Understanding how to apply robust industry standards to harmonise electronic data exchange.

For information to be provided once and be reused to the widest extent possible, port stakeholders and the shipping community alike benefit from the use of internationally accepted standards, developed by organisations employing robust standardisation. The IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business is a common information model where different maritime standard organisations cooperate to develop unified semantics, to translate between the different standards but also as a tool to ensure the same vocabulary when describing flows of information, making it possible to integrate the reporting formalities of the authorities with the concepts of e-navigation and port call optimisation, enabling a connected and integrated world. The session sought to teach how different maritime standard organisations use the Compendium to cooperate in developing unified semantics, to translate between the different standards.

The Moderator rounded up the discussion that ensued with the question,
"what will be the biggest challenge to Member States and Ports with respect to the implementation of MSW? In response, the Panel agreed with the input: "Remember, we are a small business therefore International Co-operation is the answer".

PANEL 5. Port call data requirements & Data quality.

A port call brings together administrative, nautical and operational information between ships and shore. This session set out to elicit a comprehensive understanding of the entire port call process as defined in the Guidelines for setting up a maritime single window (FAL.5/Circ.42/Rev.2) as well as the importance of data quality in efficiently handling the port call process, including clearances.

In the ensuing discussion, views were expressed that:

- An investment in 'upstream' work pays off and that the focus should be put on the analogue side;
- Streamline first, digitise second and eliminate redundant documents;
- The link between cargo and ship clearance is important;
- There is no such thing as a model; and,
- With a high level of customisation, tailoring is necessary.

PANEL 6. Strategic Partnerships and resources available for MSW projects.

Many countries continue to face challenges in embracing digitalisation. Under the IMO Secretary-General's vision on a "Voyage Together", the IMO is developing strategic partnerships to reduce the digital divide. The partnerships focus on assisting developing countries to achieve a more resilient, efficient and green ship-port interface by implementing a Maritime Single Window (MSW) system in their ports to facilitate electronic clearance of ships and port-to-port communication. Project Managers invited to highlight their experiences included:

- Antigua and Barbuda / Norway– IMO project;

- IMO SWIFT project, Porto of Lobito, Angola;

- Fiji – IMO/WB maritime single window project;

- IMO E-learning course on MSW; and,

- IMO Digitalisation project.

CLOSING SPEECHES.

Three speakers made closing speeches:

Patrick Verhoeven, Managing director Policy & Strategy, IAPH;

Jeppe Skovbakke Juhl, Manager, Maritime Safety & Security, BIMCO; and,

Julian Abril, Head of Facilitation, Maritime Safety Division - IMO

Mr Verhoeven (IAPH) had the advantage of speaking first, as follows:

- **Challenges:** Technology is not an issue and bottlenecks are those caused by analogue;

- **Compliance:** There is a deadline to implement MSW requirements. It is not a ticking box but trade failures might ensue;

- **Pragmatism.** Is proportional to whether digital infrastructure is in place. Also, whether MSW is stand-alone or imbedded;

- **Standards.** A globally universal system leaves no excuse to delay or wait for implementation. The Green Shipping Corridor (Rotterdam/Singapore), is a very good concept; and,

- **Resources.** Help is available (e.g. Singapore/Norway) and there is no excuse for not starting. This example of governments and private industry working together provides a positive message.

For his part, Mr Skovbakke (BIMCO) felt that:

- The establishment of MSW is needed, and the opportunity exists. It will also help ship clearance and administration data plus improving overall efficiency on the Administration side, paving the way for a system of information exchange and reducing the Admin. Burden;

- Harmonisation and interoperability is essential;

- There is need for holistic integration of systems, but using an incremental approach; and,

- MSW is not just an idea, it's here!

Finally, Mr Abril acknowledged that all of his points had been covered already, apologised for technical problems with the sound, revealed that 115 delegates had participated on-line [with roughly similar numbers in plenary], requested Member States to populate MSW on the GISIS module and thanked everyone who attended.

End   Captain Paddy McKnight