

The IMO Assembly held its 33rd Session, in-person and remotely, from Monday 27 November through Wednesday 6 December 2023 under the newly-elected President, H.R.H. Prince Khalid Bin Bandar Bin Sultan Al Saud, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Saudi Arabia as recommended by the Heads of Delegation meeting preceding A 33 and subsequently endorsed in Plenary. H.E. Ms Saida Muna Tasneem, High Commissioner and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to IMO was elected as first Vice-President of the Assembly whilst H.E. Mr Juan Carlos Gamara Skeels, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary and Permanent Representative of Peru to IMO was voted in as second Vice-President.

The IMO Assembly is the highest Governing body of the organisation and meets every second year to approve the work programme, vote in the proposed budget and determine financial arrangements. It also elects the 40-member Council for the following two-year interim period, charged with supervising the conduct of IMO's work, and provides a forum for the annual Bravery at Sea awards together with the International Maritime Prize.

The meeting was attended by representatives from 171 of the 175 Member States, plus Associates from the UN and Special Agencies, Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental organisations.

ADDRESS BY THE IMO SECRETARY GENERAL. The IMO Secretary-General, Mr Kitack Lim, welcomed delegations to the thirty-third regular session of the Organisation's biennial Assembly, both in person and attending remotely. He stated that our planet, oceans, and humanity face critical threats from pollution, climate change, geopolitical instability, and the economic challenges posed by high inflation. However, despite such obstacles, the importance of shipping in facilitating global trade and transporting essential goods across continents cannot be overstated. Nonetheless, our focus must shift towards a future that is both decarbonised and digitalised whilst importantly, leaving no one behind.

Assembly will be invited to review the Organisation's work over the past two years by approving the upcoming work programme, budget, and Strategic Plan for 2024-2029, electing a new Council, as well as

appointing the next Secretary-General, and adopting a number of resolutions. During the first half of 2022, IMO adeptly continued its operations through remote meetings, a testament to its adaptability and resilience, then transitioning back to in-person sessions in September 2022, incorporating hybrid remote modalities on a trial basis.

During the last biennium, the Maritime Safety Committee achieved significant milestones, including adoption of the modernised Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS); initiating the development of a goal-based instrument for maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS), in cooperation with the Legal and Facilitation Committees; and, a comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code. It also commenced work on the development of a framework for safe operation of new technologies and alternative fuels aimed at reducing GHG emissions from ships in order to support the safe delivery of the IMO's 2023 GHG Strategy.

Turning to the Marine Environment Protection Committee, he reminded Assembly that in July 2023 the MEPC unanimously adopted an ambitious 2023 Strategy on the Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Ships, setting a common vision and an ambitious goal of achieving net-zero GHG emissions by or around, i.e. close to, 2050. Amendments to Marpol, aimed at reducing carbon intensity of ships, including a rating system on completion of the related impact assessment, entered into force on 1 January 2023. A further milestone for the shipping sector was achieved on 26 June 2023, when the criteria for entry into force of the Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships were met and the Convention is now set to enter into force on 26 June 2025.

The Legal Committee continued to address important issues. These included threats posed by fraudulent registries and fraudulent registration of ships, plus work in tandem with the International Labour Organization (ILO), and in cooperation with industry and workers' bodies, on the Abandonment of Seafarers.

The Facilitation Committee promoted the efficient digitalisation of shipping in adopting amendments to the FAL Convention, making the maritime single window mandatory for straightforward electronic exchange of data through a single portal from 1 January 2024.

A resolution on recommendations related to lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic will be proposed, derived from work by a joint United Nations and industry sector action group to review the impact of the pandemic on the world's transport workers and the global supply chain. Mr Lim acknowledged the outstanding contribution to shipping by Seafarers whose well-being he viewed as paramount. In his view, the challenges posed by the pandemic, occasioning a shift to remote learning, have created valuable opportunities to leverage the advantages of e-learning, most notably, the IMO e-learning platform developed in collaboration with WMU, which was successfully launched in 2022. In addition, IMO has continued to grow a multi-million-dollar portfolio of global projects aimed at fostering a culture of collaboration, partnerships and innovation. Such projects encompass various domains such as decarbonisation, addressing marine litter, and managing biofouling. They actively contribute to bolstering national action plans, nurturing innovation, and aligning with IMO's core mission of safeguarding the oceans and our planet.

Extending his gratitude to the Member States, donors, and all supporters who contribute to capacity-building efforts, he stated that it is our responsibility to dismantle barriers and ensure inclusivity for all. In his view, embracing diversity is key to attracting top-tier talent, irrespective of gender, and he expressed delight at IMO's introduction of the International Day for Women in Maritime. This was successfully achieved in 2022, also 2023 and he eagerly anticipated presentation of the inaugural IMO Gender Equality Award in 2024.

Looking forward to the next biennium, he felt that there is significant work ahead, driven by the imperative to decarbonise and digitalise shipping. For centuries, the shipping industry has adeptly navigated transitions and IMO's pivotal role lies in safeguarding such process, ensuring the protection of seafarers, ships, and the well-being of our

oceans and planet. This year commemorates the 75th anniversary since the adoption of the Convention establishing IMO and he shared the news that the IMO Secretariat has produced a book celebrating what can only be described as a significant milestone.

Closing his final Assembly-welcoming address, Mr Kitack Lim looked back on his tenure as Secretary-General of IMO and remarked that he has been constantly inspired by the remarkable spirit of cooperation that defines IMO, extending his heartfelt gratitude for unwavering collaboration, and wished delegates a highly productive Assembly.

AGENDA.

- 1 Adoption of the agenda
- 2 Rules of Procedure of the Assembly
- 3 Election of the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Assembly
- 4 Application of Article 61 of the IMO Convention – Report of the Council to the Assembly on any requests by Members for waiver
- 5 Establishment of committees of the Assembly:
 - (a) Establishment of the Credentials Committee
 - (b) Establishment of other committees, as necessary
- 6 Consideration of the reports of the committees of the Assembly:
 - (a) Report of the Credentials Committee
 - (b) Reports of other committees
- 7 Report of the Council to the Assembly on the work of the Organisation since the thirty-second regular session of the Assembly
- 8 Strategy, planning and reform

- (a) Strategy and planning P 7 & 9
- (b) Reform P 7
- (c) Internal Oversight, Ethics and Joint Inspection Unit

9 IMO Member State Audit Scheme P 12

10 IMO Convention

- (a) Consolidated text of the IMO Convention
- (b) Amendments to the IMO Convention

11 Consideration of the reports and recommendations of the Maritime Safety Committee P 10

12 Consideration of the reports and recommendations of the Legal Committee P 8

13 Consideration of the reports and recommendations of the Marine Environment Protection Committee P 10

14 Consideration of the reports and recommendations of the Technical Cooperation Committee P 8

15 Consideration of the reports and recommendations of the Facilitation Committee P 10

16 Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter, 1972 and the 1996 Protocol thereto: report on the performance of Secretariat functions and other duties P 11

17 Resource management:

- (a) Report on the status of Member States' contributions to the General Fund and the Working Capital Fund P 8

(b) Presentation of the financial reports and audited financial statements for the financial periods ended 31 December 2021 and 2022, and the reports of the External Auditor **P 9**

(c) Results-based budget for the 2024-2025 biennium **P10**

18 Global maritime training institutions: **P 12**

(a) Report on the World Maritime University

(b) Report on the IMO International Maritime Law Institute

19 External relations:

(a) Relations with the United Nations and the specialised agencies

(b) Relations with intergovernmental organisations

(c) Relations with non-governmental organisations **P 14**

(d) Report on World Maritime Day, 2022 and 2023 **P 13**

(e) Report on International Day for Women in Maritime, 2022 and 2023

(f) IMO Gender Equality Award

(g) International Maritime Prize **P 13**

(h) IMO Honours for Exceptional Bravery at Sea **P 13**

(i) Day of the Seafarer **P 14**

(j) IMO Goodwill Maritime Ambassador Scheme **P14**

20 Enhancement of multilingualism

21 Report on the status of the Convention and membership of the Organisation

- 22 Report on the status of conventions and other multilateral instruments in respect of which the Organisation performs functions
- 23 Election of Members of the Council, as provided for in Articles 16 and 17 of the IMO Convention **P 11/12**
- 24 Appointment of Members of the IMO Staff Pension Committee
- 25 Appointment of the External Auditor
- 26 Approval of the appointment of the Secretary-General
- 27 Farewell to Mr. Lim **P 16**
- 28 Date and place of the thirty-fourth regular session of the Assembly **P 15**
- 29 Supplementary agenda items, if any.

REVIEW OF AGENDA ITEMS. Given the extensive scope of the above agenda, this report contains a summary of items judged by the author to be of interest to InterManager Members. However, details of items not covered can easily be made available at paddy@intermanager.org

COMMITTEES OF THE ASSEMBLY. In order to facilitate efficient handling of the huge work agenda, two Committees were formed in order to focus on specialist knowledge, the first (Committee 1) on Administrative, Financial, Legal and Technical Cooperation; the other (Committee 2) on Technical matters.

COMMITTEE 1. The following agenda items were assigned to Committee 1 for consideration: 8(a) and (b), 12, 14, 17 (a), (b) and (c), and 19 (c).

In considering the report of Committee 1, the Assembly:

.1 approved the revised Strategic Plan for the Organization for the six-year period 2024 to 2029, together with the associated draft Assembly resolution and, through Committee 2, recommended that the Assembly approve and adopt the revised Strategic Plan for the Organisation for the six-year period 2024 to 2029 and the associated resolution;

- .2 noted that Committee 1 approved the draft resolution on the Application of the Strategic Plan of the Organisation, and, through Committee 2, following which the Assembly adopted the draft resolution;
- .3 instructed the Council to keep both documents, the Strategic Plan and its application, under constant review;
- .4 noted the progress made on Council reform;
- .5 noted that further information is required for the development of criteria and procedures for the selection of meetings, or parts thereof, that should be livestreamed to the public;
- .6 noted that the Council instructed the Secretariat to develop a policy on intellectual property management taking into account decisions and comments made by the Council for its consideration at a future session;
- .7 endorsed the Council's view that no review of the geographical regions used at IMO for various internal and administrative purposes is necessary;
- .8 endorsed the work plan of the Council on its reform, as updated;
- .9 approved, in general, the reports and recommendations of the Legal Committee on its 109th and 110th sessions;
- .10 approved, in general, the reports and recommendations of the Technical Cooperation Committee on its seventy-second and seventy-third sessions;
- .11 noted the information provided in document A 33/17(a) on the status of Member States' contributions to the General Fund and the Working Capital Fund as of 21 November 2023;
- .12 urged all Member States that have not yet done so, to meet in full their financial obligations to the Organisation at the earliest opportunity;
- .13 adopted the draft resolution on Arrears of contributions;

.14 approved the audited financial statements for the financial years ended 31 December 2021 and 31 December 2022, together with the External Auditor's reports and opinions thereon;

.15 adopted the draft resolution on the Presentation of audited financial statements and report of the External Auditors;

16 noted the information provided in documents A 33/17(c) and its addendum concerning the Results-Based Budget for 2024-2025;

.17 approved the proposed results-based budget for the 2024 2025 biennium and adopted the relevant associated draft resolution;

.18 adopted the proposed resolution on Amendments to the Organisation's Financial Regulations;

19 approved the decisions of the Council concerning applications for consultative status with the Organisation and concerning the periodic review of non-governmental organisations in consultative status with IMO;

.20 adopted the draft resolution on Relations with non-governmental organisations; and,

.21 approved the report of Committee1 in general.

COMMITTEE 2. The following items were assigned to Committee 2 for consideration: 8(a), 9, 11, 13, 15 and 16.

In considering the report of Committee 2, the Assembly:

.1 adopted a resolution on the Strategic Plan of the Organisation for the six-year period 2024-2029;

.2 adopted the resolution on Application of the Strategic Plan of the Organisation;

.3 Took action as recommended by the Committee with regard to the IMO Member State Audit Scheme;

- .4 adopted the resolution on Guidelines on places of refuge for ships in need of assistance;
- .5 adopted four resolutions relating to both maritime safety and marine environment protection;
- .6 adopted the resolution on Recommendations emanating from the Joint Action Group to review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world's transport workers and the global supply chain;
- .7 revoked resolutions A.334(IX), A.383(X), A.385(X), A.421(XI), A.524(13), A.530(13), A.570(14), A.612(15), A.614(15), A.660(16), A.661(16), A.699(17), A.701(17), A.702(17), A.703(17), A.801(19), as amended, A.802(19), as amended, A.805(19) and A.814(19), as from 1 January 2024 (paragraph 15);
- .8 endorsed the action taken by MSC 105 regarding the superseding of resolutions A.530(13), A.699(17), A.801(19), as amended, A.802(19), as amended, and A.814(19) by resolutions MSC.507(105), MSC.509(105), MSC.510(105) and MSC.514(105), as appropriate;
- .9 reinstated resolutions A.536(13) and A.583(14) by deleting operative paragraph 4 of resolution A.831(19);
- .10 approved in general the reports of MSC on its 105th, 106th and 107th sessions;
- .11 adopted the draft Assembly resolution on *Enhancing the framework of the fight against organised crime in the maritime sector* and endorsed the related action taken by the Committee;
- .12 adopted the resolution on *Urging Member States and all relevant stakeholders to promote actions to prevent illegal operations in the maritime sector by the "dark fleet" or "shadow fleet"*;
- .13 approved in general the reports of MEPC on its seventy-eighth, seventy-ninth and eightieth sessions;
- 14 approved in general the reports of the FAL Committee on its forty-sixth and forty-seventh sessions;

.15 noted the reports of the forty-fourth and forty-fifth Consultative Meetings of Contracting Parties to the London Convention and the seventeenth and eighteenth Meetings of Contracting Parties to the London Protocol;

.16 noted that the Committee authorised the Secretariat to effect any necessary editorial corrections to the resolutions considered and their respective annexes, as appropriate;

.17 adopted the resolution on Implementation of the Hong Kong International Convention for the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships, 2009 (the Hong Kong Convention); and,

.18 approved the report of Committee 2 in general.

ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE IMO COUNCIL. The current composition of the IMO Council falls into three categories:

- **Category (a)** 10 States with the largest interest in providing international shipping services;
- **Category (b)** 10 other States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade; and,
- **Category (c)** 20 States not elected under (a) or (b) which have special interest in maritime transport or navigation and, importantly, whose election to the Council ensures the representation of all major geographic interests of the world.

In the ensuing election, 9 of the 10 sitting States in Category (a) were returned unopposed, however, the tenth seat passed from the Russian Federation to Liberia.

The composition of Category (b) was unaltered.

Category (c) however, saw most change. 23 Member States competed for the 20 available seats. Of the current members seeking re-election, Vanuatu alone did not stand whilst Belgium and Thailand lost their seat; the resultant gaps were filled by Bangladesh, Finland and Peru. Of the final votes cast in this category by Assembly Members, Poland and South Africa failed to gain election.

The composition of the elected Council now comprises:

Please see table located on the next page ...

CATEGORY (a)	CATEGORY (b)	CATEGORY (c)	
10 x States with the largest interest in providing international shipping services	10 x States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade	20 x States not elected under (a) or (b) which have special interest in maritime transport or navigation and, importantly, whose election to the Council ensures the representation of all major geographic interests of the world	
CHINA	AUSTRALIA	BAHAMAS	MALAYSIA
GREECE	BRAZIL	BANGLADESH	MALTA
ITALY	CANADA	CHILE	MEXICO
JAPAN	FRANCE	CYPRUS	MOROCCO
LIBERIA	GERMANY	DENMARK	PERU
NORWAY	INDIA	EGYPT	PHILIPPINES
PANAMA	NETHERLANDS	FINLAND	QATAR
REPUBLIC OF KOREA	SPAIN	INDONESIA	SAUDI ARABIA
UNITED KINGDOM	SWEDEN	JAMAICA	SINGAPORE
UNITED STATES	UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	KENYA	TURKEY

IMO MEMBER STATE AUDIT SCHEME. This item provided an updated report on progress made in the implementation of the audit scheme since the thirty-second regular session of the Assembly.

GLOBAL MARITIME TRAINING INSTITUTIONS. The President of the IMO's World Maritime University (WMU) delivered a comprehensive, glowing biennial report on WMU activities and achievements. In particular, he thanked the Government host, Sweden, for granting its accreditation of WMU degrees and also applauded the city of Malmo for their continuing support whilst also urging IMO Member States to continue doing likewise.

The Director of the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) also gave a very up-beat report on matters concerning IMO's IMLI over the period August 2021 to July 2023. He noted that, through its global network, there are now 1,112 alumni hailing from 152 States and territories worldwide. He expressed appreciation to the Government of Malta for continuing to host the Institute and providing the academic premises whilst also thanking sponsors.

WORLD MARITIME DAY (WMD). The event for 2022 was celebrated with the theme, "New technologies for greener shipping", whilst that for 2023 is: "MARPOL at 50 – Our commitment goes on". At its 129th session, the Council endorsed the Secretary-General's proposed theme for 2024, "Navigating the future: safety first!", and authorised the Secretary-General to make all necessary celebratory arrangements.

Regarding WMD parallel events, Council 129 accepted the generous offer by the Government of Spain to host the Parallel Event in 2024. However, the Council rescinded its decision to accept the offer made by the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the WMD parallel event in 2023 and noted that, consequently, the event will not be celebrated in 2023.

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME PRIZE. Since 1981, a silver dolphin statuette has been awarded annually to the individual or organisation judged by the IMO Council to have made the most significant contribution to the work and objectives of IMO. The Prize for 2022 was awarded to Mrs. Anneliese Jost former Deputy Head of the Maritime Safety Division at the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development of Germany and Chair of IMO Sub-Committees on Ship Design and Equipment and Ship Design and Construction. In addition, a special certificate was awarded posthumously to Captain David J.F. Bruce, former Permanent Representative of the Marshall Islands to IMO, for his invaluable contribution to the Organisation.

IMO HONOURS FOR EXCEPTIONAL BRAVERY AT SEA. Established in 2005 and first presented in 2007, the IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea, provides international recognition for those, who, at the risk of losing their own life, perform acts of exceptional bravery, displaying outstanding courage in attempting to save life at sea or in attempting to prevent or mitigate damage to the environment. There are three categories of honour: first: the Award itself for the nominee judged to have made the most outstanding act of bravery; second, Certificates of Commendation for acts of extraordinary bravery; and third, Letters of Commendation for meritorious actions.

The Panel of Judges bestowed the 2023 IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea on Petty Officer Caleb Halle of the United States Coast Guard for his outstanding courage, endurance and determination displayed in the rescue of seven crew members of the tugboat **Legacy**, which was disabled and adrift, in rough weather and heavy seas.

In addition, 4 Certificates of Commendation were awarded, together with 13 Letters of Commendation to those involved in other incidents.

A further Panel recommendation was endorsed to consider a revision of resolution A.1093(29) on *Special recognition for merchant vessels and their crew involved in the rescue of mixed migrants at sea*, to allow the submission of nominations by IGOs and NGOs for such recognition. The Council approved the draft revised resolution, which was subsequently adopted by the Assembly, observing that the Secretariat will notify the relevant flag State when such nominations are received from IGOs or NGOs in order to avoid duplication or objection.

DAY OF THE SEAFARER. For 2022, the Day of the Seafarer campaign chose the theme "Your voyage – then and now, share your journey", which looked at the seafarer voyage, what it includes and how has it evolved over time, and what remains at the heart of the seafarers' reality. For 2023, the campaign looked at seafarers' contribution to protecting the marine environment in line with the World Maritime theme "MARPOL at 50 – Our commitment goes on". As usual, the campaign centred on social media. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, also Instagram, which were all used as platforms and a lot of traction was generated online. The main campaign hashtag #OceansWorthProtecting is estimated to have reached about 30 million people on X, formerly known as Twitter, alone (due to new data methodology on X, the metric is slightly different than in previous years). Media monitoring showed that 439 media outlets from 58 countries around the world reported on the Day of the Seafarer 2023 whilst the IMO Secretary-General's video message was viewed more than 10,000 times. Posters, GIF animations and other material were downloaded and used throughout the world to share IMO's key messages.

IMO GOODWILL AMBASSADORS SCHEME. Following the appointment of 10 new IMO-GMAs, there are now 41 GMAs representing 2 nominating authorities comprising 21 Member States and 5 NGOs. A list of the current IMO-GMAs can be found on the IMO website at the following link:
<https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/ERO/Pages/IMO-Goodwill-Maritime-Ambassador.aspx>.

RELATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS. Since the thirty-second regular session of the Assembly, seven applications for consultative status were received and processed. Four of these were not granted whilst three were approved, comprising:

- the TIC Council;
- the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF); and,
- the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN).

Additionally, consultative status was granted on a provisional basis for no more than two years, after which a review should be conducted, to:

- the Zero Emissions Ship Technology Association (ZESTAs); and,
- the International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA).

MEETING OF IMO COUNCIL, C 131. Following dissolution of Assembly 33, the newly formed Council met for the first time at C 131 to elect its Chair and Vice-Chair. Mr Victor Jiminez Fernandez, Counsellor for Transport at the Embassy of Spain in London and Alternate Permanent Representative of Spain to IMO was duly re-elected as also was his Vice-Chair, Mrs Amane Fethaliah, Director-General of Ports & Merchant Marine, Morocco. The next session of the Council (C 132) will be held from 8 to 12 July 2024 and budgetary provision made for ten plenary sessions with full interpretation services.

CONSIDERATION OF THE REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL COOPERATION COMMITTEE.

Members may recall that, following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the Organisation voted to displace the latter from its position as Chair of the Technical Cooperation Committee, the TCC. Following this, the Russian Federation submitted comment on the report of the TCC detailing the work of its seventy-second session. Document A 33/14/1, by the RF, invited the Assembly “to confirm the illegitimacy of any decision by TCC or any other IMO organ to suspend, limit or restrict IMO technical cooperation and to condemn use of such measures as "retaliatory mechanisms" against IMO Member States.” A further RF commenting paper, A 33/14/1/Rev.1, asserted that the conclusions adopted “in principle” are illegitimate and then posed a slightly different question by inviting the Assembly “to confirm whether technical cooperation can be used to penalise IMO Member States”. In a commenting response (document A 33/14/2), all 15 co-signatories contended that this is not an issue of punishing a Member State but rather of ensuring that those Member States participating in IMO sponsored technical cooperation activity are upholding the core principles of IMO. Thus, it is more accurate to state that IMO may choose to restrict a Member State to participate in IMO sponsored technical cooperation when, by its actions, that

Member State has shown flagrant and repeated disregard to the fundamental principles of IMO safety, security and environmental protection instruments. A roll-call vote on the matter was forced by the RF as per IMO's Rules of Procedure, and although there were many more in support of the TCC action than those against it or choosing to abstain, no finite conclusion was reached. Following this, the President observed that Assembly is not in a position to conclude the matter at this session and closed the debate, which TCC will be directed to consider, and to which all interested parties should make submissions.

The RF agreed overall with this approach, which will afford a calm, technical approach to discussions.

FAREWELL TO MR.LIM.

Suffice to record, Mr Lim was given a wonderful send-off after his 8-years tenure as the IMO Secretary-General, for he achieved much in that time and leaves behind, in his words, "a well-oiled machine". I am also happy to record that Mr Arsenio Domingues of Panama, is a worthy successor and have no doubts whatsoever that he will lead the Organisation to even greater heights.

Wishing readers a very happy Christmas.

End

Captain Paddy McKnight