



MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
71st session
Agenda item 22

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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Preparation of a new report covering all aspects of safety and environmental protection, including the review of the IMO Rules and Recommendations on Navigation through the Strait of Istanbul, Strait of Çanakkale and the Marmara Sea

Note by the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSMA), the International Association of Institutes of Navigation (IAIN), and the International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA)

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This paper provides comments and proposals on navigation and safety in the Strait of Istanbul, Strait of Çanakkale and the Marmara Sea
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 17
<i>Related documents:</i>	Resolution A.827(19); NAV 43/INF.5; NAV 43/INF.6 and MSC 70/INF.20

Introduction

1 At the sixty-ninth session of the Maritime Safety Committee a decision was made to prepare a new report covering all aspects of safety and environmental protection, including the review of the IMO Rules and Recommendations on Navigation through the Strait of Istanbul, Strait of Çanakkale and the Sea of Marmara. A preliminary draft of a new report was prepared at NAV 44 and there was further discussion of this matter at MSC 70.

2 At MSC 70 it was decided that a working group should give further consideration to this matter at MSC 71. Comments and proposals were invited to enable further progress on this issue to be made at the next session of the Committee.

3 The Organizations submitting this paper are particularly concerned with safety aspects and with the ability of vessels to fully comply with the relevant international regulations.

4 It is recognized that safety in the Straits of Istanbul and Çanakkale is of vital importance to Turkey. The Strait of Istanbul runs through a city with more than 10 million inhabitants. The shorelines of Istanbul are densely populated. Istanbul has been declared as a "World Heritage City" by UNESCO. It is an important cultural, tourist and business centre.

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5 According to statistics provided by Turkey (NAV 43/INF.6, annex D) the number of accidents in the Straits has reduced significantly as a result of implementing in 1994 the IMO adopted routeing system and the associated Rules and Recommendations on navigation together with the operations of a maritime traffic control organization for the Straits. This is a welcome improvement which should be maintained. Changes should not be made if they are likely to result in a reduction of standards of safety.

6 The intention of Turkey to establish a modern VTS in the Straits in the near future has been welcomed as a measure likely to produce improvement in safety and efficiency of navigation. Further measures taken by Turkey which are likely to improve traffic safety include the relocation of pilot boarding places to safer locations outside the traffic lanes of the traffic separation schemes and the designation of a new anchorage area south of Istanbul.

Comment on the current situation

7 At its seventieth session the Committee noted information provided by Turkey (MSC 70/INF.20) that some large vessels are unable to comply fully with the established traffic separation schemes due to restrictions in their manoeuvrability. According to Turkish information paper NAV 43/INF.5 ships of more than 150 metres in length are unable to keep to the appropriate lane of the traffic separation scheme when proceeding through the narrow and winding parts of the Strait of Istanbul.

8 According to information provided by Turkey (NAV 43/INF.6) a large number of vessels of over 150 metres in length pass through the Straits. In 1996 7236 vessels of over 150 metres in length passed through the Strait of Istanbul. These vessels would have difficulty in complying with the traffic separation schemes.

9 Rule 1(d) of the Collision Regulations states that "Traffic Separation Schemes may be adopted by the Organization for the purpose of these Rules". It is implied that traffic separation schemes must be designed so as to ensure that ships using the schemes shall be able to fully comply with the Collision Regulations, in particular Rule 10 of these Regulations. The Committee has adopted a new paragraph 6.8 to Section 6 of the "General Provisions on Ships' Routeing" which states:

"Traffic separation schemes shall be designed so as to enable ships using them to fully comply at all times with the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972, as amended."

10 As some large vessels are unable to fully comply with the traffic separation schemes temporary suspensions of two-way traffic are made at frequent intervals. However, it would appear from the statistics that some vessels of over 150 metres in length are expected to pass through the traffic separation schemes at times when two-way traffic is not suspended. Such vessels are not able to fully comply with Rule 10 of the Collision Regulations.

11 Frequent changes in the operational status of a traffic separation scheme, or parts of it, cause uncertainty in the application of the Collision Regulations. No other IMO adopted traffic separation schemes are subject to frequent suspensions.

Proposals

12 It is recommended that consideration be given to the establishment of IMO adopted routeing measures, other than traffic separation schemes, in the narrow and winding parts of the Straits of Istanbul and Çanakkale. Two-way routes may be appropriate for such parts of the Straits. Elsewhere in the Straits the existing traffic separation schemes should continue to apply.

13 The reduction in casualties which has been achieved since new regulations and recommendations came into force may be attributable to the suspension of two-way traffic, rather than the application of Rule 10 of the Collision Regulations. Suspension of two-way traffic is not necessarily dependent on the existence of IMO adopted traffic separation schemes. Special rules and recommendations may be adopted for use with any IMO adopted routing system. The existing Rules and Recommendations, which are associated with the present adopted routing system should be reconsidered in relation to any amendments to the routing system.

14 Turkey has reported that many vessels transiting the Straits are not participating in the ship reporting system (TUBRAP). This indicates the possible need for a mandatory ship reporting scheme for all ships entering the Straits. All vessels intending to pass through the Straits should give prior information and keep a watch on VHF as appropriate, in accordance with the TUBRAP scheme.

15 Despite the strong recommendation by IMO that vessels passing through the Straits should avail themselves of a qualified pilot it is noted that only 40% of ships passing through the Strait of Istanbul and 30% of ships passing through the Strait of Çanakkale are using the pilotage service. It is recommended that all parties concerned should consider reinforcing the recommendation. Turkey has established compulsory pilotage for vessels of over 150 metres in length passing through the Straits. Vessels of other flag states, especially vessels of over 150 metres in length, should seriously consider whether they are justified in passing through the Straits without a pilot. Use of a qualified pilot is likely to bring about an improvement of safety and may also contribute to improved efficiency and traffic flow.

16 The consequences of a major accident in the Straits could be catastrophic with the risk of severe pollution. As an additional safety measure escort towage for very large laden vessels in the narrow winding parts of the Straits should be considered.

Action requested of the Committee

17 The Committee is invited to consider the above comments and proposals and to take action as appropriate.
