The year 2019 was completed with the 31st Assembly of IMO*, which involved the election of members to the IMO Council by their peers. This is a process in which IAIN, as a non-governmental international organizations with consultative status, has no voting rights; but the outcome reflects current maritime “status” of member nations, supported by much lobbying by candidate members’ delegations with embassy support.

Briefly, the 40-strong Council representation is the same as in the previous (2018-2019) biennium, save that Sweden and Liberia are no longer Council members, their places have now been taken by Argentina and Kuwait.

IMO achieves results, as reflected in Resolutions, for implementation by Member States, almost entirely by debate and by consensus. And whilst this means that the IMO’s output takes some time to materialise, when it does so it has added weight, in that it is the outturn of international consensus. Thus it is all the more remarkable that in a world where climate change has only now come to the forefront it has become one of the key issues of our time. IMO has brought the “sulphur cap” – a real and marked reduction in sulphur levels in marine fuels into force on 1 January 2020. This aligns with IMO’s already declared aim of “safer ships, cleaner seas.”

For 2020, alongside the move towards autonomous shipping, and the safeguards required to ensure safe navigation of those vessels (and their interaction with all other, non-autonomous vessels) in all conditions, two major matters have the continuing support of IAIN.

These are:

- **NCSR 7/7** - Revision of the Guidelines for VTS (draft Assembly Resolution) following the excellent work of IALA, aimed at bringing the three current levels of VTS into a simplified and more applicable single layer structure;

- **NCSR 7/10** - Safety Measures for non-SOLAS ships operating in Polar waters, to increase the levels of safety of vessels operating in waters where weather conditions can be extreme, and where SAR facilities are limited.

Both these measures, under debate at IMO’s Navigation, Communications and Search-and-Rescue Sub-Committee in January 2020, are effectively being fast-tracked, with the hope that they will complete passage through IMO’s
Committees to final approval by the end of 2020. IAIN will continue to use its representation and best efforts to lobby to that end.

*31st Assembly photograph reproduced by kind courtesy of IMO ©.*

*At the 31st Assembly of IMO, IAIN was represented by Captain James Taylor RN.*