

President, Secretary General,

What follows is an overview of the proceedings of IMO Assembly A33. Conflicts in many areas, the Red Sea, the Black Sea and elsewhere put the lives of seafarers and the safe delivery of goods and cargo at risk, with economic and human consequences which remain unpredictable. As a mariner, I am sure that our business in IAIN is not only the security of the means of navigation, but also the safety of those who use those means.

2. The Black Sea and the war in Ukraine following Russia's illegal invasion took priority at A33; the attacks in the Red Sea by Houthi rebels/Iranian National Guard had yet to start in meaningful numbers. I attach A33-11-2, the draft resolution on this issue, which gives background. The key paragraphs are these:

16. **TAKING INTO ACCOUNT** the dire threat to the safety and security of international shipping in the Black Sea and the urgency in the need to restore existing chains of supply of critical goods for maintaining global food security, **DECIDES to establish an IMO-led technical assistance mission in Ukraine to support Ukrainian authorities in facilitating the restoration of an unimpeded flow of international navigation, ensuring and monitoring the safety and security of ships that are using the Ukrainian special maritime corridor and the Ukrainian port infrastructure**, in accordance with key purposes and functions of the Organization;

17. **REQUESTS** the Secretary-General to facilitate the implementation of the above decision in consultation with Ukraine and contributing Member States, **to ensure the deployment of the mission as soon as possible but no later than four months after the adoption of this resolution**, and to report on the progress of this work to the Committees and the Council;

18. **AUTHORIZES the IMO Secretariat to use available funds** to carry out the initial needs' assessment for the mission and **further accumulate voluntary contributions** and, **if necessary, to create a Voluntary Multi-donor Trust Fund** for the purposes of the mission, based on the Secretariat's standard template for Fund terms of reference;

3. At IMO's NCSR10, in May 2023, I made the following statement on behalf of IAIN:

Chair, Distinguished Delegates. This is not only about the current conflict stemming from the illegal invasion of Ukraine by the forces of the Russian Federation. It is not just “political” – it concerns navigation as well.

There is a need to consider how best to put in place the marine aids to navigation – traditional, virtual, terrestrial or space-based – to ensure the navigational safety of vessels operating under the Black Sea initiative, exporting materials from Ukraine’s Black Sea ports such as Sebastopol, notably the grain on which Egypt and the Horn of Africa in particular are so dependent.

And at the end of hostilities, when Ukraine’s full sovereignty is restored, there will remain the very large task of rebuilding, repair and replacement of the means of safe navigation. And this Committee of IMO might best consider how to achieve that. NGOs and IGOs such as IAIN and IALA/AISM stand ready to assist in putting these planning measures in place, in support of the State Hydrographic Service of Ukraine (SHSU) in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Straits.

4. And this text is a part of an article I wrote for RIN's *Navigation News*, Nov/Dec 2023 edition, following my second trip to Ukraine as part of a humanitarian aid convoy.

And on the other side of Ukraine, on the Black Sea coast, so much remains to be done. Actions by invading Russian forces have destroyed the navigational infrastructure of the region, both in traditional maritime aids to navigation, such as at Snake Island, where the lighthouse was just one of many to be destroyed; and in e-navigation, too. The Black Sea incident of some years ago, where ships in the Black Sea using ECDIS suddenly appeared to be at Baku airport as a result of Russian spoofing, may have just been a trial run. There is more to this than facilitating safe navigation, however necessary that is. Ukraine is still the breadbasket of so much of the world. The Horn of Africa relies almost entirely on Ukrainian grain for its bread. Without it, the region starves as a result of Putin’s war, so the nations of the Black Sea, principally Ukraine, Georgia, Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, and excluding Russia as an aggressor, need to come together to map out a navigational and politically resilient way ahead, a wartime and post-war navigational infrastructure with comprehensive and mandatory tracking via AIS to make navigation safe in the Black Sea, the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Straits. Turkey holds many of the cards

here, as Chair of the Montreux agreement which monitors and governs traffic through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. Turkey also chairs the on-and-off-again arrangement between Russia and Ukraine to export grain, but Russian attacks against Ukrainian grain holdings and infrastructure show their real intent. A clear way ahead is not easy to determine, and will be clouded by political strategies. IMO has a role to play, of course, but that will take time and international agreement which will take even longer. NGO's and IGOs such as IALA/AISM advised by professional bodies such as the Royal Institute of Navigation can and should play a leading role, setting out the minimum requirements to ensure safe navigation. The General Lighthouse Authorities too, have a role to play, as they did in restoring safe navigation following the Indonesian tsunami. But this can be started now, while the attention of most of the World is rightly diverted to the land war in Ukraine and its horrific human cost.

5. The Dark Fleet and IMO Technical Committee Acrimonious debate surrounded the report of the technical Committee, which included a draft resolution on the Dark Fleet and a review of the work of the Technical Cooperation Committee (TCC), which had agreed “in principle” that Russia should not be allowed to participate in IMO technical cooperation.

As regards the dark fleet resolution:

The reference to “sanctions” was again disputed by Russia, supported by Belarus, China, Iran, North Korea (DPRK), and Venezuela – on grounds that it went beyond IMO’s technical mandate. Also, what sanctions were being referred to, and by whom? Russia also said that any reference to sanctions in an IMO document was only acceptable if such sanctions had been agreed by the UN General Assembly or the UN Security Council. The Secretary-General sought to calm the waters and suggested that countries could submit proposals to MEPC, MSC and LEG to clarify the term “sanctions”. This was accepted, as was the inclusion of the full statements of Russia, Belarus, China, Iran, North Korea (DPRK), and Venezuela in an Annex 9 of the Committee 2 report .

As regards the TCC’s agreement “in principle” to suspend the participation of Russia in IMO technical cooperation: Russia demanded a roll-call vote on the question “Has IMO the right in principle to suspend a member State from participating in technical cooperation?” USA raised a point of order on grounds that Russia was in violation

of Article 1 of the IMO Convention, and it was “not appropriate” for the Assembly to take a vote. USA received wide support.

Russia spoke several times, expressly stating that certain countries – naming the UK, the USA, and the European Union – were concealing their political intentions and protecting their own interests behind an IMO resolution, and this also amounted to double standards (Russia cited actions in Yugoslavia and the invasion of Iraq, among other things).

The Assembly President tried to calm the waters, saying the issue was “very sensitive” and “important to the unity of IMO”, but it could not be resolved at this Assembly session, but it “needed further discussion”. He suggested, “in spirit of cooperation”, to move on now and that parties could make submissions to the next Technical Cooperation Committee meeting. Russia agreed for work to continue work on the matter in TCC “in a calm and technical environment”.

6. Much of this report reflects personal experience and opinion of the author; but I very much hope that it accords with the broad principles of safety of navigation which IAIN supports. I am indebted to Ms Aline deBievre for her steadfast support to IAIN; very little of IMO's business escapes her forensic maritime gaze.

With best wishes,

James Taylor

IAIN delegate to IMO.