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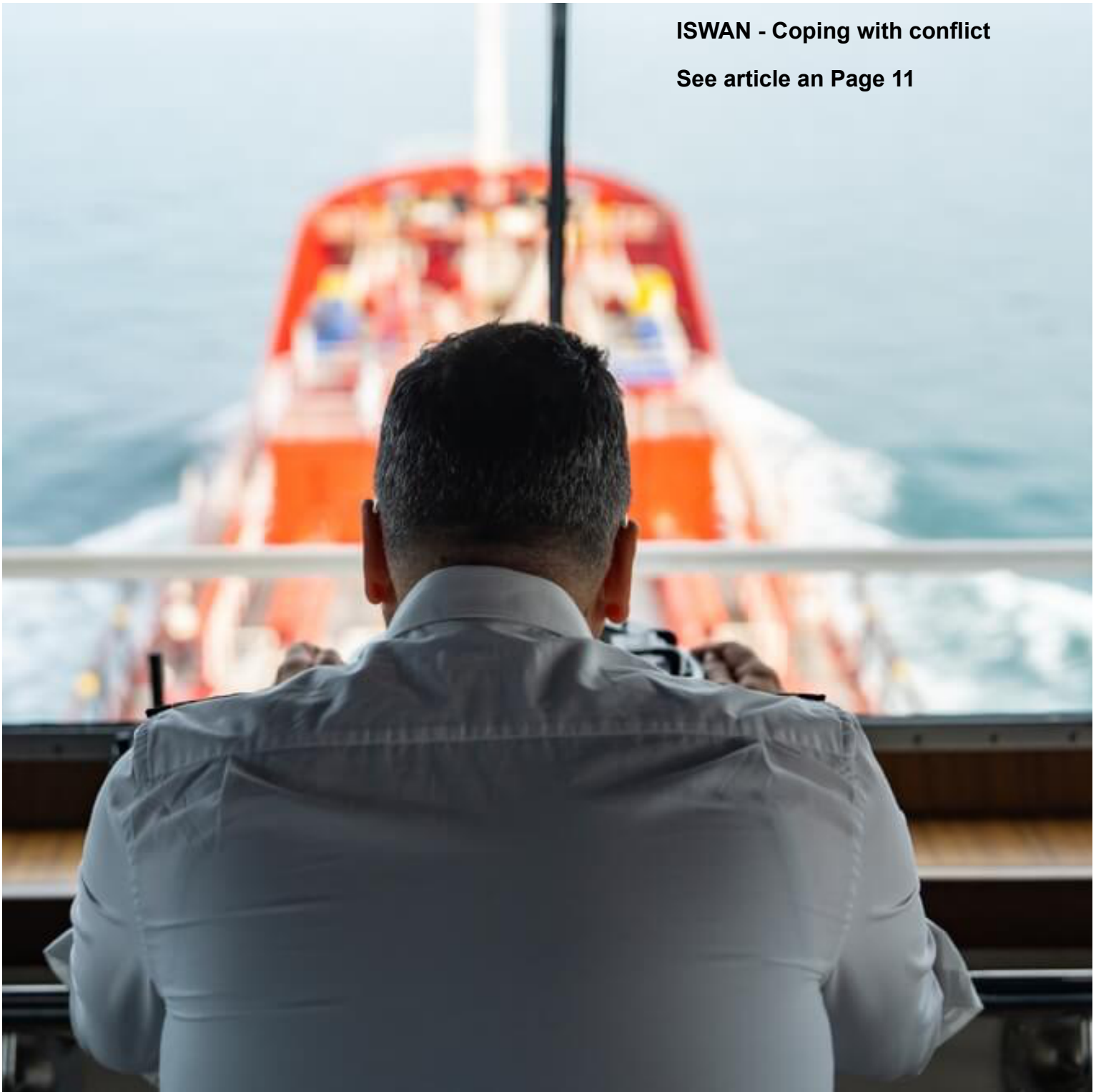
IF SMA

NEWSLETTER

The Shipmasters' International Voice

ISWAN - Coping with conflict

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Readers are reminded that the opinions expressed in the IFSMA Newsletter are those of the various authors and providers of news and are not necessarily in accord with IFSMA policy.

Secretary General's Message

From us here at IFSMA HQ, we hope you are all well.



Throughout the month of March, the maritime news has been dominated by the conflict in the Middle East, the attacks on merchant vessels and the tragic loss of seafarers' lives.

It is widely reported that around 20,000 seafarers are onboard ships that have been trapped due to the Strait of Hormuz being unsafe to transit. These seafarers cannot leave their ship, their onboard supplies are often getting very low and there is a constant threat of attack. All of this while simply doing their job.

At IFSMA, we have the greatest admiration for all the Masters who are in command of the ships trapped in the Strait of Hormuz region. They have little or no control over the regional situation but have to make difficult decisions that affect the seafarers onboard their ship.

The International Maritime Organization called an Extraordinary session of the Council on 18 and 19 March, 2026. IFSMA attended this session and we co-sponsored a paper demanding that freedom of safe navigation must be re-established so that seafarers can go about their jobs without fear as this is their civilian right. We stated that this can only be achieved through a coordinated international approach.

The Council consists of delegations from 40 nations and they urged that all attacks on ships affecting innocent civilian seafarers be halted and called upon all nations to preserve the welfare of seafarers and to coordinate an approach to safe navigation. It was especially noted that affected seafarers were severely impacted by pressure and fatigue and that the Masters' overriding authority had to be preserved.

At the end of this Extraordinary Session of Council, the Secretary General made a closing statement. He urged all Member States to take the IMO Council's decisions back to the highest level of their governments. The Secretary General also made the following closing statement near the end of proceedings:



'Recently, I read an article which really touched me. It made me realize how powerless I am in directly helping seafarers. Its message was simple yet powerful. Its headline said it all:

'When seafarers die, statements are not enough. Vessels can be insured, cargo can be insured; but a human life cannot be replaced.

'I will not stop making statements. Neither will I stop putting seafarers first in all my statements on geopolitical events affecting shipping, nor when I speak to the media. Because even today, few truly comprehend the risks seafarers face for the benefit of others.

I say this because we all need to go beyond the statements of the last two days. Let us make this extraordinary session unequivocal evidence that we mean what we say.

'Look around and take a moment to reflect on the comfort and security we enjoy. Then think of the men and women on board vessels at this current moment – uncertain of what tomorrow might bring. What if you were one of those seafarers who just wanted to return home? Ask yourself: if one of those seafarers were your family member, what would you expect to be done? What would you do?

'If brought face to face with one of those seafarers, what would you say you did to help?'

We all hope that the overall situation around the Strait of Hormuz improves and that we have better news to report at the end of April.

Again, I would like to remind you all again to explore our new website at www.ifsma.org and follow us on LinkedIn and Facebook where we highlight our latest news, initiatives and updates.

We wish you the very best and safe sailing in these troubled times!

Andy Cook
Secretary General

From the News Editor

The Gulf shipping crisis

Engagement by ICS, ITF and the Gulf States

It was reported on 31 March that the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) have met

representatives from Gulf States to address the ongoing conflict and its direct impact on seafarers and shipping in the Gulf.

This meeting comes four weeks into the deadly conflict in which seafarers have been killed, ships have come under attack, and an estimated 20,000 seafarers remain stranded in conditions of fear and uncertainty, on ships unable to transit the Strait of Hormuz.

Joint initiatives

Discussions focused on urgent practical, joint initiatives aimed at supporting ships and crews currently impacted. These include:

- Introducing, as required, a reporting mechanism, via the IMO, for ships to highlight their most immediate concerns for resupply so this can be communicated to Gulf State partners.
- Recognition of seafarers as key workers in accordance with the national law and the need to prioritise their replacement onboard ships, where necessary and in accordance with the relevant international standards, to ensure that vessels in the affected region remain sufficiently manned and operational.
- Being able to quickly and safely disembark seafarers from vessels for medical reasons, as necessary.

These initiatives are intended to support both operational continuity for shipping and the immediate safety, protection and wellbeing of seafarers caught in the conflict zone.

Comment

Thomas A. Kazakos, Secretary General of the ICS, said: *'Discussions with our partners in the Gulf States at this meeting were constructive and timely. Their support is essential to addressing the challenges facing seafarers and ships in the region and I was encouraged by their commitment to work with us to introduce solutions as required.*

'Together, we have identified a series of practical and achievable steps, and we are committed to working in close partnership to safeguard seafarer welfare and maintain the flow of global trade.'

Stephen Cotton, General Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation, added: *'Seafarers are on the frontline of this conflict, and right now too many are facing extremely difficult conditions.*

'It is essential that they have access to food, clean water, fuel and medical care. These are not optional; they are fundamental rights.

'At the same time, no seafarer should be expected to remain in a conflict zone against their will. Those who want to go home must be able to do so safely and without delay, with arrangements in place to ensure safe crew changes and the continued operation of vessels.

'The ITF is working closely with shipowners and our industry partners, to support seafarers through this crisis. We are making sure their voices are heard and are bringing their demands directly to governments and industry to secure practical solutions that protect seafarers and the industry.'

Governmental activities

During the meeting the representatives of the Gulf States to the IMO highlighted several issues. Including that their respective governments have already begun and will continue to do everything in their capacity to support seafarers, emphasising the importance of concerted efforts to ensure that neither seafarers nor passengers onboard ships feel abandoned.



They also highlighted that the current phase is different from the initial stages, and as such requires different measures. They also confirmed that logistical support will be implemented across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States for ships that are unable to leave the Gulf region, and that crew changes will not face difficulties.

Possible exceptional measures

In cases where crew contracts or medical certificates expire, it was indicated that the GCC States may resort to exceptional measures like those taken during the Covid-19 pandemic to facilitate seafarers' situation.

Need to work with IMO

Moreover, they stressed the need to work closely with the IMO and its Secretary-General, under the auspices of the resolutions of its Extraordinary Session (36), to ensure the establishment of a safe maritime corridor for the evacuation of ships, guarantee the safety of seafarers, and resume navigation in the Strait.

IMO representatives from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar attending the meeting with ICS Secretary General Thomas A. Kazakos and ITF Secretary General Stephen Cotton.

The IMO Digest

A summary of some of the news received with grateful thanks from the excellent IMO Media service in recent weeks.

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IMO Secretary-General opens SSE 12

The Secretary-General of the IMO Mr Arsenio Dominguez addressed the IMO Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment on 9 March as it convened its 12th session which ran to 13 March at IMO HQ.

His full speech is below:

'Good morning distinguished delegates.

'I am pleased to welcome you all to the twelfth session of the Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment.



IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez (centre) addresses the Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment on 9 March, seated with the SSE Chair, Mr. Hironori Eguro, of Japan (right).

For more information related to shipping and seafarers in the Strait of Hormuz and the Middle East, including previous IMO statements and verified information about attacks, see Middle East by the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/29crfdx6>

'As we open this session of the SSE Sub-Committee, I must express my grave concern regarding the recent attacks on merchant vessels in the region of the Strait of Hormuz, which have resulted in at least seven fatalities and several injured seafarers, some of them gravely.

'As I have said on numerous occasions, any attack on innocent seafarers or civilian shipping is unacceptable. These seafarers are simply carrying out their duties and performing an essential service to the global community, ensuring the continued flow of goods and energy, and they must be protected from the consequences of broader geopolitical tensions.

'All parties without exception, and I repeat, without exception, must respect the freedom of navigation,

which a fundamental principle of international maritime law.

'I continue to monitor the situation closely, and I reiterate my call for all shipping companies to exercise maximum caution when operating in the affected region.

'My thoughts are also with the many seafarers who remain at sea in areas of heightened risk, especially those who are directly impacted by the instability in and around the Strait of Hormuz. They continue to perform their duties under challenging and uncertain circumstances as tensions escalate.

'As I have emphasized publicly, I urge all stakeholders to remain vigilant against disinformation and to rely only on verified, authoritative sources when making operational decisions.

'To support this, the Organization has made available a dedicated webpage where regularly updated and verified information on the evolving situation is published, ensuring that seafarers, companies, and administrations can access reliable information directly from IMO.

'I stand in solidarity with the injured seafarers, with the families of those who have lost loved ones, and with all crews who continue to keep global shipping moving under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Their safety and welfare remain my highest priority.

'International Women's Day

Yesterday, 8 March, marked International Women's Day, celebrated globally under the theme "Rights. Justice. Action. For ALL Women and Girls." This year, the United Nations is calling for action to dismantle the barriers that continue to stand in the way of equal justice: discriminatory laws, weak legal protections, and harmful practices and social norms that erode the rights of women and girls.

'In the maritime sector, we all have a role to play in breaking down institutional barriers that hinder – rather than enhance – diversity and inclusion. Recent evidence from the Women in Maritime Survey provides a clear picture of where we stand: it highlights the policies and measures already in place across the sector, while also identifying the critical gaps that remain and where further action is needed.

'From our side, at IMO, we are focusing on recognizing the women in maritime who drive innovation, leadership, and positive change every day.

'2026-2027 World Maritime Theme

The 2026 World Maritime Theme, "From Policy to Practice: Powering Maritime Excellence" underscores the importance of translating regulatory ambition into effective implementation. The SSE Sub-Committee's work directly reinforces this ambition, ensuring that new safety standards can be implemented effectively and consistently across the fleet.

'Agenda of SSE 12th session

'The Sub-Committee's agenda, as usual, is structured around two main pillars: Life-Saving Appliances and Fire Protection.

'On Life-Saving Appliances, the Sub-Committee will advance work on ventilation requirements for partially enclosed lifeboats, continue the goal-based revision of chapter III and the LSA Code, and address outstanding issues related to self-righting and canopied reversible life rafts for new ships. These discussions involve both technical and regulatory considerations, including testing provisions.

'On the Fire Protection agenda, the Sub-Committee is tasked with a comprehensive modernization of the 2010 FTP Code, which is essential for aligning IMO instruments with modern shipbuilding materials. Additionally, you will continue the work to improve SOLAS regulation II-2/9, transforming years of non-mandatory Unified Interpretations into clear, mandatory regulatory text regarding fire containment.

'One of your most urgent tasks is addressing the detection and control of fires on containerships and this session will progress towards finalization of amendments to SOLAS on portable infrared thermal imagers and on water mist lances and developing associated guidelines. You will also tackle the specific hazards posed by the carriage of New Energy Vehicles, including battery-electric vehicles, which present unique risks of thermal runaway and re-ignition. The Sub-Committee will consider proposals to enhance early fire detection and verification measures and assess effectiveness of existing fire suppression systems.

'Finally, we are initiating the development of a safety regulatory framework for GHG emissions reduction. With the number of battery-equipped ships expected to grow by 40% in the coming years and potentially reaching nearly 18% of the global fleet by 2050, the development of interim guidelines for ships using Battery Energy Storage Systems will provide a much-needed global framework, supporting safe implementation while the regulatory regime continues to mature.

'I am confident that under the capable leadership of your new Chair, Mr. Hironori Eguro, of Japan, supported by your experienced Vice-Chair, Mr. Cristiano Aliperta, of Palau, you will engage in constructive discussions and reach agreement on the matters before you.

'I invite you all to the welcome reception in the Delegates' Lounge after the close of today's business.

'Thank you.'

IMO condemns attacks on shipping

Calls for safe-passage framework in Strait of Hormuz

In a two-day Extraordinary meeting at its London HQ on 18 and 19 March the IMO Council strongly condemned the threats and attacks against vessels and purported closure of the Strait of Hormuz, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2817, which has adversely affected merchant and commercial vessels and threatened the safety and welfare of seafarers.

The Council called for a coordinated approach to security be adopted and that the response be internationally coordinated. It reiterated that the exercise of navigational rights and freedoms by merchant and commercial vessels, in accordance with international law, must be respected.



The IMO Council met from 18 to 19 March, 2026 to discuss the situation in the Middle East and its impact on shipping and seafarers.

In his closing remarks, IMO Secretary-General said: *'Let it be the responsibility of each and every one of us to demonstrate that inaction is not an option, that words alone are not sufficient. Together, we can drive the change required to protect the wellbeing of those who have no voice and safeguard the principle of freedom of navigation.'*

Protection, safety and welfare of seafarers

The Council urged that all attacks on ships affecting innocent civilian seafarers be halted immediately. It called upon Member States to ensure the continuous provision of water, food, fuel and other essential supplies to ships currently unable to leave the region.

States were encouraged to facilitate crew change and crew renewal operations in accordance with international standards, to safeguard the health, safety and well-being of the seafarers affected. The Council urged States to ensure that seafarers' communication with their families and friends can be maintained and that stores and provisions remain adequate for their needs.

The Council called for a coordinated international approach to the safety of navigation, taking into account the fatigue and pressure of those on board, the master's overriding authority, as well as the risks associated with transiting the area while Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) suffer extensive jamming and spoofing.

Safe passage framework

The Council called for the establishment of a safe maritime framework, as a provisional and urgent measure, to facilitate the safe evacuation of merchant ships currently confined within the Gulf region. This measure aims to protect the lives of seafarers and ensure safe commercial shipping by avoiding military attacks.

The Council directed IMO Secretary-General Mr Arsenio Dominguez to take the necessary immediate actions to initiate the establishment of the framework, in collaboration with the relevant parties.

Secretary-General Dominguez responded with: *'I am ready to start working immediately in negotiations to establish a humanitarian framework to evacuate all vessels and seafarers trapped. However, for this to materialize, I will need the understanding, commitment and, above all, the concrete actions from all relevant countries and stakeholders.'*

IMO Council

The Extraordinary Session of Council was convened followed requests from several Member States. The Council is the Executive Organ of IMO, consisting of 40 Member States, elected by the IMO Assembly. More than 120 Member States participated in the session, including all 40 Council Members.

In summary

To read the full five-page summary of decisions of the IMO Council readers are invited to use the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/33ty8vch>

The Extraordinary Meeting of the IMO Council

Closing remarks

On 19 March IMO Secretary-General Dominguez thanked all parties for their comments during the session of the Council to address the impacts on shipping and seafarers of the situation in the Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and the Gulf region, particularly in and around the Strait of Hormuz.

As he said: *The world is watching. The very fact that we have come together so swiftly sends a clear*

message to the rest of the world: that IMO remains steadfast in its responsibility for international shipping, and above all, for the well-being of seafarers.'

In his closing remarks to the two-day meeting the Secretary-General stated that the root causes of the situation may lie beyond the mandate of IMO however it is important not to disregard the immense negative impact that geopolitical conflicts impose on seafarers, but beyond that, on the global community that depends on essential trade transported by sea.

In summary

In summary Mr Dominguez paid particular attention to the various statements received that reiterated key principles, these being:

- Respect for the freedom of navigation.
- The paramount importance of the safety of seafarers and shipping.
- The conviction that seafarers and shipping must never be used as collateral victims of any geopolitical conflict.
- The importance of dialogue and diplomacy in de-escalating tensions and restoring stability in the region.

Decisions taken

In the two days of talks delegates took clear and important decisions in order to:

- Condemn threats and attacks against merchant vessels.
- Confirm the need to exercise navigational rights and freedoms of vessels.
- Encourage restraint and de-escalation.
- Demand a halt to all attacks on innocent seafarers.
- Call for the preservation of the safety, welfare and well-being of seafarers.
- Commit to the provision of essential supplies to the vessels in the region.
- Facilitate crew change for seafarers.

Valuing seafarers

One specific decision taken was of particular operational importance in demonstrating that all statements heard at the Council related to how much mankind values seafarers.

Humanitarian corridor

He closed by referring to the establishment of a humanitarian corridor to evacuate ships in the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.

Furthermore he promised to take this instruction very seriously, along with other instructions such as keeping the international maritime committee informed of developments.

In conclusion

In conclusion he added: *'I can assure you that will continue maintaining dialogue with all of you, including holding informal briefings, whenever necessary.'*

'But allow me to be more direct to all of you now.'

'These decisions must not remain within this room. I urge you to take them back to your capitals, elevate them to the highest levels of your governments, and engage with the relevant UN agencies.'

'Everyone needs to be aware of the risks to innocent seafarers, and how imperative the freedom of navigation is for the benefit of all in the world, especially for global food and energy security.'

'I am ready to start working immediately in negotiations to establish a humanitarian corridor to evacuate all vessels and seafarers trapped. However, for this to materialize, I will need the understanding, commitment and, above all, the concrete actions from the countries involved. I will also involve the interested parties, including as well as relevant UN agencies.'

Port of Dar es Salaam

Advancing digitalization

A needs assessment mission led by IMO in the United Republic of Tanzania has been assessing the country's current port situation and laying the groundwork to set up a Maritime Single Window (MSW) system in the Port of Dar es Salaam. This was reported from IMO HQ on 27 March.

One-stop digital platform

The Maritime Single Window is a one-stop digital platform designed to streamline communication among all the stakeholders and agencies involved in the arrival, stay and departure of ships. By consolidating information exchange into a single interface, the system is expected to significantly reduce time and costs associated with port procedures.



Since 1 January 2024, it is mandatory for all IMO Member States to establish MSW systems in ports to enhance the efficiency of shipping worldwide.

Broad representation

The needs assessment mission held from 23 to 27 March was conducted by IMO consultants in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport of the United Republic of Tanzania, the Tanzania Shipping Agencies Corporation (TASAC), relevant Ministries and other public bodies, including the Tanzania Revenue Authority, Port Health Service, the Border Police and Immigration Service, as well as private-sector stakeholders such as shipping lines, agents, and terminal operators.

The mission concluded with a meeting with TASAC to review and validate the findings.

A comprehensive mission report will be produced to guide the development of the MSW in the United Republic of Tanzania. It will include findings, analyses and recommendations for the deployment of the MSW, according to IMO principles and guidance, as well as the development of related IT tools.

The report will also support stakeholder mapping and provide clear directions for efficient and successful implementation of the MSW.

IMO's ITCP

This activity is delivered through IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) in close collaboration with the Ministry of Transport of the United Republic of Tanzania, and the Tanzania Shipping Agencies Corporation.

IMO's Facilitation Committee FAL 50

Digitalization strategy and cyber security measures

IMO steps up progress on digitalization to enhance maritime safety and security

The Facilitation Committee (FAL) of the IMO has approved a global strategy for maritime digitalization as well as cybersecurity measures for maritime single windows.

IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization

Meeting in London for its 50th session from 23 to 27 March, the Committee approved the IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization, aimed at transforming global maritime operations. It emphasizes interoperability, system standardization, data-sharing and effective data governance across organizations and jurisdictions.

The Strategy establishes maritime digitalization as an overarching IMO policy, to be integrated into the Organization's Strategic Plan and applied across all IMO bodies and processes. This includes engagement with maritime administrations, the shipping industry and seafarers.

To improve efficiency and reduce administrative burdens

The goal is to improve efficiency and reduce administrative burdens by facilitating the sharing, verification and renewal of seafarer credentials, passenger identification and ship certificates. The Strategy also uses data to enhance navigation safety and strengthen ships' environmental performance, promoting human-centred systems that are resilient to disruptions, cyber threats and environmental challenges.



Following FAL Committee approval, the Strategy will be shared with the IMO's Legal, Marine Environment, and Maritime Safety Committees for further review before being submitted for adoption to the IMO Assembly's 35th session in 2027.

Cybersecurity for maritime single windows

As digitalization increases, so do cyber threats that could cause operational, safety, or security failures.

To address this, the FAL Committee approved amendments to the Annex of the Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, 1965 (FAL Convention). These amendments require Contracting Governments to implement mandatory cybersecurity measures to protect maritime single windows, in line with national legislation.

MSWs

Maritime Single Windows (MSWs) are one-stop digital platforms established by maritime authorities to facilitate information exchange between ships and government agencies. The amendments aim to protect these systems – which are key to streamlining procedures for arrival, stay and departure at ports – from cyber risks.

The amendments will be submitted for adoption at the next Committee session (FAL 51) in 2027, with expected entry into force on 1 January 2029.

Introduction of API and BRI in maritime transport

The FAL Committee approved amendments to the Annex of the FAL Convention that will allow Contracting Governments to implement Advance Passenger and Crew Information (API) and Booking and Reservation Information (BRI) information in the maritime sector. These measures represent a notable step forward in strengthening the management of crew and passenger information, enhancing both border control processes and operational efficiency.

The amendments will be submitted for adoption at FAL 51 in 2027, with expected entry into force on 1 January 2029.

Other key decisions

The Committee also:

- Approved a new version of the IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business, including new datasets, for adoption at FAL 51.
- Adopted amendments to the Annex of the FAL Convention related to vaccinations and medical care for crews during international public health emergencies. These recommend that governments consider IMO guidance on crew vaccination within national programmes and ensure access to medical care during public health emergencies of international concern and will enter into force on 1 January 2028.
- Adopted new Guidelines on the prevention of access by stowaways and the allocation of responsibilities to seek the successful resolution of stowaway cases.

A full meeting summary will be published in due course.

About the Facilitation Committee

The Facilitation Committee (FAL) deals with matters related to the facilitation of international maritime traffic, including the arrival, stay and departure of ships, persons and cargo from ports. The Committee also addresses electronic business, including the single window concept, and aims to ensure that the right balance is struck between regulation and the facilitation of international maritime trade.

Strait of Hormuz

Foreign ministers brought up to date on IMO activities

Mr Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General of the IMO has urged States to support diplomatic efforts to secure the evacuation of around 20,000 seafarers still stranded in the Persian Gulf, and enable humanitarian corridors for urgent assistance.

On 2 April during a virtual meeting for Foreign Ministers from more than 40 countries hosted by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to discuss the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, Secretary-General Dominguez called on all Parties to respect the rights and freedoms of navigation and stressed the paramount importance of the safety and wellbeing of seafarers.

He emphasized the need for de-escalation and operational maritime solutions rather than purely military approaches.

He said following the meeting: *'Fragmented responses are no longer sufficient to resolve this crisis. What is urgently required is diplomatic*

engagement, practical and neutral solutions, and coordinated international action.'

'IMO is advancing a maritime evacuation framework built on coastal State cooperation, security guarantees and operational coordination, with the clear objective of releasing stranded vessels, enabling safe crew rotations and preventing an environmental disaster.'

IMO actions

Since the beginning of the conflict on 28 February 2026, IMO has confirmed 21 attacks on commercial shipping, resulting in the deaths of 10 seafarers with several more severely injured. Around 20,000 civilian seafarers remain aboard vessels in the Persian Gulf, facing dwindling supplies, fatigue and severe psychological stress.



Following an extraordinary session of the IMO Council on 18-19 March 2026, IMO has undertaken key actions:

Safe passage for seafarers

Ongoing discussions are being held by the IMO Secretary-General and representatives from the relevant States on the development of a safe passage framework to evacuate seafarers currently stranded in the Persian Gulf.

Support from coastal States

IMO is engaging States in the region that have stepped forward to secure supply lines to ships and facilitate humanitarian access for seafarers. Focal point information is available on IMO's dedicated webpage.

Data collection and verification

The IMO website features an online hub that includes verified information on ship attacks, guidance from key industry bodies and international partners, contacts for stranded seafarers, as well as resources related to the global economic impact.

Supporting industry coordination

IMO maintains close communication with industry bodies (BIMCO, ICS, ITF, INTERTANKO, WSC and others) to share information and coordinate action where necessary.

UN Task Force on Strait of Hormuz

IMO is a member of a new dedicated Task Force established by the UN Secretary-General to work on technical mechanisms specifically designed to meet humanitarian needs in the Strait of Hormuz.

The Task Force is led by Under-Secretary-General Jorge Moreira da Silva, Executive Director of United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), and includes representatives from the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and others, alongside IMO.

Online training under SMART-C Women project

Opportunities for women in maritime

The IMO-Republic of Korea SMART-C Women Project is empowering women across the Asia-Pacific maritime sector through specialized online training – opening pathways to broader career opportunities and fostering a more balanced and diverse workforce.

WMU expertise

In the largest cohort to date, forty female maritime professionals from Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam took part in the 2026 sessions from 2 to 6 and 16 to 20 March. The training was run with specialist consultants and maritime experts from the World Maritime University (WMU) and focused on enhancing professional competencies and leadership skills and reinforcing efforts to promote a more inclusive and equitable maritime industry.



Speaking at the opening session, Ms Louise Proctor, IMO Thematic Lead on Gender Equality in Maritime, said: *‘Through the SMART-C Women Project, we aim to enhance women’s participation and leadership in a sector undergoing rapid transformation, particularly in the areas of digitalization and decarbonization.’*

Inspirational

This session featured Ms Rubina Badoy of the Philippines, an alumna of the 2024 SMART-C Women

cohort and the first recipient of a WMU scholarship under the programme. Ms Badoy outlined how the project had positively shaped her professional journey, inspiring this year’s participants as they embarked on their training.

Three core themes

Training modules are structured around three core themes: Decarbonisation, Digitalization and Gender Empowerment. They covered key topics including alternative energy solutions for the shipping industry, the IMO’s greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction strategies, and key aspects of maritime digitalization, with particular attention to the Maritime Single Window, cybersecurity, and broader digital transformation initiatives.

This programme addressed gender-related challenges within the maritime sector, including cultural awareness, unconscious bias, and practical strategies to advance women’s leadership and participation.

Selected trainees from the online programme will be invited to attend an in-person training session in the Republic of Korea in October, where they will gain hands-on experience and further enhance the skills necessary for application within their home countries.

Vital platform

The SMART-C Women Project continues to provide a vital platform for women maritime professionals across Asia and the Pacific to enhance their competencies and advance their careers across the sector, through training, education, global networking, and the development of national master plans for women’s empowerment in selected pilot countries.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Supporting international ship safety management

Two regional workshops to support implementation of IMO’s International Safety Management (ISM) Code took place in Panama and Antigua and Barbuda in March 2026. The workshops strengthened cooperation and alignment among maritime administrations and industry stakeholders across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Officials from flag State and port State control authorities, and industry representatives, shared experiences and addressed common challenges in applying the ISM Code. The Code provides an international standard for the safe management and operation of ships and for pollution prevention. Through targeted technical sessions, case studies and interactive working groups, participants deepened their understanding of the Code’s requirements, recent IMO developments and the findings of the IMO study on the effectiveness and effective implementation of the ISM Code.

By fostering open dialogue on legislative transposition and its difficulties, port State control practices and

oversight of safety management systems, the workshops helped promote greater regional consistency and a more harmonized approach to implementation.



Exchange, knowledge, collaboration

These events strengthened regional capacity by encouraging the exchange of best practices, reinforcing institutional knowledge and supporting collaboration through existing regional mechanisms. Together, these outcomes contribute to safer shipping, stronger regulatory performance and more effective, consistent implementation of the ISM Code across the region.

From ISWAN a new resource

Coping with conflict: A guide for seafarers and their families

Many seafarers and their families are feeling the pressure and uncertainty of the current situation in the Middle East.

The London-based international seafarers charity ISWAN has put together a practical guide to help crew and their loved ones manage stress, stay connected, and know when to reach out for support.

Readers are invited to share this guide with crew, networks, and anyone who might need it.

If you are a seafarer or a family member, you are not alone. Support is available at any time – you can contact ISWAN as indicated below.

The guide: ***Coping with conflict: A guide for seafarers and their families*** may be downloaded using the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/yprt24bj>

If families and friends of the seagoing community are worried about a loved one who is at sea, ISWAN reminds that it is here for them and encourages them to get in touch.

COPING WITH CONFLICT:

A guide for seafarers and their families

Worried, tense or distracted? Checking the news regularly? Noticing changes in your sleep, concentration or mood? **What you are feeling is normal.** These reactions are natural during a crisis. If worries build up, talk to someone you trust or contact us. Here's what else you can do:

Focus on what you can control

- Keep a simple daily structure – regular meals, rest and daily responsibilities.
- Take things one step at a time rather than thinking too far ahead.
- Rely on verified updates from trusted or official sources rather than rumours.

Calm your body when stress rises

- Pause and take a few slow, steady breaths.
- Move your body – stretch, walk or change your environment for a few minutes.
- Take short breaks from news or stressful conversations if you feel overwhelmed.
- Focus your attention on something around you – what you can see, hear or feel.
- Do something that usually helps you relax – like listening to music or prayer.

Stay connected with loved ones

- Stick to your normal routine for checking in.
- Keep calm and understanding of each other's worries or fears.
- Keep the conversation on the present moment, rather than future worries.
- Share calm, factual updates and try to avoid discussing rumours or unverified information that may increase worry.
- Remind them of your love, gratitude and appreciation for them.

Seafarers – Look out for each other

- Check in with crewmates – a simple 'How are you doing?' can help.
- Spend time together during meals or breaks rather than isolating yourself.
- Listen with patience if someone wants to talk about how they are feeling.
- Notice if someone seems withdrawn and gently reach out to them.
- Small acts of support, kindness or humour can lift morale.

No matter how hard you are finding things right now, remember you are not alone.
If you need someone to talk to, support is available 24/7 through our helpline – visit iswan.org.uk/get-support.

To obtain support readers are invited to see the contact details below:

SeafarerHelp – for all seafarers and their families:

Call ISWAN: +44 (0)207 323 2737
 E-mail: help@yachtcrewhelp.org
 Live chat: iswan.org.uk/yachtcrewhelp
 WhatsApp: +44 (0)7909 470 732

YachtCrewHelp – for yacht crew and their families:

Call ISWAN: +44 (0)203 713 7273
 E-mail: help@seafarerhelp.org
 Live chat: iswan.org.uk/seafarerhelp
 WhatsApp: +44 (0)7514 500 153

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For privacy-related enquiries readers are invited to contact ISWAN at iswan@iswan.org.uk

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The strategic value of a good threat

By Michael Grey, IFSMA Honorary Member

You would like to hope that all sorts of useful lessons are being learned from the current conflict in the Middle East, and not just about the consequences of offending irrational world leaders, with a short fuse and no sense of history. In staff colleges and war studies institutions, where cerebral military staff congregate to hone their great brains, in MoD departments in which cleverer planners are not completely obsessing about their promotion prospects, there is surely a lot to take on board. Some of the lessons are very old, such as the potent value of a threat, even where there may not be the obvious capability to carry it out. Two and a half centuries ago, the founding fathers of the United States of America worried themselves sick about the threat from the British fleet lying off their coasts, even though that fleet was far from home and in a shocking state of repair.

A few years later, the threat of Napoleonic invasion, no matter how practicable, dominated British naval strategy. Throughout two world wars, the threat from the German High Seas Fleet in WWI and single large warships in WWII required the Admiralty to take vast and expensive precautions. The nuclear deterrent, it might be suggested, remains the ultimate threat. Now we have the Iranian threat over the Strait of Hormuz, which may be more or less founded in reality, after the US Navy's destruction of the Iranian naval forces, but which nobody is willing to test. It is not an unreasonable reaction to the widespread Iranian drone and missile attacks, and we are sensibly less cavalier with the lives of seafarers than we were a few years ago, during the Iran-Iraq war. The cost and availability of insurance, along with more modern concepts of "neutrality" also act to reinforce the threat to merchant shipping, whatever flag it sails under. One thing which surely has resonated this week, if the lessons of Ukraine had not properly penetrated, is the considerable destructive power of cheap and simple munitions, requiring substantially more sophisticated and vastly more expensive defences to counter them.

Whatever (or whoever) blasted a huge hole in the containment system and sank the Russian controlled gas carrier in the Mediterranean earlier this month was probably not using a weapon costing a king's ransom. With drones employing off-the-shelf components, mass produced and easily stored and transported, the Iranians, no matter how wounded, have shown unexpected resilience to US and Israeli attacks. Rather closer to home, one lesson which surely has been learned is that while threats can be a useful weapon, if there are not the assets available to carry them out, there is little point in uttering them.

If much of your naval capability is inactive, under repair, half-built or immovable for various reasons, the analogy of paper tigers or even chocolate teapots inescapably come to mind. It is not rocket-science to prepare for the unexpected, when it seems to happen so often, but successive governments, with more populist priorities for their finite finances, have failed to grasp this particular nettle. And that comes home with

a vengeance in the context of energy self-sufficiency, as the oil and gas prices soar into the firmament, with the UK, we are told, armoured by a whole two days of gas reserves and the nation dependent on others.

With exploration and any new drilling at a standstill, while our Energy Secretary clings to his net-zero obsession, this latest threat surely ought to provide overwhelming evidence for a rethink. It is cheap to be wise after the event, but one wonders about the thought processes, or perhaps the advice given, to those cruise companies whose vessels were stranded in the Gulf when the missiles started to fly around. Their reaction and contingency plans: somehow managing to fly out some 6000 frustrated customers, cannot be faulted, but with Trump's "Armada" in its final phase of assembly, you wonder why they decided to press ahead with their schedules. Perhaps they just thought that everything he said in the run-up to hostilities was but an idle threat. That, perhaps, is another lesson learned.

Michael Grey is former editor of *Lloyd's List*.

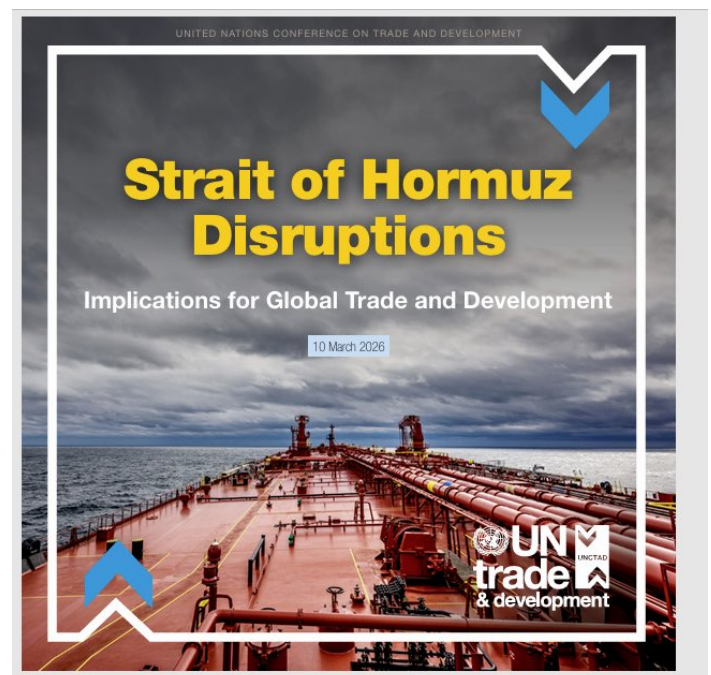
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Hormuz shipping disruptions

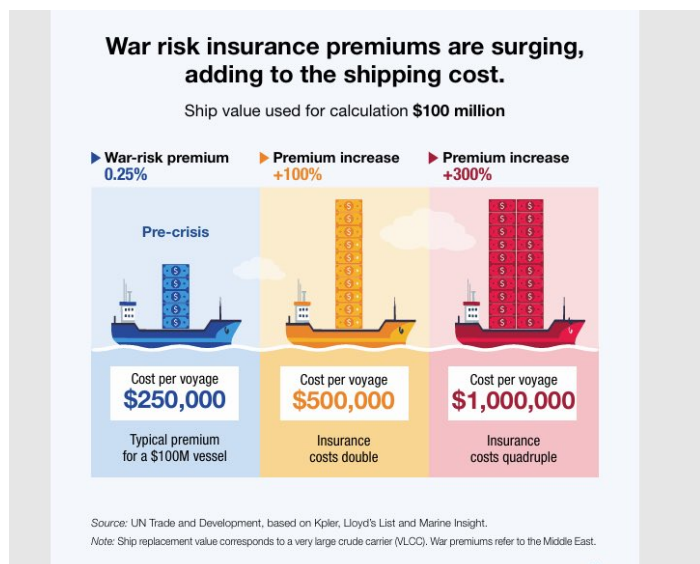
Risks for energy, fertilizers and vulnerable economies

UNCTAD report

On 10 March the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) released a rapid analysis – Strait of Hormuz Disruptions – Implications for Global Trade and Development – examining the implications of recent disruptions to maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most critical trade corridors.



The Strait carries around one quarter of global seaborne oil trade, as well as significant volumes of liquefied natural gas and fertilizers.



Military escalation in the region has disrupted shipping flows through this narrow passage, raising concerns about ripple effects across energy markets, maritime transport and global supply chains.

Key findings from the analysis are:

- Energy markets reacted immediately, with Brent crude rising above US\$90 per barrel.
- Freight rates for oil tankers and war risk insurance premiums are surging, while marine fuel costs are also rising, increasing shipping costs across supply chains.
- Around one-third of global seaborne fertilizer trade (about 16 million tonnes) passes through the Strait, raising concerns about fertilizer access for some of the poorest countries.
- Developing economies may be particularly exposed, as high debt burdens and rising borrowing costs limit their ability to absorb new price shocks.
- Past crises - including COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine - showed how disruptions to energy, transport and agricultural inputs can quickly spread across interconnected markets.

The report

The 18-page UNCTAD document *Strait of Hormuz Disruptions: Implications for Global Trade and Development* is available using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/yea2jh6h>

About UN trade and development (UNCTAD)

UNCTAD is the UN's leading body on trade and development. Founded in 1964, it supports 195 member states with expert analysis, technical assistance, and serves as a platform for intergovernmental dialogue.

UNCTAD helps developing countries make trade, finance, investment, and the digital economy work for inclusive and sustainable development.

Strengthening Regional SAR Cooperation in the Caribbean

The International Mobile Satellite Organization (IMSO) participated in the Regional Caribbean Search and Rescue (SAR) Workshop, held in Miami from 3 to 6 February 2026.

Broad representation

This workshop brought together around 90 participants from regional and international SAR stakeholders, including maritime administrations, Rescue Coordination Centres, SAR operators, and international organizations. The objective was to exchange operational experience and further strengthen cooperation in Search and Rescue activities across the region.

GMDSS oversight

IMSO delivered a presentation highlighting its role in the oversight of the Recognized Mobile Satellite Systems for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), as well as its role as Coordinator for the Long-Range Identification and Tracking of Ships (LRIT), with particular emphasis on the operational use of these systems in support of SAR activities.



IMSO participated in the Regional Caribbean Search and Rescue (SAR) Workshop, held in Miami from 3 to 6 February.

LRIT demonstration

IMSO's presentation included a live demonstration of LRIT for SAR purposes, conducted using the Brazilian LRIT Regional Data Centre, with system access kindly granted by COMPAZ (Brazilian Navy). This demonstration illustrated how SAR services can request and use LRIT information, including ship position data and surface picture (SURPIC) requests, to support SAR coordination and operational decision-making.

IMRF Review

In addition to the technical sessions, discussions were held on the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) Global Maritime Search and Rescue System Review, allowing participants to contribute regional perspectives and operational insights to this ongoing global initiative.

Night Navigation, ETA Pressure, and Decision Making

Comment by the CHIRP reporting programme

The London-based charity CHIRP (Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme, see here: www.chirp.co.uk) welcomes information and reporting on safety incidents from anywhere in the world and from all parts of the maritime industry. This includes commercial seafarers, fishers, recreational and leisure mariners, anyone who works in a port or harbour and from members of the public.

CHIRP takes every report seriously and carries out necessary investigations before publishing its findings for companies and other maritime works to learn from without revealing any identities.

Once analysed, CHIRP anonymises and shares the information via its various publications, which can be used by individuals and industry stakeholders for training and incorporated into safety management systems to improve maritime safety culture. It can also be used as an evidence base for identifying improvements to current safety regulations.

One essential feature of CHIRP's effort is the production of the online safety newsletter *Feedback* available here: <https://chirp.co.uk/maritime/subscribe/>

The February 2026 edition of *Feedback* carries a wealth of material of benefit to shipmasters and one entry with the title *Night Navigation, ETA Pressure, and Decision Making* is outlined below.

Initial Report

The reporter contacted CHIRP with this report, which concerned a night transit through a highly congested area within a traffic separation scheme (TSS). The reporter stated that they reduced speed to allow a slow overtaking vessel to clear ahead. *'This then allowed my vessel to overtake safely without leaving the TSS. Had I overtaken both vessels immediately, our vessel would have been forced outside the scheme.'*

'The following morning, the master challenged this decision, stating that I had no authority to adjust the speed because it affected the vessel's ETA and that orders issued that night should have been followed. I explained that my actions were taken to comply with COLREGs and to maintain safe navigation in heavy traffic. No specific night orders had been given regarding speed adjustments or a requirement to call the master in such circumstances.'

CHIRP Comment

The master's reaction appeared to be driven by concern about the impact on ETA and by the belief that night orders had been breached. This highlights a common tension on board: commercial pressure and schedule adherence, versus the realities of dynamic traffic management at night.

From a navigational perspective, the officer's actions were both reasonable and compliant with COLREGs. Officers-of-the-watch are not only permitted but required to take early and positive action to avoid close-quarters situations. This authority exists regardless of whether night orders specifically mention speed adjustments. If officers feel constrained from acting decisively out of fear of criticism, safety margins erode quickly.

Calling the master to explain the developing situation may have been an option. However, this raises an important question: did the officer feel sufficiently supported and confident to do so? A bridge culture in which officers hesitate to call the master for fear of a negative reaction is itself a risk factor. The master's standing and night orders should make it clear that safety-driven decisions are expected, supported, and open to discussion.



Night orders did not adequately cover speed management in heavy traffic; the balance between schedule adherence and navigational safety; and the explicit authority of the OOW under COLREG Rule 2 and, in particular, the principles of Rule 8. The master's standing orders should, however, make very specific reference to these aspects so that officers are not in doubt about what actions to take.

A culture that questions compliant safety decisions risks normalising hesitation or delay in future high-risk situations. ETA sensitivity reflects broader industry pressures that can indirectly shape onboard leadership behaviours and expectations.

This report underscores the importance of trust, clarity, and shared priorities on the bridge. Compliance with COLREGs and good seamanship must always take precedence over ETA. Masters play a key role in reinforcing this message before, during, and after the watch.

Key Issues relating to this report

Communication – Hesitation to call the master due to fear of criticism or questioning decisions. Lack of

clarity on OOW's authority to make COLREG-compliant decisions independently.

Pressure – ETA pressure influences the master's reaction and the potential for officers to defer safety decisions. High-density traffic and schedule pressures increase cognitive load and potential for conflict.

Teamwork – Tension between the officer and the master shows trust and authority gaps.

Local Practice – Misunderstanding of COLREG authority can normalise hesitation in future similar scenarios.

Capability – Balancing schedule adherence versus navigational safety without clear guidance.

Training – Night orders did not explicitly cover speed adjustments in dense traffic situations.

Key Takeaways

Regulators: Rules are not optional; early, safe action is non-negotiable. Safety must always outweigh commercial imperatives. COLREGs provide clear authority for officers to take early action in navigational risk scenarios, and regulations should reinforce this to prevent the normalisation of delayed decision-making. Regulators need to ensure that industry guidance emphasises that schedule pressures never justify compromising safe navigation.

Managers / Masters: Safety-first leadership prevents hesitation from becoming a habit. Bridge culture matters more than orders alone. Explicitly reinforcing that COLREGs and safe seamanship take precedence over ETA pressures empowers officers to act decisively. Masters should model trust, openness, and clear guidance for night navigation scenarios to avoid hesitation or friction.

Seafarers / Officers: Act early, act safely, and do not fear doing what is right. You are empowered to act decisively within COLREG rules. Understanding your authority, balancing risk with operational pressures, and communicating with the master when possible ensures safe outcomes, even when orders are unclear. Confidence and clarity are your best tools in high-pressure situations.

For readers' information CHIRP's contact details are here:

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CHIRP Maritime. Shadow Fleet Safety Guide

Shadow Fleet Safety Guide

CHIRP Maritime has now published a seven-page wallposter-style guide to shadow fleets.

This equips seafarers and their families with practical steps to stay safe when dealing with vessels that

operate outside international rules—often called the 'shadow fleet.'

These ships frequently evade sanctions, change flags, and lack proper maintenance, creating serious safety and welfare risks.



Understanding how to identify these ships helps protect seafarers and enables crewing companies to make safer placement decisions.

Spotting the warning signs

Identifying vessels linked to the shadow fleet requires close cooperation between seafarers and crewing companies. Before accepting any assignment seafarers are advised to verify the vessel's IMO number against official sanctions and risk lists and at the same time look for these indicators:

Vessel Characteristics

- Significantly older vessels, particularly where there are visible signs of poor maintenance or neglect.
- Frequent changes in ownership or management.
- Rapid or repeated flag changes.
- Not appearing on recognised Port State Control MoUs (Paris, Tokyo, USCG).
- Operational Patterns: Unusual or high-risk trading routes.
- No clear management, insurance or P&I entry.
- AIS switched off or transmitting false positions.
- Ship-to-ship (STS) cargo transfers offshore.

- High-Risk Registries: If registered under unofficial or suspicious registries, as shown in the document the vessel is likely sanctioned.



The CHIRP Shadow Fleet Safety Guide is available in English here: <https://tinyurl.com/mr38u53w>

Copies are available in Bahasa Indonesia and Filipina using the same link

Fatal accident to a crew member

Roll-on/roll-off cargo vessel *Laureline*

MAIB report

Summary

Shortly after 1700 on 13 July 2024, a crew member on board the Malta-registered roll-on/roll-off (ro-ro) cargo vessel *Laureline* (Class DNV; 217m loa; 50,442gt; crew 28) was fatally injured when he was crushed between the rear of a moving trailer and the vessel's structure. The accident happened while *Laureline*, port of departure Zeebrugge, was alongside, loading and discharging trailers using tugs driven by shore workers under the direction of the ship's crew.

Safety issues

- The deceased crew member passed behind the trailer probably assuming that it was safe to do so because it had completed manoeuvring.
- The tug driver was unaware of the crew member's position and reversed the trailer to realign it, crushing the crew member against the vessel's structure.
- The vessel operators had instigated a new

procedure for vehicle deck safety. However, there were weaknesses in its training and implementation, and it was not well understood by the crew working on the vehicle deck who routinely entered the danger zone around moving vehicles.

- The tug driver's knowledge of danger zones and the requirement to stop when a crew member was out of sight did not align with their actual working practices.
- Supervision on the vehicle deck was ineffective, and the vessel's management company had not provided effective assurance to confirm that the new safety procedure had been understood or fully implemented on board.
- Industry guidance on ro-ro vehicle deck operations relied heavily on the misconception that the drivers depend on marshallers to safely position their trailers and will stop their vehicle if they lose sight of their marshaller.

Additional findings

Although the terminal carried out audits of vehicle deck operations, the vessel's management company had not provided effective assurance to confirm that the new safety procedure had been understood or fully implemented on board.



Malta-flag roll-on/roll-off cargo ship *Laureline* built 2019.

Since the accident, CLdN Cobelfret SA, the terminal manager, and Anglo-Eastern Ship Management NL B.V, the vessel's management company, have taken several steps to improve vehicle deck safety, including the issuing of safety bulletins; trialling the use of blind spot cameras on tugs; reviewing the positioning of on board closed-circuit television cameras; developing training videos and introducing new audit procedures.

Comment

Of the accident Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents, Rob Loder, said: '*Laureline is the latest in a series of tragic vehicle deck accidents across Europe and is a stark reminder that procedural controls alone are not sufficient to protect workers on ro-ro vehicle decks.*

'The investigation into the fatality on Clipper Pennant in 2024 made a recommendation to industry to develop a unified Code of Practice for vehicle deck safety, with my predecessor stating that it was no longer tenable for the industry to continue operating in

the current manner. Sadly, that remains true today and so I am reissuing that recommendation, strengthened by the lessons of this investigation. I call again for industry organisations to act decisively and deliver a unified Code of Practice without delay.'

The MAIB report

The MAIB document with the title *Report on the investigation of the fatal accident to a crew member on board the roll-on/roll-off cargo vessel Laureline at Purfleet, England on 13 July 2024* is available using the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/77rxadtk>

Editorial note:

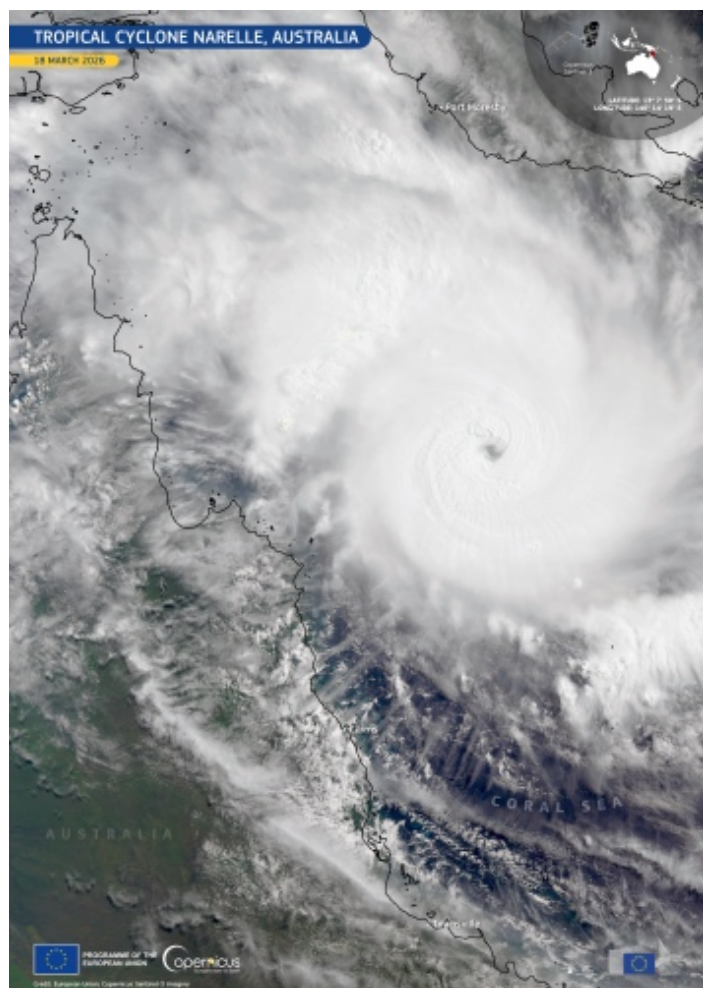
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Tropical Cyclone Narelle

Tropical Cyclone Narelle formed on 16 March 2026 in the Coral Sea, off the coast of Queensland, Australia.

In the following days, it rapidly intensified while moving towards Australia's north-east coast, reaching Category 5, the most intense tropical cyclone classification, on 19 March 2026.



It was the first cyclone of this category to affect the Cape York Peninsula in northern Queensland since 1899.

This image, acquired by one of the Copernicus Sentinel-3 satellites on 18 March 2026 at 12:11 UTC, shows Narelle as it approached the coast of Australia.

From 20 to 23 March Tropical Cyclone Narelle moved westward across northern Australia, prompting national warnings.

After crossing Cape York Peninsula, the system re-intensified over the Gulf of Carpentaria, triggering alerts for coastal communities in the Northern Territory, particularly Arnhem Land. Strengthening winds, heavy rainfall, and an elevated risk of flooding and storm surge accompanied the cyclone's passage over open waters.

Copernicus Sentinel data is key for assessing the environmental impacts of tropical storms and other extreme weather events worldwide, improving understanding of these phenomena, and helping authorities prepare for and mitigate their impacts.

Credit: European Union, Copernicus Sentinel-3 imagery

EU ©

Connectivity needs care

By Michael Grey, Honorary IFSMA Member

It was in the 1950s, during an earlier Middle East crisis, that the wife of a British Prime Minister complained that the Suez Canal was flowing through her sitting room. Today, of course, we have a different watercourse dominating the news and it is difficult to consider anything else. Nevertheless, we must persist. Before the Trumpian Armada got into its stride, there had been a great deal of public agonising about the effect of endless connectivity on young minds, with the Australian government taking the nuclear option to ban social media for under-16 year-olds.

The jury is still out on this bold step, but other concerned interests are considering the same. You do not have to be a dinosaur to be worried about the attention with which the population is glued to its devices, regardless of their generation. When did you last see anyone in a train reading a real book, or a newspaper? Our grandchildren are glued to their phones, not that their parents provide a better example, as we read about first-grade children unable to speak, or baffled by the need to turn pages in their picture books, without their "child-minding" tablets. This is not supposed to be a social commentary, but the subject became "marinized" just recently, when that excellent charity the Sailors' Society published its latest report into the lives lived at sea by cadets.

Having surveyed some 9000 cadets, the subsequent report considers what it describes as "the first digital seafarer generation", with one of its elements an interesting focus on the advantages and problems of connectivity. Nobody who lives in the real world will be surprised by the discovery that some 70% of these young people spend more than three hours online each day. There is an expectation among them that despite the handicaps of distance, all should have

access to decent levels of connectivity and an ability to stay in regular touch with family and friends. After all, this is what their shore-side peers expect and if the technology is available, why not them? Perfectly reasonable.

What the Society points out, is that while there are numerous advantages in being digitally connected, when compared with the isolation of the pre-internet days, the problems that are now being recognised among younger shore-side populations could well be magnified in the loneliness of a steel box, far from home. It is not difficult to imagine some lonely cadet, who has been finding life at sea difficult, “doomscrolling” for hours in their cabin and getting even more deeply depressed. Half of those approached reported online bullying or negative behaviour. It is high time that the anti-social elements of connectivity are properly recognised as they apply to vulnerable young people at sea.

There is no shortage of discussion ashore about social pressures from the digital life, where its effect upon what is now described as wellness is plainly obvious. The Society comments on the fact that there is a pressure to appear happy online, and notes the importance of human mentors aboard ship, rather than some ephemeral electronic “friend”. This sort of study is clearly very welcome, but this change in seafarer behaviour and the sea life has long been commented upon by observers. Years ago, I remember talking to a perceptive tanker Second Officer, who set herself the task of making her shipboard environment more cheerful and the struggles she had in persuading her shipmates to be a bit more social. They would rather, she noted, sit grimly behind their closed cabin doors, eyes on their devices, rather than come out and socialise.

To me, used to ships with lively bars, a junior officer tasked to make the ship a happier place with competitions, and no shut doors, it seemed such a miserable metamorphosis. But nothing about the “modernisation” of the maritime life has lent itself to make life at sea more enjoyable, which is what it ought to be, even though people tell you that enjoyment is not an option. The ruthless reduction of the numbers, beyond that necessary for some sort of social cohesion, the rise of multi-national, multi-lingual and multi-cultural crewing, the banning of the bar by a lot of po-faced American oil company apparatchiks, the treating of cadets as a tax advantage, rather than as an investment in the future, placing a couple of cadets in a ship with nobody who speaks their language, institutional accommodation, the lack of shore leave, and the sheer intensity of modern shipping, under the lash of the accountants make the prospect of an evening’s doom scrolling, seem quite explicable.

Shadow Fleet safety

CHIRP publishes Shadow Fleet Safety Guide For the benefit of seafarers who might find themselves aboard vessels of the notorious sanction-busting shadow fleet, CHIRP has published a practical guide for all who might be involved; seafarers, their families, crew managers and others.

It describes the warning signs of a dubious ship, points out the doubtful flags they sail under, their characteristics and operational patterns. It clearly sets out the safety, welfare, mental health and legal risks and provides practical steps to support seafarers and their families, offering advice for those looking at an offer of employment, and those who might have found themselves aboard such a vessel. The Shadow Fleet Safety Guide can be found and downloaded from the CHIRP website.

Michael Grey is former editor of *Lloyd's List*.

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Celeste’s first satellites launched

Exploring LEO-based satellite navigation

A complementary low Earth orbit layer for Galileo

On 28 March, the European Space Agency (ESA) took a major step forward in strengthening Europe’s ambition for more resilient satellite navigation, as the first two satellites of the Celeste in-orbit demonstration mission lifted off from New Zealand aboard Rocket Lab’s *Electron*. Their mission is to begin testing a complementary low Earth orbit layer for Galileo.



Illustration per European Space Agency ©.

The two satellites – built respectively by GMV and Thales Alenia Space – were launched at 1014 CET on the day and separated from the launcher about an hour later. This marks the beginning of their early operations phase, during which mission control gets them ready for life in orbit.

It is understood that the two satellites will validate core technologies and new signals and service capabilities and will bring into use the required frequencies in L- and S-band signals for the mission’s operational phase, in adherence to International Telecommunication Union regulations.

More launches planned

Additional launches in 2027 will bring the mission to its full configuration of 11 spacecraft in orbit offering a

wide range of experimentation opportunities in different frequency bands, user environments and applications.

Comment

ESA Director General Josef Aschbacher commented: *'With this mission, we are exploring new frontiers for satellite navigation. Celeste will demonstrate how a satellite navigation constellation in low Earth orbit can complement Europe's current Galileo system in medium Earth orbit.'*

'Celeste was among the first ESA missions to embrace a New Space-inspired development approach, enabling faster and more flexible deployment of satellites and technical capabilities, and ultimately ensuring Europe stays at the forefront of innovation in satellite navigation.'

Francisco-Javier Benedicto Ruiz, ESA's Director of Navigation, added: *'Over the past two decades, satellite navigation has become integral to our society. Galileo and EGNOS are a European success today, fuelling our society, generating economic growth while ensuring our independence and security. With Celeste, ESA is ensuring that Europe continues to pioneer innovation in positioning, navigation and timing.'*

'The mission will demonstrate how a complementary layer in low Earth orbit can enhance Europe's current navigation systems, making them more resilient, more robust, and capable of delivering entirely new services.'

More robust signals and new frequencies

By flying closer to Earth, Celeste offers the opportunity for more robust signals and new frequencies. The mission will offer an in-orbit test bench for a broad range of applications, such as enhanced navigation capabilities for autonomous vehicles, railway, maritime, and aviation, increased availability in urban canyons and remote polar and arctic regions, enhanced positioning and messaging with emergency services during disasters, tracking of connected devices and Internet-of-Things applications, and even indoor navigation.

Engaging European industry

Following the demonstration activities, the Celeste in-orbit preparatory (IOP) phase, fully supported by ESA Member States at CM25*, will leverage European industry to validate the technologies in-orbit and build pre-operational infrastructure.

Ultimately, the results of the Celeste mission will prepare European industry and support the European Union's decision towards the establishment of an operational navigation layer in LEO, complementing Galileo and EGNOS, Europe's current position, navigation and timing systems.

About Celeste

The Celeste mission is ESA's initiative for LEO-PNT (Low Earth Orbit Positioning Navigation and Timing) and is currently in its in-orbit demonstration phase. This first phase features a demonstration constellation of eleven satellites that will fly in low Earth orbit to test innovative signals across various frequency bands. Its goal is to advance satellite navigation concepts for resilient positioning, navigation and timing services.

Industry partners: Spain, Germany, France and Italy

The Celeste in-orbit demonstration phase was approved at ESA's Council at Ministerial Level of 2022. The fleet is being developed through two parallel contracts respectively led by GMV (Spain) with OHB (Germany) as core partner, and by Thales Alenia Space (France) as prime and Thales Alenia Space (Italy) as space segment responsible. The two consortia involve over fifty entities from more than fourteen European countries.

*Celeste was further expanded at ESA's Council at Ministerial Level of 2025 (CM25), towards the implementation of the next phase: the LEO-PNT In-Orbit Preparatory phase.

Celeste also contributes to one of the three core pillars of ESA's new European Resilience from Space (ERS) initiative, endorsed at CM25. ERS addresses critical security and resilience needs for Member States while laying the groundwork for future European strategic space capabilities.

AMSA Inspections report 2025

Insights from 2025 vessel inspections including detentions, common safety risks and compliance performance

Australia has one of the world's largest mixed-market economies and is the largest continental landmass surrounded by water. Australia's national livelihood depends on ensuring that maritime trade to, from and around the country remains safe and compliant with all relevant international conventions. Australia relies on sea transport for most of its imports and exports.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority's robust port and flag State control processes are an essential element in ensuring the safe operation of all vessels, the protection of the marine environment, and protecting seafarers and passengers' onboard vessels.

Meeting public expectations

To meet public expectations, AMSA is empowered to perform compliance and enforcement functions, regulating maritime trade in Australia through the implementation of flag State control (FSC) and port State control (PSC) regimes.

Inspection of Domestic Commercial Vessels (DCVs) is carried out under the National Law Act 2012 and the

inspection of Regulated Australian Vessels (RAVs) and Foreign Flagged ships is carried out under the Navigation Act 2012. Professional and consistent FSC and PSC regimes are essential in ensuring vessels comply with the minimum standards of maritime safety, seafarer welfare

and protection of Australia's 34,000 kilometre coastline (excluding approximately 8,000 islands) from environmental damage.

Close national and international cooperation

AMSA works in close cooperation with Australian state authorities, the IMO and PSC partner nations across the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions, sharing information and actively participating in international policy development. These efforts are aimed at ensuring AMSA remains a transparent, trusted and consistent member of the maritime community, both nationally and internationally.

AMSA inspectors check that ships are safe, follow Australian and international standards, and do not pose risks to people or the environment.

Each year, AMSA analyses inspection data across all domestic commercial vessels (DCVs), regulated Australian vessels (RAVs), and foreign-flagged ships visiting Australian ports.

In 2025

There were 5,329 inspections of DCVs, RAVs and foreign-flagged ships, over 10% more than in 2024. A total of 237 ships were detained in total. This was up from 212 in 2024, as inspections continued to focus on high-risk vessels.

General cargo/multi-purpose ships (7.0%) and container ships (5.9%) had the highest detention rates. The most common issues were structural and equipment problems. DCVs and RAVs had higher deficiency rates than foreign-flagged ships.

Safety management system (SMS) issues were more common on DCVs, partly due to newer rules and the ability to record multiple problems in one inspection.

RAVs and DCVs had higher deficiency rates than foreign-flagged ships in most areas.

A total of 28 operators were recognised as high performing due to their strong safety performance and compliance.

The report

This report summarises AMSA inspection activities, detailing the performance of commercial shipping companies, flag States, Recognised Organisations (ROs), Accredited Marine Surveyors (AMS) and vessel types.

To read the full 2025 AMSA inspections report readers are invited to use the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/2945x5tc>

Ferry emissions outpace cars in major European ports

Per NatPower Marine:

'Charging infrastructure gap now the critical bottleneck'

Ferry emissions in Europe's port cities now rival those from millions of cars, according to a new analysis by Transport & Environment – raising urgent questions about how quickly the sector can transition to clean maritime transport.

The report finds that ferries emit as much CO₂ as 6.6 million cars annually, and that port cities, including Dublin, Barcelona and Naples, experience higher levels of harmful air pollution from ferries than from road traffic.

Lack of scalable charging infrastructure

NatPower Marine, a global developer of maritime charging infrastructure, says the findings point to a tipping point for the industry the barrier to decarbonisation is no longer vessel technology, which is growing rapidly, but the lack of scalable charging infrastructure at ports.

Maritime electrification is no longer theoretical

Electric ferry vessels are already operating across full routes in Europe and China, demonstrating that maritime electrification is no longer theoretical, it is happening at scale. China's latest five-year plan signals a major acceleration, targeting the electrification of ferries and container feeder vessels by 2030. In doing so, it is positioning itself to lead in electric shipping, much as it has in electric vehicles.

This creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the UK and EU to co-lead maritime electrification — not only in vessel innovation, but in the infrastructure, services and energy systems that will define the future of the industry.

To quote Stefano Sommadossi, CEO of NatPower Marine UK: *'Ferries are one of the most viable segments to electrify. The technology is ready and the economics are increasingly favourable what's missing is infrastructure at scale.'*

UK and Irish Sea / Channel routes highlight immediate opportunity

The findings are particularly relevant for the UK and Ireland, where high-frequency ferry routes such as Dublin–Holyhead and Belfast–Heysham, and the Channel routes with France, Belgium and the Netherlands, which are among the most intensively used in Europe.

These routes account for thousands of annual crossings and significant emissions at berth, yet they are also among the most suitable for electrification due to predictable schedules and regular port dwell times.

Sommadossi added: *'Short-sea ferry routes like those across the Irish Sea or the Channel are one of the most practical starting points for maritime decarbonisation.'*

'With the right charging infrastructure in place, emissions reductions can be achieved quickly and at scale.'

Infrastructure — not ambition — is now the constraint

While the Transport & Environment report suggests that up to 60% of Europe's ferry fleet could be electrified by 2035, with many routes already cheaper to operate using battery power, deployment is being held back by limited grid access and insufficient port-side charging capacity.

NatPower Marine is addressing this challenge by developing a global network of fully financed maritime charging infrastructure combining shore power, battery storage, and smart grid integration.

In the UK, NatPower Marine is investing over £100 million in partnership with Peel Ports Group to deploy e-ship charging infrastructure across eight major ports, supporting the creation of one of the first green shipping corridors between the UK and Ireland.

This model removes the need for upfront capital investment from vessel operators and enables ports to scale clean energy provision without compromising grid stability.

Turning ports into energy hubs for clean shipping

Ports are at the centre of the maritime energy transition, but selling electric fuel is not their business, in fact the ones which tried are losing money, and are now wanting to pass the risk to operators like NatPower.

Sommadossi concluded by saying: *'Ports do not drill, pipe, refine and sell traditional fuels, they make money with logistic and real estate services instead. Operating electric fuel is our mission.'*

'The data is clear, the technology is proven, and the economics are immediately

viaible. Since there is not enough infrastructure and access to electricity for marine electrification is in competition with higher payers like data centres, the ferry operators that will secure access to electricity will create a competitive advantage in both service and cost, leading to larger market shares and higher profits for them.'

Readers may wish to use this link to the Transport & Environment Report here:
<https://tinyurl.com/4emp3v87>

Background

For the UK, this is not a niche transport issue. Around 95% of the country's trade moves by sea, with the

maritime sector contributing over £100 billion to the economy.

While ferries represent a smaller share of total shipping by volume, they are among the most operationally intensive and economically critical segments, connecting key trade routes, supporting regional economies, and operating at high frequency in and out of major ports. Their fixed routes, regular schedules and extended time at berth make them one of the most immediate and cost-effective opportunities for decarbonisation, with emissions concentrated where they have the greatest impact on air quality, energy demand and the cost of moving goods.

Across Europe, this is equally not a niche transport issue. Maritime transport underpins the continent's economy, carrying around 75% of external trade and nearly a third of intra-EU freight, while supporting millions of jobs across ports, logistics and industry. While ferries represent a smaller share of total shipping by volume, they are among the most operationally intensive and socially critical segments, connecting islands and coastal regions, enabling cross-border trade, and operating at high frequency in and out of major port cities. Their fixed routes, predictable schedules and extended time at berth make them one of the most immediate and cost-effective opportunities for decarbonisation — with emissions concentrated in urban port environments where they have the greatest impact on air quality, public health and regional economies. can we back this up with creditable links if challenged

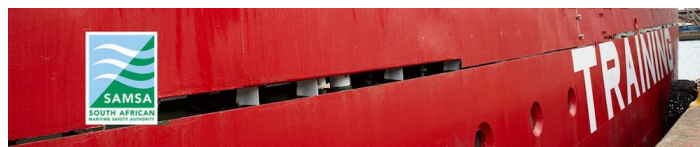
About NatPower Marine

NatPower Marine, part of the NatPower Group, is developing the largest independent network of ship charging facilities to provide clean electricity for propulsion and a cold ironing solution to the global maritime sector. The company develops the essential end-to-end infrastructure required for the decarbonisation of global supply chain routes, providing shore power to support the electrification of ships for propulsion and cold ironing at berth, at anchor, and offshore.

The NatPower Group is a global energy transition developer with approximately 30 GW of natural power projects, operating in the UK, USA, Italy, Kazakhstan, and other countries. The company has an ambitious expansion plan to become the largest and fastest-growing enabler of the global energy transition. NatPower H, a subsidiary of NatPower Group, is currently building the world's first green hydrogen refuelling station infrastructure for pleasure yachting.

NatPower UK is a sister company of NatPower Marine. NatPower UK has one of the largest clean energy development portfolios in the UK. It will bring over 100 GWh of battery storage online by 2035, integrating large-scale, smart, clean energy generation and distribution with large-scale, intermittent, clean energy demand.

SAMSA monitors developments in the Middle East



In mid-March the South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) announced that it was closely observing the ongoing developments in the Middle East concerning the rerouting of merchant vessels around the Good Hope.

Evolving situation

SAMSA, as the country's designated authority for maritime safety and environmental protection, is closely monitoring the evolving situation and assessing its potential impact on global shipping routes. Through the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) Cape Town, the Maritime Domain Awareness is on high alert to support the high-volume traffic. SAMSA anticipates a possible increase in maritime traffic along the South African coastline and the MRCC is well-positioned to monitor the movement of merchant vessels in real time.

Call for vigilance

Furthermore, the Safety Authority calls on ship operators to remain vigilant and stresses the importance of relying on verified, authoritative maritime safety information when making operational decisions.

Comment

To quote SAMSA's CEO, Captain Dennis Mqadi: *'We stand fully prepared to support all vessels choosing to navigate past our coastline thereby providing the right of innocent passage as per The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).*

'We remain ready to provide navigational guidance, maritime domain awareness updates, and safety information to ensure secure and efficient passage for all ships.'

SAMSA reaffirms its commitment to upholding the highest standards of maritime safety within South African waters.

Added Mqadi in conclusion: *'We will continue working collaboratively with national departments, regional partners, and global maritime bodies to ensure that South Africa remains a safe, reliable, and strategically important route for international shipping.'*

World's first hydrogen-fuelled operation of a main engine

On-shore factory trial

It was reported on 30 March that Japan Engine Corporation (J ENG) and Kawasaki Heavy Industries,

Ltd., are jointly engaged in the Green Innovation Fund Project: *Development of Marine Hydrogen Engines and MHFS** of the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO), in cooperation with Mitsui OSK Lines, Ltd., MOL Drybulk Ltd., Onomichi Dockyard Co., Ltd., and Nippon Kaiji Kyokai (ClassNK).

A fully Japan-made, large, low speed, two stroke hydrogen-fuelled engine

Within this project, J ENG has been developing a fully Japan-made, large, low speed, two stroke hydrogen-fuelled engine. The world's first** full scale engine intended for installation on a vessel, the type 6UEC35LSGH, has successfully begun hydrogen co-firing operation in all cylinders. To date, the engine has achieved a hydrogen co-firing ratio of over 95% at 100% load, confirming both GHG reduction effects and stable operation. Verification testing will continue to further optimize performance under hydrogen co firing conditions.

Progress in Japan and abroad

In recent years, the development and demonstration of hydrogen fuelled vessels have progressed in Japan and abroad. However, most initiatives focus on short distance, short duration, and low output operations—such as sightseeing craft or tugs, using compressed hydrogen—primarily for domestic coastal or port area applications. In contrast, this project combines the high efficiency, high output, low speed two stroke hydrogen fuelled type 6UEC35LSGH engine with liquefied hydrogen fuel, thereby enabling long range, long duration, and high output operations. This represents a major technological milestone toward the practical use of large oceangoing hydrogen fuelled merchant ships.

Accumulated expertise

J ENG has accumulated expertise through fundamental studies on hydrogen related materials and combustion, as well as durability testing of hydrogen fuel injection systems.



A computer-generated image of the proposed 17,500 dt hydrogen-fuelled multi-purpose vessel.

The new engine has been developed based on this accumulated knowledge. Once full-scale verification is complete, the engine is scheduled for shipment in January 2027 and will be installed as the main engine of a 17,500 dt hydrogen fuelled multi-purpose vessel

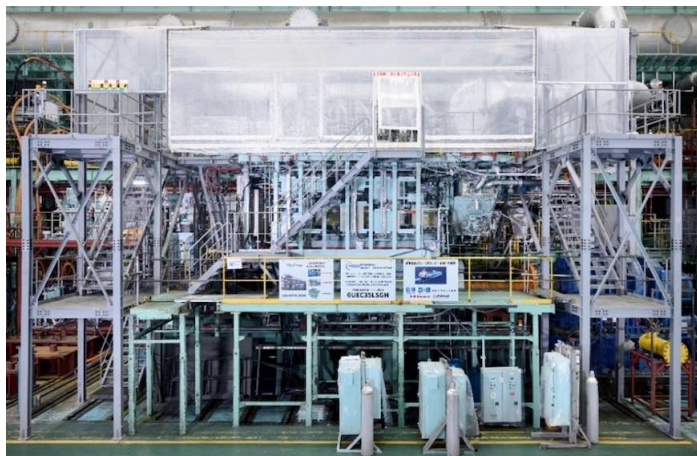
designed and built by Onomichi Dockyard. The MHFS, a hydrogen fuel supply system for this engine, is being developed and manufactured by Kawasaki, and it will also be installed on the vessel.

Vessel construction contracts

MOL and Onomichi Dockyard concluded a series of contracts for the construction of the vessel. In addition, through discussions among the relevant parties, agreements were reached on the specifications of various facilities required for the hydrogen fuelled vessel, and related contracts were executed. The detailed design of the vessel is currently progressing smoothly.

Ready in 2028

The vessel is scheduled to undergo three years of demonstration operation starting in FY2028 under the operation of MOL and MOL Drybulk. Throughout the development of the engine and MHFS, as well as the design, construction, and operation of the vessel, ClassNK will conduct safety evaluations.



The Japan-made, large, low speed, two stroke hydrogen-fuelled type 6UEC35LSGH engine.

With NEDO's support, J ENG and Kawasaki, in collaboration with MOL, MOL Drybulk, Onomichi Dockyard, and ClassNK, will continue taking on the challenge of realizing the practical operation of merchant vessels powered by hydrogen fuel—paving the way toward a sustainable future for the maritime industry.

*Marine Hydrogen Fuel System (Marine Hydrogen Fuel Tank and Fuel Supply System).

*Note 2 According to J-ENG *Development of marine hydrogen engines and MHFS* is adopted by NEDO, part of Green Innovation Funding Program Moving to Realize a Zero Emissions Vessel published on 26 October 2021

In a Houthi risk area

US Maritime Authorities advise turning off AIS

Thanks to advice from the MM&P Wheelhouse Weekly* we learn that the Houthis remain a threat to American vessels in the Red Sea, Bab El Mandeb Strait, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea and Somali Basin, according to a new US maritime advisory warns.

Although there have not been any Houthi attacks on commercial ships since the Israel-Gaza ceasefire agreement in October 2025, the Houthis on Sunday (29 March) claimed responsibility for a missile attack on Israel.

It was the first time that Israel had been fired on by the Yemen-based Houthis since the start of the war in February. Israel said it had intercepted the missile.

The maritime authorities warn that potential threats against ships could include: one-way unmanned aerial vehicles; unmanned surface vehicles; unmanned underwater vehicles; ballistic and cruise missiles; small arms fire from small boats; explosive boat attacks; and illegal boardings, detentions, and/or seizures.

To avoid being targeted, American ships are strongly advised to turn off their AIS transponders unless the master believes that doing so would compromise the safety of the vessel.

Additional onboard systems that transmit commercial data, such as reefer temperatures and weather, could also be used for tracking.

For this reason, the authorities advise ship operators to alert crews to the fact that since all electronic signals pose a risk to maritime operations, when feasible they should secure wi-fi routers while underway in high-risk areas.

If a US-flag commercial vessel without a contracted armed security detail is boarded, the crew should not forcibly resist the boarding party, the authorities said.

Refraining from forcible resistance does not imply consent to boarding.

The authorities noted that adherence to all flag state and international requirements and guidance regarding operation of AIS, and the safe navigation of the vessel, remains the responsibility of individual companies and vessel masters.

*Journal of the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots.

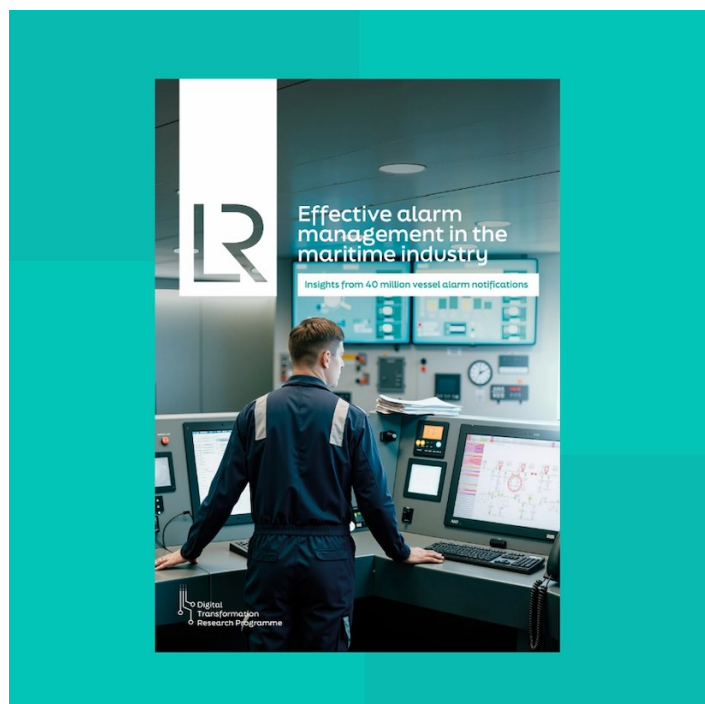
Alarm overload: a growing safety risk

An LR report

We learnt on 2 April that LR's new report, *Effective Alarm Management in the Maritime Industry*, reveals how excessive alarms are overwhelming crews. The document is said to offer one of the most detailed analyses in the industry, which is based on:

- Over 40 million alarm-related events examined.
- Eleven ships assessed across more than 2,000 days of operation.
- Evidence showing sensors and equipment were incorrectly set up, or calibrated, which led to bombarding crews with false alarms.

As part of LR's Digital Transformation Research Programme, the study findings show that simple, targeted interventions can dramatically reduce nuisance alarms, improve situational awareness, and allow crew to focus on the alarms that truly matter.



As demonstrated in the report, during seven days on board a vessel LR's research team achieved the measurable results shown in the accompanying graphic.

Research with industry stakeholders

It is understood that LR is continuing this research with industry stakeholders, aiming to ensure that developments to the IMO's Engine Control Room Alert Management (ECRAM) performance standard are based on informed, pragmatic, and proven methods.

Alongside the new research, LR has expanded its Alarm Management Advisory Service, supporting ship owners, designers and shipbuilders in efforts to:

- Reduce nuisance and non-actionable alarms, with bridge and engine control room reviews.
- Improve crew response and situational awareness, following human factors analysis.
- Optimise alarm integration and performance from design to operation.

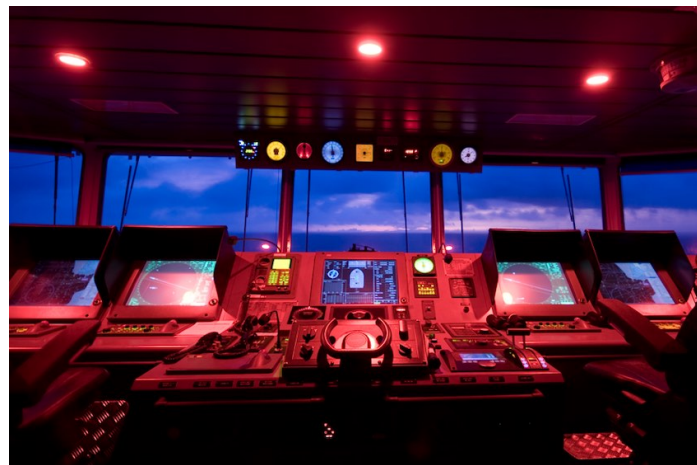
Whether operating a large, mixed-age fleet or planning newbuilds, LR can help reduce operational risk, improve safety, and deliver a more effective bridge environment for crews.

Information available

LR states that it is able to schedule a short discussion to explore where the biggest gains can be made for an owner's vessels or forthcoming projects. The LR Alarm Management Advisory services can support such business.

For more see here: <https://tinyurl.com/5n8t55pz>

Effective alarm management reduces stress, cuts risk and helps fleets operate more safely and efficiently.



More information is available using the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/3ce5k9m9>

The definitive Port Call Optimization (PCO) guide for ports and shipping

Ports and shipping unite to standardise port call data, advancing safe, efficient and sustainable berth to berth navigation

An unprecedented collaboration between recognised IMO NGOs representing ports and shipping has produced an industry milestone: a framework and accompanying guide that will standardise core port call data, advancing safe berth to berth navigation.

Working side by side, IHMA and IAPH have delivered a common solution that ends decades of fragmentation and misalignment around port call data, charting a course for safer, more efficient, and more sustainable shipping – underpinned by robust and established IMO, ISO and IHO data standards and endorsed by BIMCO, ICS, Intertanko and Intercargo.

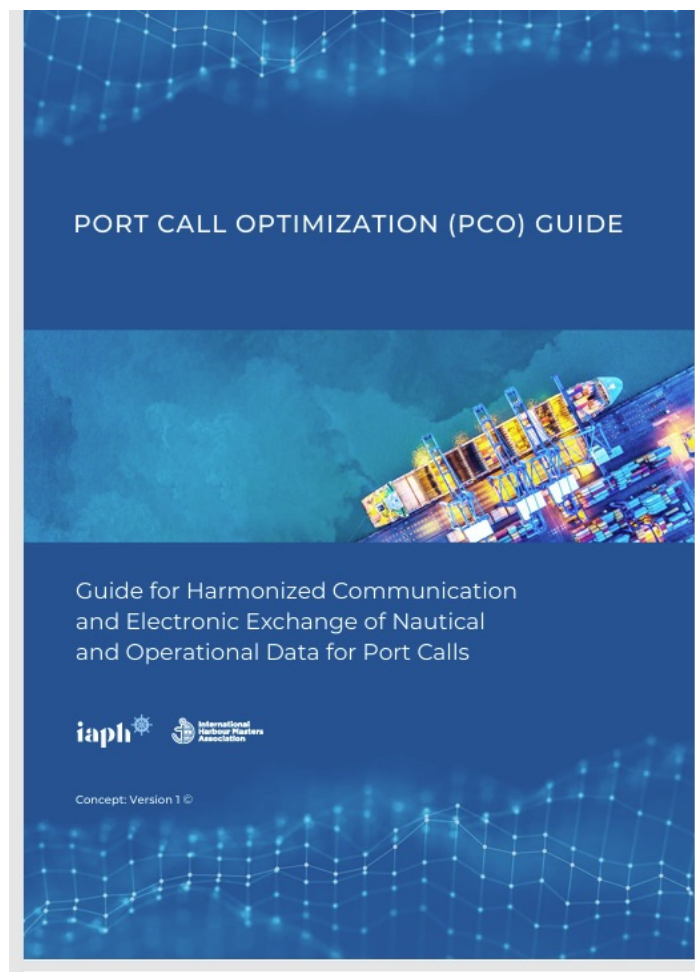
Dual submissions to the IMO FAL 50 from 23 to 27 March further built on this landmark agreement by mapping out a path to formalised guidelines on port nautical information, based on existing IMO rules and guidelines.

A new global framework

Produced by the International Association of Ports & Harbors (IAPH) and the International Harbour Masters' Association (IHMA), the *Guide for Harmonized Communication and Electronic Exchange of Nautical and Operational Data for Port Calls* – abbreviated to the *Port Call Optimization (PCO) Guide* – sets out a step by step approach for ports and shipping to exchange a minimum, high value set of port call data electronically to improve supply chain efficiency, remove wasted time awaiting (or at) berth and ultimately reduce ship emissions.

Endorsed by forty maritime organisations, including other leading industry NGOs such as IBTA¹, the

Nautical Institute, FONASBA² and the World Bank, the *Port Call Optimization Guide* marks the first time in which a global framework has existed equivalent to the IMO's own established ship-focused standards on safe navigation from berth to berth.



The intended readers of this guide are harbour masters or equivalents, terminal operators, nautical service providers, IT personnel of the port, policy makers and solution providers.

IMO submissions continue the journey

Submitted at IMO Facilitation Committee (FAL 50) two complementary IMO papers charted a practical, shared course based on this milestone agreement.

Submitted by IAPH and IHMA, FAL 50/INF.4 introduced the *Port Call Optimization Guide* and defined an initial, minimum set of port call data, aligned with IMO and IHO standards and supported by an international standard for electronic data sharing through the IHO.

This submission directly complemented FAL 50/17 (Netherlands *et al*³) which proposes a new request for output regarding the development of guidelines on port nautical information and which details the full breadth of nautical data required for safe berth to berth navigation, grounded in existing IMO rules and guidelines.

Tried and tested between the world's most advanced ports

The *Port Call Optimization Guide* is not a theoretical manual. Prior to publishing, some of the world's most advanced ports in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas had successfully trialled port-to-port data exchanges on port calls of both liner container shipping and liquid bulk tanker calls, using the data sets in the guide. This includes the first ever demonstration of port call data exchange, piloted between the Maritime Port Authority of Singapore and the Port of Rotterdam, showcased last year at the IMO FAL 49 in London.

A milestone achievement

IAPH Managing Director Patrick Verhoeven commented: *'The publication of the Port Call Optimization Guide marks a significant, shared step toward safer, more efficient and predictable berth to berth navigation. This guide is the result of long-term industry collaboration, which should translate long standing IMO safety ambitions into practical steps inside ports.'*

IHMA President Captain Paul O'Regan (Chief Operation Officer Port of Duqm Company, SAOC) added: *'The International Harbour Masters are proud to have been a part of the PCO initiative since its inception. The initiative has evolved to align with changes in the maritime arena – however the core principle of transparent, accurate and universal information exchange between all parties remains overall objective to support safe and efficient port management.'*

Next steps and further information: To download

The 68-page *Port Call Optimization Guide* is available in the public domain and can be found in pdf form using the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/38sekebh>

In print

Enquiries about printed copies should be directed to Captain Ben van Scherpenzeel, Project Officer, IHMA: Scherpenzeel.ehmc@harbourmaster.org

¹ The International Bulk Terminals Association

² The Federation of National Associations of Ship Brokers and Agents

³Submitted by Netherlands (Kingdom of the), Germany, Estonia, United Arab Emirates, Norway, ICS, IHMA, IAPH, INTERTANKO, INTERCARGO, BIMCO, IBTA, IFSMA)

Editorial note:

Material here kindly provided by the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) ©.

Information letter to seafarers in the Persian Gulf

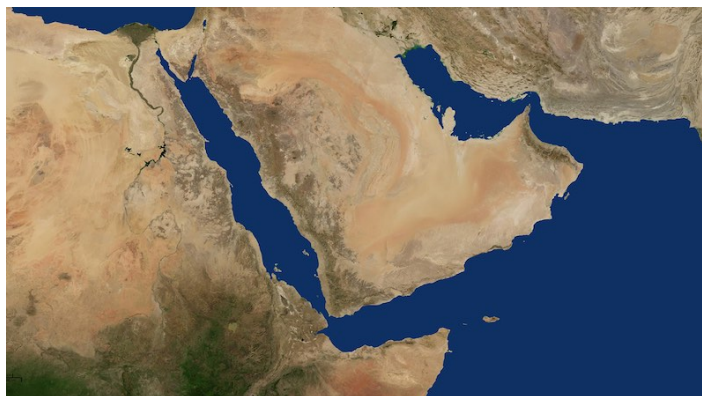
Introduction by GARD

In response to the ongoing situation in the Strait of Hormuz, Gard, in collaboration with Helse Bergen (Haukeland University Hospital, Bergen, Norway), is sharing timely guidance to support the health and wellbeing of seafarers currently operating in the region.

This news was published by GARD on 31 March 2026.

Guidance letter

A guidance letter has been distributed directly to clients and vessels in the affected area – provides information on available round the clock medical and social support services, as well as practical advice on managing uncertainty and stress.



The letter is headed *Information letter to seafarers in the Persian Gulf* and is by Dr Jon Magnus Haga, Head of Norwegian Centre for Maritime and Diving Medicine, Haukeland University Hospital, Norway.

Topics considered

Topics dealt with include stress reaction, building resilience, supporting colleagues, what companies can do. There is an introduction to the Mariners Medico Guide with detailed step-by-step instructions on how to deal with disease and injury at sea.

The information letter to seafarers in the Persian Gulf is available to be downloaded by the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/mv22suxr>

There is a page related to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East available on GARD's website here by scrolling down: <https://tinyurl.com/s4sydm3k>

Gulf Cooperation Council and United Nations accord

HE Mr Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) pictured left, met HE Mr António Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations (UN), on 2 April in New York.

During the meeting, they discussed the brutal Iranian attacks targeting GCC states and examined the repercussions of the serious escalation witnessed in the region, and the direct threat this poses to regional and international security and stability.

HE the GCC Secretary General expressed his appreciation for the supportive stance of the UN Secretary General towards GCC states against these attacks, affirming that the Cooperation Council countries had sought to build normal relations with Iran, but were surprised by these treacherous attacks that violated the sovereignty of GCC states and constituted a flagrant breach of all international laws and norms.



Photo kindly provided by the Gulf Cooperation Council, with grateful thanks.

GCC 2026 ©.

At the conclusion of the meeting, both sides stressed the need for the immediate cessation of all hostile acts and the necessity for Iran to comply with UN Resolution 2817 (2026) adopted by the Security Council at its 10119th meeting, on 11 March 2026 and of which this is part:

'Deploing the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian objects by the Islamic Republic of Iran, including airports, energy installations, objects necessary for food production and distribution, and critical civilian infrastructure, as well as the indiscriminate use of weapons in populated areas and their consequences for the civilian population, as well as attacks and threats on merchant and commercial vessels in and near the Strait of Hormuz and at the disruption of maritime security and the adverse impact on international trade, energy security and global economy resulting from destabilizing activities and regional tensions in violation of international law...'

The full document is to be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/47unh9pp>