



COUNCIL
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Agenda item 16

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CONSIDERATION OF THE ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO CERTAIN IMO PUBLICATIONS

Note by the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document provides background information to the Council concerning the Technical Co-operation Committee's consideration of free Internet access to certain IMO publications following in initiative of Argentina, Germany and Ghana.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 5

Related documents: TC 51/6/1 and TC 52/9

Introduction

1 The Technical Co-operation Committee at its 51st session on 14 June 2002, had before it a proposal (document TC 51/6/1) submitted by Argentina, Germany and Ghana, to make available free Internet access to certain IMO publications and suggesting a seven-month model test period with a view to submitting a cost/benefit analysis to the Council in 2003 for consideration.

2 To assist the Committee in its deliberations, the Secretariat recalled the Organization's long-standing position that its intellectual assets, disseminated as sales publications, should be priced realistically for users from the international shipping community. The Committee was informed that revenues from sales of publications played a material part in the Organization's finances and now contribute to the major part of the costs of some 43 staff and that accumulated surpluses of the Printing Fund had played an essential part in the funding of the Technical Co-operation Fund. The Committee was further advised that with the support of Member States, IMO had so far been able to protect its copyright from being breached by commercial or semi-commercial institutions reproducing IMO sales publications from either printed copies or from the Internet, and from selling these at cut-rate prices without safeguarding the authentic nature of IMO texts.

3 Several delegations supported the proposal but some expressed the wish for a study on this subject because of the potential impact on the budget of the Organization. Other delegations were of the view that free access to IMO instruments should only be available to Member States through a secure website whilst others proposed limited access in read-only format. Several delegations requested more information on this subject in order to facilitate an informed decision on the matter. The majority of delegations who spoke supported the proposal to gain experience and collect empirical data, by conducting a model test. Accordingly, the Secretary-General will provide a report

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for consideration by the TCC when it reverts to the matter at its fifty-second session in November 2002 (see document TC 52/9).

4 Since this matter has important policy considerations for the Council and the Assembly, notably in respect of the potential revenue implications, the Council may wish to make a decision on this matter on the basis of the outcome of TCC's further consideration, which will be reported to the Council at its eighty-ninth session.

Action requested of the Council

5 The Council is invited to take note of the information contained in this document and to comment and decide as appropriate, following consideration of the TCC's views on the matter.
