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Agenda item 13

C 117/13  
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**PERIODIC REVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS IN MANDATORY  
IMO INSTRUMENTS**

**Update on recommendation 2 from the SG-RAR on the creation of a web-based  
information portal**

**Note by the Secretary-General**

**SUMMARY**

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This document provides a response to the request of the Council for the Secretariat to develop a proposal in order to better assess the implications of recommendation 2 contained in the report of the SG-RAR
<i>Strategic direction:</i>	14
<i>High-level action:</i>	14.0.1
<i>Output:</i>	14.0.1.3
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 21
<i>Related documents:</i>	C 113/11, C 113/INF.2, C 113/INF.3, C 113/D; C 114/13/1 and C 114/D

**Introduction**

1 The 113th session of the Council considered the report from the Ad Hoc Steering Group for Reducing Administrative Requirements (SG-RAR), in which 13 recommendations were presented. In its consideration of the recommendations, the Council requested the Secretariat to develop a proposal in order to better assess the implications of recommendation 2, which stated:

"that the Organization – as a matter of priority – establishes and develops a fundamental vision concerning its role and responsibility as host of an internationally trusted web-based information portal, including (a) functional architecture for the entry, storage and retrieval of information and data; (b) practical and efficient use; and (c) development and maintenance of such a portal."

2 At the 114th session of the Council, the Secretariat proposed that as the Organization already has an information portal (GISIS) that is used for an increasing number of the reporting requirements of Member States, it considered that the feedback from the stakeholders in the public consultation carried out in 2013 leading to this recommendation, called for a system that went beyond the existing reporting functions of GISIS. In this respect and bearing in mind the existence of GISIS, the Secretariat had initiated a process to comprehensively map out the purpose and current status of GISIS, in order to identify what additional features would be needed in a new web-based portal to fulfil the requests expressed in the stakeholder consultation.

3 The Council noted the information provided on the work being undertaken by the Secretariat, and requested the Secretary-General to provide the Council with further information at a future session.

### **Update on progress**

4 The Secretariat completed a comprehensive review of GISIS in October 2015, having secured the services of an independent Project Coordinator who was familiar with GISIS as well as the work of the SG-RAR.

5 The review undertook extensive consultations across the Secretariat to understand the origins and purpose of GISIS, how it is used within the Secretariat and external users with whom they interact, and to identify the system's strengths and weaknesses. Based on these consultations, the review examined how data is included and retrieved from GISIS, taking into account the needs of users and the reliability and veracity of the data contained therein.

6 The review also analysed the structure of GISIS and the feedback received from the SG-RAR consultation process on what kind of information portal would be most useful. Also of importance was to understand the constituents proposing such a portal and whether such portal was viable, sustainable vis-a-vis the accuracy and reliability of the information to be available through such a portal. In doing so, the review examined possible enhancements to meet the needs of a coordinated, systematic and well-resourced information portal with GISIS.

### **The development of GISIS**

7 Through cross-divisional consultations, the Secretariat determined that the basis of the development of the various GISIS modules stems largely from two sources. The first being the Organization's desire to move to an electronic data storage, management and use of information supplied by Member States to the Secretariat in fulfilment of their obligations derived from the various IMO instruments, whilst at the same time making such information widely available as a means of enhancing compliance. This element has been largely driven by the various organs of the Organization requesting a number of reporting-related modules to be developed. However, there was no process in place to determine the actual value added for these reporting modules, their impact on the core idea of promoting compliance and how data supplied by Member States would be monitored to ensure that the data was up to date, relevant and useful.

8 The second driver for the development of modules was the Secretariat's need to accumulate data that was necessary for its work, and to make that data widely available throughout the Secretariat, to Member States and the Public, as necessary. This development was carried out with a similar ad hoc approach – with little or no cross-divisional coordination to ensure data synergy and interdisciplinary convergence. Equally so, no resource implication was considered or quantified in the development and maintenance of the various GISIS modules.

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## Comparison of current and proposed functionalities

9 One of the outcomes of the consultation of the SG-RAR was that stakeholders identified electronic solutions as an effective answer to the burdens they faced while fulfilling reporting requirements under IMO instruments. Part of the commentary on electronic solutions made reference to elements of an online information portal that would facilitate both compliance with reporting requirements and port State control procedures. The review analysed who were the stakeholders/respondents associated with recommendation 2, as well as information on the number, work role of respondents and the exact requirements to which respondents were making reference. Sixty respondents made comments associated with an information portal. Most of the respondents who added comments to the consultation of the SG-RAR came from ships' management (masters, ships' crew and company employees), followed by respondents from Member States (administration, contracting governments and port State employees), and the Secretariat. Their primary areas of concern seemed to be predominantly safety-related requirements (SOLAS, HSC, LL) on reporting and carriage of documents, followed by MARPOL and STCW requirements on surveys and certification.

10 Those respondents requested a system that is significantly more expansive than GISIS, and much more focused on facilitating and expediting port State control procedures. They requested a centralized system that would facilitate compliance with reporting requirements and industry-wide coordination that would expedite port State control procedures and alleviate the burden of inspections from involved parties. It should be noted that out of the 53 requirements for which respondents identified GISIS, or a potential online information portal as solutions to occurring administrative burden, the majority (35) was not covered by GISIS.

11 Those respondents who made specific reference to GISIS either confirmed the fact that the system already covered a number of requirements contained in the SG-RAR consultation, and further added that it should:

- .1 cover, and allow for direct reporting for even more requirements;
- .2 be the sole means of provision of information to the Organization;
- .3 have a system in place to ensure that port States are informed of matters of concern (an example provided was inadequacy reports for reception facilities);
- .4 allow for a direct notification mechanism that would replace the circular system; and
- .5 utilize IMO contact lists as an automated communication mechanism.

12 In general, the respondents' recommendations requested the further development of GISIS as an information tool. There are two things that are interesting to note, while looking at their recommendations. The first is that respondents, in their recommendations for GISIS, indicated that they view it as an information tool that is in need of further development towards that direction. The second is that, while a number of respondents discussed an online information portal, most did not name GISIS. This could indicate that some respondents may not have been aware of GISIS.

13 A further look into the recommendations by SG-RAR indicates that respondents identified simplified reporting, improved information sharing and automation/ simplification of information access by port State control as issues that an information portal should provide to the sector.

14 As a consequence of this analysis, possible changes to GISIS fall into two main categories. One being changes that refer to the further development of the existing features of the system, and the other is a redefinition and considerable expansion of the remit of GISIS as a tool that facilitates and automates port State control procedures, alleviating the burden from stakeholders by digitizing traditionally manual and paper-based processes.

15 The first category of consequential changes falls within the existing work on the system, as GISIS is continuously under review and enhancement. The second category however would require GISIS or a new system to function as a portal that would be connecting and facilitating information exchange between online certificate databases, port State control regimes, seafarers and companies. The latter category of changes is much more substantial and far-reaching and would see GISIS move from being a reference tool for PSC regimes (that is not always authoritative or complete with regard to data contained within) to being a tool that essentially facilitates port State control worldwide and is used to synchronize port State control regimes' activities, including determining whether ships are going to be detained. Another implication of this considerable expansion of the remit of GISIS is that this would need a number of dedicated staff, due to the size and importance of the new role of the system, and as such could not fit into the current zero-cost approach. Furthermore, such a functionality, if featured in a portal hosted by the Organization, would also require considerations of regulatory and liability-related issues as the framework and rules governing the information contained in the portal would be dependent on a common regulatory regime. This latter aspect could expose the Organization to significant strategic risk with regard to its credibility and for which the risk tolerance level maybe unacceptably high.

#### **Outcome of the review of recommendation 2 of the SG-RAR**

16 The core issue of recommendation 2 is that the Organization should establish and host an internationally trusted web-based information portal as foreseen from the stakeholders' consultation. As can be seen from the foregoing, the Organization's current data repository is not fit for purpose for the expanded mandate as might be envisioned in the recommendation from the SG-RAR.

17 In order to move forward with the recommendation, it would first be necessary to take the decision – in principle – if it would be desirable for the Organization to expand the scope of the data management capabilities to encompass the function of facilitating port State control activities.

18 In this context, the purpose of the expansion would also need to be considered and determined, including for example whether the new system should be an information sharing system or would it be an operational module. In the latter case, consideration would need to be given to establishing the necessary common rules and protocols, which could in turn have an impact on IMO's regulatory framework, and require amendments.

19 As such, the Secretary-General is of the opinion that, based on the information provided by the report of the SG-RAR, it is not possible to move ahead with the recommendation without additional guidance. Should the Council wish to further explore the matter, more information would be necessary from Member States on what the proposed functionality of the new platform should be.

20 With respect to the current GISIS, the system will continue to evolve, taking into account the strategic directions of the Organization in providing the data platform for capturing, storage and retrieval for various purposes, including analysis to support decision-making processes. Additionally, a coordinating body within the Secretariat will be established to harmonize cross-divisional oversight and management of GISIS related matters, including the identification of any resource implication relating to the further development of the system.

**Action requested of the Council**

- 21 The Council is invited to consider the information provided and, in particular to:
- .1 note the information provided, and should the Council decide to further consider the development of a web-based information portal, invite Member States to provide further information of the purpose and function of such a system (paragraphs 16-18); and
  - .2 endorse the Secretary-General's approach to the continued development and management of GISIS (paragraph 21).
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