



MARINE ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION
COMMITTEE
56th session
Agenda item 17

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ROLE OF THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Development of a safe working environmental standard and its application to Tier II Functional Requirements of the Goal Based Constructional Standards

Submitted by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document addresses a strategic plan contained in MSC 78/WP.16 and the identifiable need for a code of safe working environmental standards for seafarers and broad human element considerations in Tier II of the Goal Based Constructional Standards

Action to be taken: Paragraphs 14 and 15

Related documents: MSC 78/WP.16; resolution A.947(23); MEPC 53/19; MEPC 53/19/4; MSC 79/14/5; MSC 79/14; BLG 8/WP.4 and BLG 8/18

Background

1 The eighth session of the BLG Sub-Committee circulated document BLG 8/WP.4, 'Guidance on the basic elements for a shipboard occupational health and safety programme', for the consideration of all Committees and Sub-Committees. The report of the session (document BLG 8/18) noted that this falls within the competence of ILO and WHO and agreed that IMO should invite these organizations to participate in the formation of guidelines.

2 At the seventy-ninth session of the Maritime Safety Committee, the ICFTU submitted document MSC 79/14/5 on the human element strategy, as proposed at MSC 78. No action was taken and this was referred to MEPC 53.

3 Document MSC 79/14/5 refers to resolution A.947(23), and the principles state that:

- Rules and regulations which address seafarers directly should be simple, clear and comprehensive,

and are:

- To facilitate the comprehensive consideration of the human element in the development of guidance, tools, mandatory and non-mandatory instruments.

4 At the fifty-third session of MEPC, document MSC 79/14/5 was again considered along with MEPC 53/19/4 from the ICFTU and this recognized the gap between the current IMO standards on noise, etc., and the ILO Conventions on safety and health conditions. No action was taken and these documents were referred to MSC 82.

5 At the eighty-second session of the MSC the ICFTU expressed the view that there was a need for these standards to be incorporated into Tier II Functional Requirements of the Goal Based Constructional Standards, along with ergonomics, to ensure that ships are built in the future to secure the safety and health of the crew, again this was not agreed in the *ad hoc* Working Group on Goal Based Standards. The Maritime Safety Committee however, following the outcome of the Human Element Working Group, called for comments and proposals on these documents to be submitted to MEPC 56.

Situation

6 Currently throughout the IMO Conventions, resolutions, Codes, Circulars and guidance, there are criteria and standards intended to ensure the safe design and operation of vessels at sea and in port. Many of these standards have been developed strictly for the handling of cargo but are also applicable to the seafarers in their working and living conditions.

7 For example, at the BLG and DSC Sub-Committees there has been extensive work on the safe handling of chemical and bulk liquid cargos, the dangers of carcinogenic vapours and the emergency procedures with these cargos. They have also identified the risks of chemical cleaners and the dangers of entering fumigated containers. Most of these safety standards are equally as important to the seafarers in their working and living environment.

8 There is also a need for greater consideration of standards for noise, vibration, lighting and ambient factors when designing vessels to ensure the occupational health and safety of seafarers. Although IMO is recognized as the competent body to set maritime safety standards, many areas of the working and living environment of the seafarer have not been considered or where they have, as in the case of noise levels and protection, they have not been revised for 25 years.

9 Many national administrations are collating the wide range of safety standards and guidance from IMO, ILO, ISO and industry best practice to form a Code of Safe Working Practice for Seafarers and where this is done it may form part of the national regulatory framework for safety and health on board ships. These generally incorporate national or international safety standards. Unfortunately many flag States do not have such a collated code and the seafarer is expected to be conversant with the wide range of sources available.

The IMO and ILO role in safety and health of seafarers

10 As stated by the working group in paragraph 21 of document MSC 78/WP.16:

- The group, recognizing that ILO is also engaged in addressing the issue of the human element, considered that the close co-operation between IMO and ILO should continue in the joint efforts to achieve a common understanding of the associated issues and solutions.

11 The ILO 'Code of accident prevention on board ship at sea and port,' is used by many administrations as a basis for any national code of safe working practice as it broadly covers the matter in a generic manner. However, the seafarer is excluded from direct application of the more specific ILO conventions and standards, such as those dealing with benzene, noise, vibration, etc and even the new ILO Consolidated Convention will defer to IMO criteria or recommendations in these instances.

12 Clearly safety must be designed into a ship at the earliest opportunity, being an integral part of the seafarers' training and pursuant to the requirements of the ISM Code. There should be a Code of Safe Working Environmental Standards for seafarers' that is clear, easily understandable, consistent with all the regulations and giving comprehensive reference to all the applicable guidance and standards.

13 For maximum benefit these standards should be identified and incorporated into the future design of all vessels and where there are Goal Based Constructional Standards, the introduction of these should form a requirement of Tier II, Functional Requirements.

Action requested of the Committee

14 The Committee is invited to consider possible content of a Code of Safe Working Environmental Standards for seafarers consistent with resolution A.947(23), and its application to Tier II of the Goal Based Construction Standards.

15 The Committee is also invited, in formulating the human element strategic plan, to identify where areas of occupational safety and health concerning the seafarer have been omitted or require revision.
