

**London International Shipping Week**  
**14 September 2017**  
**“How can the IMO help in the free flow of trade?”**  
**Speech by Kitack Lim, Secretary-General**  
**International Maritime Organization**

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is an important occasion for the shipping world, and I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words to the “great and the good” of London’s shipping community. I should say at the outset how grateful we are to the UK Government for all it does to host IMO and facilitate its work. On behalf of all the IMO membership, let me say “Thank you, London.”

The organisers of this event have asked me to speak today on “how IMO can help in the free flow of trade”. That is an interesting topic for me, not least because usually it is other aspects of IMO’s work, like safety and environmental protection, which attract the most attention. But helping the free flow of trade is a vital part of our work and, indeed, one which we have tried to highlight throughout this year under our World Maritime Day theme “Connecting ships, ports and people.”

Everyone here today understands the importance of shipping to global trade. So it is in everyone’s interests to make the process as smooth as possible. But ships, crewmembers and the goods and passengers that they carry across borders are subject to a range of government controls, both on arrival and departure. These controls address a wide range of issues including ensuring public health, revenue protection, security, immigration, enforcing controls on importing and exporting prohibited and restricted items, and sanctions enforcement.

If every country and every port within each country has different requirements for ships, cargoes and people, there would be chaos and inefficiency. There is a clear need for standardization and cutting red tape. This was recognized by IMO many years ago, resulting in the development of the Convention on the Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, 1965 – the FAL Convention.

The FAL Convention was the first international convention developed by IMO. It entered into force on in 1967 and is currently binding on 118 Contracting Governments.

The Convention is crucial to the free flow of maritime trade. It sets out internationally agreed 'Standards' and 'Recommended Practices' in respect of the arrival, stay and departure of ships, persons and cargoes and includes provisions in respect of stowaways, public health, and quarantine.

As with all IMO conventions, the FAL Convention evolves to take into account new developments and technologies. A series of amendments to the Convention will enter into force on 1 January 2018. These include new systems for the electronic exchange of information for the clearance of ships, cargo, crew and passengers by April 2019.

IMO is also working on the development of so-called maritime 'single window' systems, in which all the many agencies and authorities involved exchange data via a single point of contact, using harmonized and standardized data reporting formats.

Evolution of the FAL Convention is the responsibility of IMO's Facilitation Committee, which meets annually. Membership of this Committee includes all IMO Member States, Contracting Governments to the Convention and observers from Organizations in Consultative Status with the Organization.

For the FAL Committee to function effectively, all stakeholders, both government and industry, should be represented in national and observer delegations and participate actively in its meetings, exchanging views and best practices on more efficient measures and promoting their harmonization and standardization. It is also important to increase the representation of the port sector, border control authorities and related organizations at other IMO meetings.

For trade to flow effectively, the connections between ships, ports and people must also be secure. IMO facilitates this by helping Member States enhance their maritime security, focussing on what the civil maritime stakeholders, which includes both the shipping and port sectors, can do to protect themselves and to assist governments to protect global maritime trade. The emphasis is on preventive security through risk management, deterrence and threat transfer.

A well-coordinated, risk based preventive strategy is critical to the success of port security regimes, and by extension, for the free-flow of trade. It may embrace protecting port

infrastructure against terrorist attack, countering theft and other criminal activity, or preventing access to ships by terrorists, drug smugglers or stowaways.

Both facilitation and maritime security need a multi-agency and multi-functional response. The IMO maritime security strategy is, therefore, focussed on working with other United Nations agencies and international organizations to encourage and build capacity within governments to meet all their responsibilities, as mandated in IMO conventions and other international instruments. This is carried out through a co-ordinated technical cooperation campaign involving hands-on training, workshops and exercises.

Ladies and gentlemen, investment, growth and improvement in the shipping and ports sectors is a clear indication of a country or a region that is enjoying success in the present and planning for more success in the future.

Improving port infrastructure and efficiency, developing and strengthening inter-modal links and hinterland connections can both drive and support a growing economy through promoting trade by sea. The maritime sector, which includes shipping, ports and the people that operate them, can and should play a significant role in creating conditions for increased employment, prosperity and stability.

And this, incidentally, will support the Post-2015 Development Agenda and complement United Nations initiatives on the prevention of violent extremism by addressing some of the stress factors that lead to instability, insecurity and uncontrolled mixed migration.

So let me finish by returning to the original question: “how can IMO help in the free flow of trade?” As I hope I have shown, we do this through our effective regulatory mechanism, particularly the FAL Convention and various maritime and port security measures, backed up by an extensive programme of technical cooperation activities to help build national and regional capacities to implement them.

We take this part of our mandate very seriously, and I am grateful to the organisers of London International Shipping Week for the opportunity to highlight them in this year of “connecting ships, ports and people.”

Thank you.

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