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Economic Commission for Europe**Inland Transport Committee****Working Party on Inland Water Transport****Working Party on the Standardization of Technical
and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation****Fifty-ninth session**

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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda

**Promotion of River Information Services and other Information
and Communication Technologies in inland navigation:****Guidelines and Criteria for Vessel Traffic Services
on Inland Waterways (annex to resolution No. 58)****Revision of the Guidelines and Criteria for
Vessel Traffic Services on Inland Waterways****Note by the secretariat****I. Mandate**

1. This document is submitted in line with the Proposed Programme Budget for 2021, part V, Regional cooperation for development, section 20, Economic Development in Europe. Programme 17, Economic Development in Europe (A/75/6 (Sect.20), para. 20.51).
2. At its fifty-eighth session, the Working Party on the Standardization of Technical and Safety Requirements in Inland Navigation (SC.3/WP.3) began discussing the revision of resolution No. 58 “Vessel Traffic Services on Inland Waterways” so as to maintain an efficient guide for member States to develop Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) in the pan-European region. The secretariat was asked to prepare an information document for the fifty-ninth session of SC.3/WP.3 based on feedback from the Russian Federation and Ukraine.
3. This document covers the background of VTS on inland waterways, current developments in the international regulatory framework, the application of the annex to resolution No. 58 by member States and possibilities for evolution. It was prepared by the secretariat in cooperation with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA). SC.3/WP.3 may wish to take note of this information and provide guidance to the secretariat.

II. Background¹

4. The basic principles of VTS were first internationally set out by IMO in Resolution A.578(14) “Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services”, adopted in 1985 and updated in 1997 by IMO Resolution A.857(20) “Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services”. This is the current internationally recognized policy document for VTS. Resolution A.857(20) provides:

- the principles and general provisions for operating VTS and for the participating vessels;
- the roles and responsibilities of contracting governments, competent authorities and VTS authorities, and;
- the qualifications and training requirements for VTS personnel.

5. The purpose of VTS is the safety of life at sea, the safety and efficiency of navigation and the protection of the environment within a VTS area by minimising unsafe situations by the:

- Provision of timely and relevant information based on factors that may influence the ship movements and assist on-board decision-making
- Monitoring and management of ship traffic to ensure the safety and efficiency of ship movements
- Responding to developing unsafe situations.

6. The key components of the international framework for implementing and operating VTS are:

- International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS)
- IMO Resolution A.857(20)
- IALA standards and other relevant documents, and
- National law.

7. IALA adopted and maintains the set of documents on VTS which includes standards, recommendations, guidelines and model courses specifically related to the development, implementation and operation of VTS. To facilitate the establishment and operation of VTS on inland waters that are harmonized by international guidelines, which are to the extent possible consistent with the IMO resolutions, IALA in 2001 adopted Recommendation 0120 (V-120) “Vessel Traffic Services in Inland Waters”. This recommendation provides guidance for establishing VTS in inland waters and specifies additional best practices. It is particularly relevant on waterways where IMO Resolution A.857(20) is not applied, where it aims to enhance navigation safety in cross-border areas where two regulatory regimes exist, i.e. in estuaries, lakes and other areas where inland waterways connect with the sea and vessels cross the boundaries of responsibility of maritime and river administrations.

III. River Information Services and Vessel Traffic Services on Inland Waterways

8. Development of the River Information Services (RIS) concept began in the 1990s with the World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure (PIANC) and the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR). Since the first RIS Guidelines were adopted by PIANC in 2002, VTS has been seen as part of RIS. However, VTS is not obligatory in when applying RIS. Geographical areas using VTS can overlap RIS areas, or be organized separately such as in RIS areas, when VTS is used locally for traffic organization.

9. The PIANC RIS Guidelines define Inland VTS as “a service, implemented by a competent authority, designed to improve the safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and to

¹ IALA VTS Manual, edition 7, 2021.

protect the environment. The service should have the capability to interact with the traffic and to respond to traffic situations developing in the VTS area.” Within RIS, Inland VTS is part of traffic management services with the emphasis on information service and traffic organization. In terms of the implementation of VTS on inland waterways, the PIANC RIS Guidelines referred to the guidelines and recommendations for VTS established and maintained by IALA, and therefore a detailed guideline for VTS development in the inland water transport sector was lacking at the international level until 2004.

10. SC.3 recognized that safety and efficiency of vessel traffic and the protection of the environment would be improved with harmonized international guidelines for establishing and operating VTS on inland waterways, as far as practicable, and consistent with relevant IMO resolutions. In 2004, SC.3 adopted resolution No. 58 “Vessel Traffic Services on Inland Waterways” which was based on the IALA recommendation V-120 of June 2001. SC.3 recommended that governments consider this resolution when developing, implementing and operating VTS on inland waterways where applying IMO Resolution A.857 (20) had not been considered appropriate. It should be noted that resolution No. 58 was adopted in conjunction with resolution No. 57 “Guidelines and Recommendations for River Information Services”, thus allowing the introduction of a framework for the entire concept of RIS.

11. In 2006, the Guidelines and Criteria for Vessel Traffic Services on Inland Waterways (2006 VTS Guidelines) were adopted by CCNR (Protocol 2006-I-20). Inland VTS are referred to in the PIANC RIS Guidelines, edition 4, adopted in 2019, and in the recently adopted second revision of resolution No. 63, “International Standard for Tracking and Tracing on Inland Waterways”.

12. As of 2019, according to information available to the secretariat, resolution No. 58 was applied by at least six countries in full scope, by two countries in partial scope, and was under consideration by two countries for application (ECE/TRANS/SC.3/2019/20). There may be other countries that fully or partially apply the resolution. It has not been reviewed or updated.

IV. Evolution of IALA Recommendation R0120 (V-120) “Vessel Traffic Services in Inland Waters”

13. The IALA Recommendation was first issued in June 2001; in 2005, a reformatting and preliminary review was held in conjunction with members of PIANC. In December 2013, the recommendation was reviewed and updated in view of alignment with the IALA VTS Manual, edition 5, and the relevant IALA Guidelines and Recommendations on VTS. The second edition of the recommendation aimed to ensure organizational and technological principles and provisions for the harmonized implementation of VTS and vessel traffic management in cross-border areas with different navigation regimes, and the basic terms and definitions fully correspond to those used in resolutions Nos. 57, 63 and the PIANC RIS Guidelines 2019.

14. Recently, in conjunction with the preparation of a new IMO resolution on VTS that would replace Resolution A.857(20), the IALA VTS Committee began revising the entire set of VTS documents. Substantial changes in the new IMO resolution include the basic terms and definitions, the types of services rendered by VTS, and qualifications and training. In particular, new resolution will not distinguish between an Information Service, a Navigational Assistance Service and a Traffic Organization Service but identify these as the inclusive purposes of any VTS to harmonize the interpretation and provision of vessel traffic services worldwide – and avoid confusion in the maritime sector. The main reason for this change is to address one of the key concerns that these services are not declared or delivered consistently worldwide and that some VTS deliver navigational assistance and traffic organization without declaring them as “services”. To overcome this, the new IMO Resolution will only identify a vessel traffic service which comprises the provision of timely and relevant information, monitoring and managing ship traffic and responding to developing unsafe situations.

15. On inland waters, the IALA VTS Committee has recognized the need to update their guidance and replace Recommendation V-120 with a new guideline. The “Review and update Recommendation V-120 VTS in Inland Waters to become a Guideline” was included in the agenda of the VTSS50 Task Group 1.1.1.3 at the fiftieth session of the Committee held online from 10 to 31 March 2021. ECE was invited as an observer. The new IALA guideline will identify differences between the maritime and inland navigation regimes while promoting the clear benefits of alignment as far as possible for vessels that operate in both environments. This will also be relevant for personnel who may move from one environment to another and may be able to draw on their certification and experience. The guideline will be designed to assist in developing national policies and regulations from the relevant IALA documents by (a) setting out potential areas where differing application of the guidance may be necessary and (b) identifying best practice. The draft clearly stipulates that, as SOLAS does not apply on inland waters, the development of national regulations must still be decided at the national or regional level.

V. Proposal for Further Work on Updating Resolution No. 58

16. SC.3/WP.3 may wish to note that, since the adoption of resolution No. 58, the basic work of implementing VTS has been completed and VTS centres are already operating. The need is not urgent to update the resolution. However, given that resolutions Nos. 57, 63 and the PIANC RIS Guidelines refer to the IALA guidelines and recommendations for VTS, it is preferable that resolution No. 58 is aligned with the latest revision of IALA Recommendation V-120.

17. The new IALA guideline on VTS in inland waters which will be issued following the adoption of the new IMO Resolution (issue expected in early 2022), will impact the existing documents and may necessitate a substantive revision of resolution No. 58 as well as other resolutions. SC.3/WP.3 may wish to wait for the new guideline to enter into force before preparing a revision of resolution No. 58 or a new resolution on VTS, so as to be harmonized with the new IALA documents.
