

# 13th International VTS Symposium, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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**13th International VTS Symposium**  
**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 8-12 August 2016**  
**Keynote address by Mr. Kitack Lim,**  
**Secretary-General, International Maritime Organization**



Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today and I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words as we begin this important symposium on vessel traffic services in this beautiful city, Kuala Lumpur.

I would like to start by thanking the Marine Department of Malaysia and the Malaysian Ministry of Transport for hosting us. And I would like to congratulate IALA for organizing this event, which takes place every four years, providing a forum for delegates from governments, competent authorities and VTS services around the world to review the past few years and discuss the current challenges and opportunities in VTS and domain awareness. I know from personal experience the distinct role VTS plays and the value thereof.

IALA of course has a long association with IMO, having consultative status since 1961. It plays an active part in discussions relating to safety of navigation and in developing the e-navigation concept. Through the delivery of aids to navigation and the improvement and harmonization of VTS worldwide – IALA plays a vitally important role in fostering efficient, economic and safe movement of vessels, which in turn helps protect the marine environment.

I am pleased that you have chosen the theme "Sustainable Safe Navigation" for this 13th international VTS symposium. As part of the United Nations family, IMO is actively working towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that world leaders pledged to support in 2015, with a set of clear Sustainable Development Goals. Most of the elements of that Agenda will only be realized with a sustainable maritime transport sector supporting world trade and facilitating the global economy.

Safety of navigation at sea – protecting people and ships, preventing collisions and thereby protecting the marine environment – is a vital element in maintaining the sustainability of shipping. I think looking at this theme from a sustainability angle also helps us focus on the future and what technology and innovation might offer. I know that the coming days will provide ample opportunity to discuss where we are now and how VTS might look in the future and ways to ensure "sustainable safe navigation". New technologies and innovation and e-navigation feature heavily on your programme this week. I have noted sessions on the "Convergence of VTS and e-Navigation" and "VTS in the Age of the Digital Information", to name but two.

In IMO's strategic plan for the implementation of e-navigation – which refers to the harmonized collection, integration, exchange, presentation and analysis of marine information on board and ashore

– we include a priority task relating to "Improved communication of VTS service portfolio (not limited to VTS stations)". This task needs to identify the possible communications methods that might be used and test beds need to be built to demonstrate which systems are best in different areas of operation, such as deep sea, coastal and port.

These are exciting times in which we might consider an increasing role of VTS and its capabilities. The extensive use of new information and communication technologies have already provided opportunities for enhanced interaction and information sharing, not only between ships and shore based authorities, but also with and between many other stakeholders.

We might also consider how data generated by existing and new VTS systems might in the future contribute even more to decision-making on a broader level, such as at IMO.

Technology has moved on a lot since the advent of radar provided the opportunity to accurately monitor and track shipping traffic and led to the first formal VTS systems being established in the mid-20th century. IMO recognized the importance of VTS in Assembly resolutions adopted in 1968 and 1985.

In 2000, IMO adopted the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) regulation V/12 Vessel Traffic Services which clarifies the role of Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) in contributing to safety of life at sea, safety and efficiency of navigation and protection of the marine environment, adjacent shore areas, work sites and offshore installations from possible adverse effects of maritime traffic. The regulation also outlines the role of Governments and, importantly, makes it clear that the decision as to the provision of VTS lies with the national authorities.

The associated Revised Guidelines for Vessel Traffic Services, including Guidelines on Recruitment, Qualifications and Training of VTS Operators, were adopted as Assembly resolution A. 857(20) in November 1997. Although they were published almost 20 years ago, they still provide an excellent framework for Vessel Traffic Services, alongside the IALA standards for training and certification of VTS personnel, which have been updated in recent years and have been recognized as an industry standard through an IMO Maritime Safety Committee circular.

Indeed, IALA has made a crucial contribution by working together with IMO and its Member States in the development and review of VTS-related documentation on issues such as the qualification of VTS personnel, operational procedures, equipment requirements, the impact on the provision of services, responsibilities, the impact of new technologies and the role of VTS in security and global traffic monitoring systems.

While the development of guidelines and standards is vitally important, it is equally crucial for Contracting Governments and Competent Authorities to ensure that these are implemented. Only full, smart and effective implementation of a harmonized VTS service is extremely important for the safety and efficiency of navigation and protect the marine environment, not at least in coastal and port areas.

This requires a focus on capacity building and training and so I am pleased to see that you have a session addressing "Training and Competency" which asks the question whether "the shore is lagging behind the bridge?".

This is an interesting theme which I hope to see further addressed next year when our IMO World Maritime Day theme will be: "Connecting Ships, Ports and People", building on our theme for this year which is "Shipping: indispensable to the world". We intend to take the ships-ports people theme as a starting point in looking at training and capacity building and working with developed and developing countries in linking the ships and shore side activities and all those involved.

Of course, there are many excellent, collaborative initiatives specifically focusing on VTS. One example is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-Japan Regional Project on VTS Operator Training at the Maritime Transport Training Institute in Malaysia. Under this initiative, a Regional Training Center for VTS personnel was established for ASEAN countries, which will allow VTS operators of those countries to be trained effectively and in a harmonized manner.

I would also like to congratulate IALA on its initiative in establishing the IALA World Wide Academy (WWA), which commenced operations in 2012, and aims to make VTS and Aids to Navigation training accessible to all, through the development of national centres. These are also available for the personnel of neighboring States. This is exactly the kind of positive cooperation that will help to drive progress in the coming years.

And this 13th International VTS Symposium also embodies that spirit. The three "C"s: cooperation, collaboration and communication are essential, not least when pursuing global goals and aspirations that require countless countries, organizations, authorities and individuals to work together.

VTS can also support safe navigation and protection of the marine environment alongside other tools, which themselves can service the VTS.

Not too far away from here we have the Marine Electronic Highway in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, where besides VTS to assist safe navigation through a defined part of the Straits, there is a network of electronic navigational charts using Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS) and environmental management tools, all combined in an integrated platform covering the region that allows the maximum of information to be made available both to ships and shipmasters as well as to shore-based users, including Vessel Traffic Services.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish you fruitful and enjoyable discussions during the coming days.

This symposium's theme of "Sustainable Safe Navigation" is not only necessary – but achievable. For IMO's part – we will continue to work hard to provide a smart, robust regulatory framework that ensures safe, secure, efficient shipping on clean oceans – helping to create conditions for a sustainable blue economy.

And I would like to reiterate that the worldwide harmonized implementation of Vessel Traffic Services continue to be a very important objective of IMO and IALA, as we continue in our pursuit of even more safe, efficient and environment friendly shipping.

Thank you.