
IMO EGC COORDINATION PANEL REPORT

(28 January 2020)

1 The IMO EGC Coordinating Panel (the Panel), chaired by Mr. Peter Doherty (United States), met on 28 January 2020 at IMO Headquarters in London, United Kingdom, on the margins of the 18th session of the IHO WWNWS-SC Document Review Working Group (DRWG). The Chair welcomed all participants and explained the background and revised terms of reference of the Panel, which was renamed as the IMO EGC Coordinating Panel from 1 January 2020. The Panel noted the reasons for having a formal meeting process, separate from the DRWG.

2 The Panel noted the attendance of the Vice-Chair Mr. Trond Ski (Norway).

3 The agenda of the meeting was presented and approved.

4 The Panel noted with thanks the Chair's brief on the previous activities of the International SafetyNET Coordinating Panel. In doing so, the Panel reviewed some outstanding actions from its previous meeting.

Terms of reference and procedures

5 The Panel noted the revised terms of reference of the Panel approved by MSC 101 (MSC.1/Circ.1364/Rev.1/Corr.1), as an amendment to the International SafetyNET Manual.

6 The Panel noted the outcome of NCSR 7 in general and, in particular, the finalized draft revision of the International SafetyNET Manual, which was renamed as "International SafetyNET Services Manual", with a view to approval by MSC 102. The Panel noted also that NCSR 7 had agreed to remove the terms of reference and procedures of the EGC Panel from the International SafetyNET Manual and to include them in a separate MSC circular.

7 The Panel noted also the application process to become a potential MSI provider or a SAR related information provider and that new information providers should approach the relevant international organizations for advice.

8 The Chair emphasized the importance of paragraph 3.1 of the Authorization and Certification procedure (annex 2 of the circular), which indicated the need to conclude agreements with recognized mobile satellite service providers concerned, serving the required sea area(s), to obtain access to the system.

9 The Panel noted information provided by WMO on the ongoing restructuring of WMO organs including the JCOMM structure. In this respect, it was agreed that an explanatory footnote would be added to the JCOMM listing in the membership of the Panel, as described in the new MSC circular. **Action 1 – WMO to provide the details to the IMO Secretariat.**

Iridium SafetyCast

10 The Panel further noted that the Letter of Compliance was issued to Iridium by the Director General of IMSO on 19 December 2019. The Panel, noting that the letter was issued, without any prior notification being served to the Panel including IHO and WMO, felt that the notification or consultation should have been made with the Panel before such an important letter was issued. IMSO agreed to communicate with the Panel in the future. Accordingly, the Panel noted that Iridium had fulfilled the technical requirements for its SafetyCast service to

be used in the GMDSS by certified and registered MSI or SAR related information providers in accordance with the process outlined in the EGC Panel procedures.

11 The Panel noted that NCSR 7 had requested the Secretariat to make publicly available information on the status of the implementation of the SafetyCast service for NAVAREA/ METAREA Coordinators and SAR authorities, and to modify the GISIS GMDSS module, as appropriate. Accordingly, the Panel invited relevant authorities of Member States to notify the status to the Secretariat, so that the appropriate circular could be issued, until the GISIS modifications were completed. The Panel also noted that this information would be an indication for SOLAS Contracting Governments that type-approved Iridium SafetyCast terminals/receivers could receive information in a given area at sea.

12 Regarding the status of implementation, the Panel noted that the current GMDSS Master Plan, in its annex 8 on the International SafetyNET service status, used four different categories, these being: Operational, Under Trial, Planned and Temporarily suspended. Noting that in the current initial Iridium Manual, in the Foreword section, terms such as Initial Operational Capability (IOC) and Full Operational Capability (FOC) were being used without definitions, MSI providers were invited to use the terms used in the Master Plan when notifying the status of the implementation of the SafetyCast service to the IMO Secretariat. **Action 2: Information providers to notify the IMO Secretariat.**

13 The Panel, recalling that so far, only the United States Coast Guard (USCG) was issued with a Certificate of Authorization for the generic International EGC service broadcast of SAR related information, expressed some concerns over the possible limitation on the distress relay, due to it being undertaken by a single entity on EGC services other than SafetyNET. It was agreed that the Chair would clarify the situation with the USCG on their role, regarding distress relays and activities in relation to the Iridium SAR coverage. **Action 3: Chair of the IMO EGC Panel.**

14 The Panel noted an update provided by Iridium on their current activities. Approximately 50% of the MSI providers had signed the contracts, but there remained issues with a number of providers due to their national legislation and processes. It was noted that extensions for the initial two-year cost free period by Iridium was being made available on a case by case basis since the end of 2019, but Iridium expressed that it would not be sustainable.

Challenges arising from the new multi-satellite services environment

15 The Panel, noting the discussions and decisions that took place at NCSR 7, noted the challenges arising from the new multi-satellite services environment, in particular, charges for the dissemination of MSI messages through the EGC system, provided by multiple satellite service providers.

16 The Panel noted concerns expressed by many participants representing MSI providers on the need for additional payment for the promulgation of MSI over more than one single satellite service provider. In this context, the Panel noted that there was no obligation currently in place in any IMO treaty instrument obliging MSI providers/Contracting Governments to use all recognized satellite service providers and, as such, this situation could lead to a serious operational issue for the promulgation of MSI by EGC within the GMDSS, that needs careful consideration by administrations. The Panel, noting the invitation of NCSR 7 extended to interested parties to submit relevant proposals to MSC 102 for policy related discussions on this cost element, encouraged members to consider doing so.

17 The Panel further noted the ongoing discussions in the NCSR Sub-Committee on the revision of resolution A.707(17) on Charges for distress, urgency and safety messages from the ship side perspective. It was noted that the shore side perspective also needed to be addressed.

18 The Panel noted a view expressed by the observer from Iridium explaining that the communication charges for MSI for SafetyCast would be far cheaper than currently charged for the Inmarsat services. Inmarsat in return explained that SafetyNET II charges were less than SafetyNET I due to the removal of the need to use a LES to transmit messages via contractual agreements.

19 The Panel noted that the IHO WWNWS-SC, at its next session, would discuss carriage requirement, cost and use of satellite service providers from navigational warning perspectives, with some involvement of SAR experts in this respect.

Beidou system update

20 The Panel noted the progress introduced by IMSO. Noting that the Beidou system was being considered as a regional system, the Panel requested IMSO to ensure that a regional presence with representatives from NAV/METAREAs VIII, XI & XIII would be involved in the technical assessment process.

Closing

21 The Panel noted the intention of the Chair to organize the next meeting during the IHO WWNWS-SC meeting in August/September 2020.

22 The Chair closed the meeting and highlighted that it was his final meeting and he was stepping down as Chair. The Panel thanked him for his contributions during a longstanding service for nearly two decades. The Panel noted that the Vice-Chair would take on the tasks of the Chair on an interim basis.
