

Signing ceremony 27 January 2021
remarks of IALA Secretary-General Francis Zachariae

Minister, ladies and gentlemen,

Today is a historic day for IALA and we have certainly reached a new chapter in the life of the Association which began in 1957 with the French Republic as our generous host.

For more than 60 years now, our principal aim has been to foster the safe, economic and efficient movement of vessels through improvement and harmonization of Marine Aids to Navigation worldwide, for the benefit of the maritime community and the protection of the environment.

Becoming an intergovernmental organization will further strengthen our ability to achieve our objectives, and we are thankful to the French Republic for the role it has played in getting us this far on our journey.

IALA is now truly on its way to becoming an IGO in the foreseeable future. However, our work is not finished. For the establishment of the IGO to become a reality there needs to be a genuine commitment on the part of governments. Their signature is required to start the process of national ratification and we need together to encourage every member State of the United Nations to sign this Convention.

Further in this regard, I look forward to continuing the excellent cooperation with the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and Ministry for maritime Affairs as they engage in further diplomatic efforts to promulgate the Convention widely.

In May of this year, it will be seven years since the General Assembly, held in A Coruña in Spain, decided that IGO status was the best way to serve the objectives of IALA into the future and that the transition should be achieved as soon as possible through the adoption of an international

convention. We are now at the stage where the legal framework for the establishment of the new international Organization is in place. Its most important features are that it provides for direct involvement of coastal States in the activities of IALA, and that it establishes a modern, transparent governance structure for the new Organization.

Today, with the signing of the Convention, the time has come to focus, as an urgent priority, on achieving the agreed 30 ratification requirements for the new Convention to enter into force. I strongly believe that the sooner entry into force is achieved, the greater the attraction of the Convention is likely to be to those States that have not yet commenced the ratification process. Furthermore, I expect that awareness of the importance of becoming Contracting Parties will grow as the capacity-building and training activities of the World-Wide Academy continue to expand in different regions of the world and embrace coastal States in need.

It is my strong personal belief that there is no reason why the Convention's entry into force should not take effect widely, around the world, in the foreseeable future. The agreed transitional arrangements will ensure that, upon entry into force, the activities of our organs and the technical work of the Committees will continue uninterrupted. In other words, our responsibilities towards the maritime community will be undiminished and maintained with the customary high level of commitment to the development, improvement and global harmonization of Marine Aids to Navigation.

Further in this regard, I wish to stress the importance of reiterating, in our conversations and work with concerned maritime stakeholders, that IGO status will not in any way change the nature of IALA as consultative, technical and not-for-profit organization. Likewise, IALA's principal aim will stay the exactly same and now strengthened considerably by the IGO status.

It is equally important to instill wide understanding that, like before, IALA as an IGO will continue to bring together providers of Marine Aids to Navigation Services and suppliers of AtoN and VTS equipment and systems. By providing for assured participation in the new IGO by members currently qualifying as Industrial members, the Convention preserves the very core characteristic of IALA. This is the cohesion

between Marine Aids to Navigation authorities, on the one hand, and, on the other, the industrial sector represented by equipment developers and manufacturers, consultants, scientists, and other concerned stakeholders from the technical and research communities.

It is the knowledge and expertise of all those members – and their willingness to share information and experience – which safeguards the relevance of IALA's world-renowned technical work into the future.

It remains for me to express well-deserved thanks to the French Government, our host, for the support and trust over many years. A special thanks to ambassador Serge Ségura, who has devoted much time, energy and personal commitment to the project. Without his support we would not have achieved this result. Also, a big thank to all involved in the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and Ministry for Maritime Affaires. Especially admiral Vincent Denamur, who has been instrumental for the success.

It has taken eleven years to reach this result and many people and organizations have been very helpful and supportive. The IALA Council, the Legal Panel, my colleagues in the Secretariat and the members of IALA. To all of you: Thank you very much.

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