

MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE  
100th session  
Agenda item 19

MSC 100/19/8  
28 September 2018  
Original: ENGLISH

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### Trial for an independent assessment of the IACS Quality System Certification Scheme (QSCS)

Submitted by Liberia, Marshall Islands, New Zealand and the  
International Association of Classification Societies (IACS)

#### SUMMARY

*Executive summary:* This document discusses moves towards a fully independent, international quality assessment review body for the IACS Quality System Certification Scheme (QSCS) by means of an initial trial

*Strategic direction,  
if applicable:* Other work

*Output:* OW 24

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 14

*Related documents:* III 4/14/2, III 4/15 (paragraphs 11.7 and 11.8); MSC 61/21 (paragraphs 10.5 and 10.6) and MSC 99/21/1

#### Background

1 Since 1991, IACS members have adhered to the IACS Quality System Certification Scheme (QSCS), which establishes a high baseline for quality operations and is designed to improve the standards of survey and certification. QSCS is constantly reviewed and updated by IACS and provides an all-embracing and structured framework with which all IACS members must comply.

2 QSCS underwent a step-change to fully and demonstratively ensure its independence in 2010 when the audits of the IACS members' quality systems were first conducted by independent Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs). This significant change has been successfully implemented and the QSCS is recognized as continuing to perform strongly under these new arrangements. In this regard, the Committee, at its ninety-ninth session, noted recent developments and activities undertaken by IACS for the continued improvement of the Scheme as reported regularly to the Committee by the IMO Observer to QSCS and most recently by MSC 99/21/1 and agreed to the indefinite continuation of the IMO consultant/observer participation in the Scheme at no cost to the Organization, subject to any future decision of the Committee, and requested the Secretariat to report on developments to MSC 101.

## Introduction

3 As part of IACS' ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in quality, IACS is investigating whether further moves towards a fully independent quality assessment review body would further strengthen maritime stakeholders' confidence in the IACS QSCS and would eventually facilitate the Member States awareness of the quality of the performance of their recognized organizations (ROs).

## Discussion

4 As part of these investigations, the co-sponsors note that IACS wishes to trial the establishment of a universal, independent and international quality assessment review body, possibly under the aegis of the IMO, which would review the findings of the ACBs' audits of IACS members as well as the corresponding corrective action plans.

5 This proposed International Quality Assessment Review Body (IQARB), an advisory and a non-decision-making body, would be tasked with independently reviewing:

- .1 the adequacy of QSCS in meeting the objectives set before ROs by IMO, flag States and industry;
- .2 the performance of ACBs against the criteria of QSCS;
- .3 the nature of non-compliances; and
- .4 the robustness and effectiveness of the agreed corrective actions that ROs will put in place to address the non-compliances that were identified during the audit by ACBs.

6 Following these reviews, the IQARB would release, into the public domain, a consolidated report of the fact related to the assessment of each IACS member and their recommendations on the development of QSCS to maintain adherence to the set objectives. These statements of fact and recommendations would therefore be available to any third party that seeks further independent corroboration that the certification process of IACS members, as undertaken by the independent ACBs, has been assessed competently, separately and independently by IQARB. The role of the IQARB is shown in diagrammatic form in the annex to this document.

7 For IQARB to be able to make an effective and informed review, it is proposed that it be composed of suitably qualified individuals from maritime authorities, the IMO Secretariat and industry bodies including those from the insurance industry, shipowners and shipbuilders. For the sake of efficiency and effectiveness, the number of IQARB members will be limited during this trial period. Initially, invitations to serve on the IQARB will be extended by the IQARB Chair. It is intended that membership of the IQARB will be such that it facilitates the representation of the views and interests of the stakeholders having a particular interest in the work of classification societies and ROs, with due consideration to having representation from all major geographic areas of the world.

8 IQARB, would be governed by its own self-developed protocol that covers the necessary administrative and procedural matters necessary for the smooth functioning of the body.

9 It is envisaged that the IQARB agenda would allow for detailed discussions on the audit outcomes of individual IACS members, a report on the overarching process from the IMO Observer to QSCS, an update from the IACS Quality Committee Chairman on developments to QSCS itself and the opportunity for the IQARB members to discuss how the body could further develop going forward.

10 During this trial period, the co-sponsors understand that IACS would provide the secretariat function to IQARB and the funding for the IQARB member's travel and expenses. There would be no financial implications on the regular budget of the Organization.

11 Once the trial phase is completed, it is proposed that this body provide a report on the experience gained to date and make recommendations on how the system could further evolve. A document describing the experience gained and any suggested developments will be submitted to a later session of the Committee.

12 The attention of the Committee is drawn to document III 4/14/2 (IACS) that discussed the development of a Recognized Organization Oversight Programme (ROOP). Noting the outcome of the discussion at III 4 (III 4/15, paragraphs 11.7 and 11.8), the co-sponsors recognize that subsequently, legitimate concerns were raised to the effect that for any such initiative to be successful, transparency in the assessment of the IACS members' quality certification process is necessary. As in the descriptions of IQARB in the above, especially in paragraphs 5 and 9, the co-sponsors consider that IQARB will meet these concerns.

### **Proposal**

13 Recalling the decision of the Committee, at its sixty-first session (MSC 61/21, paragraphs 10.5 and 10.6), the co-sponsors propose that the Committee endorse the active participation of the IMO Secretariat in the trial phase and the hosting of IQARB meetings by IMO.

### **Action requested of the Committee**

14 The Committee is invited to note the information provided and to decide as appropriate, in particular, on the proposal in paragraph 13.

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ANNEX

INDEPENDENT AUDIT/OVERSIGHT FRAMEWORK



