



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
RESTRICTED

TRADE/WP.4/R.1201
29 January 1996

ENGLISH ONLY

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

COMMITTEE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADE

Working Party on Facilitation of
International Trade Procedures
Meeting of Experts on Procedures and
Documentation (GE.2)

(Fifty-third session, 20 March 1996
Item 5(b) of the provisional agenda)

**REVISION OF ECE/FAL RECOMMENDATION NO.10
"SHIPS' CODES"**

Note by ICS *

It will be recalled that, during the discussion at the March 1995 session on a possible updating of this Recommendation, ICS offered to research the shipping industry's needs and preferences in respect of standard codes for identifying ships. This paper sets out the results of that research.

This document is submitted for decision.

* The present document is reproduced in the form in which it was received by the secretariat.

REVISION OF WP.4/RECOMMENDATION No.10 "CODES FOR SHIPS' NAMES"

Note by ICS

I. Executive Summary

1. This paper sets out the results of ICS research into the Shipping Industry's needs and preferences in respect of standard codes for identifying ships, conducted to assist WP.4 in its review of ECE/FAL Recommendation No.10.
2. The Shipping Industry favours the use of IMO numbers as the official standard for identifying ships.
3. For EDI purposes, only the final seven characters of the IMO number should be used.

II. Background

3. ECE/FAL Recommendation No.10, dated February 1978, recommends the use of radio call signs as codes for ships' names.
4. Two proposals in respect of this recommendation were presented to the March 1995 session of WP.4:
 - Recommendation No.10 should be abolished;
(Proposed by the ITT Modelling MA Steering group, TRADE/WP.4/R.1121)
 - the possibility of applying the IMO code for ships' names instead of the RCS should be considered;
(Proposed by the delegation of Finland, TRADE/WP.4/R.1137 and R.1138)
5. WP.4 agreed to defer consideration of these two proposals pending research by ICS into the shipping industry's needs and preferences for a standard set of codes for ships' names. The findings and conclusions of that research are set below.

III. Findings

i) Codes currently used for ships' names

6. Ships' names are currently represented in a variety of different ways in shipping lines' systems. The forms of representation of ships' names include:

- full name,
- abbreviated name,
- shipping lines' own original codes, eg alpha codes with mnemonic link to the ship's name,
- Radio Call Sign,
- Lloyd's number.

ii) Desirability of a standard set of codes

7. The shipping industry feels that the existence of an officially-recommended standard set of codes for ships' names is useful and desirable.

iii) Comparison of merits

8. There are two sets of unique codes for ship identification: ships' Radio Call Signs and IMO number. Both sets of codes encompass a very extensive portion of the world's fleet of trading ships.

9. Ships are allocated an IMO number at the time of build or when they are first entered in the Register. This number identifies a ship throughout its lifetime, from keel-laying to breaking, regardless of any changes of the ship's name, country of registration, or ownership. IMO's SOLAS Convention requires the number to be shown on ships' certificates.

10. Radio Call Signs are allocated to ships on the basis of their nationality. A change of a ship's country of registration are reflected in change of its Radio Call Sign. A ship's Radio Call Sign may therefore not

remain constant throughout the ship's lifetime. Nevertheless, as it is not uncommon for a change of registration to be associated with a change of the ship's name, the Radio Call Sign may be held to be a closer representation of the ship's name.

IV. Conclusion

11. On balance, the shipping industry feels that IMO number is the best tool for identifying ships, although it may not be the closest representation of ships' names.

Note: EDI. The IMO number comprises two parts: a variable seven-digit number (the Lloyd's number) and a constant prefix, "IMO". Only the variable seven-digit number acts as an identifier of individual ships. The inclusion of the constant prefix in each EDI transmission would therefore be unnecessary and wasteful.

V. ICS Recommendation to WP.4

12. ICS would like to endorse the proposal from the delegation of Finland that WP.4 consider recommending the IMO number to replace the Radio Call Sign as a code for identifying ships, in Recommendation 10.

13. ICS recommends that, for EDI purposes, only the final seven characters of the IMO number should be used.
