

**IHB File No. S3/3100**

**CIRCULAR LETTER 77/2003  
12 December 2003**

**THE WORLD VTS GUIDE**

Reference: IHB CL 60/2003 dated 12 September 2003

Dear Hydrographer,

In the reference above, the IHB asked whether the IHO should become a full member of the World VTS Guiding Board or should continue as an observer. Replies were received from 35 Member States. 21 Member States voted in favour of the IHO becoming a full member of the World VTS Guiding Board, 13 MS voted that the IHO should continue as an observer and the Netherlands provided comments but did not vote.

The list of Member States voting for full membership and continued observer status is at Annex A and the comments provided by Member States are at Annex B.

The 36 votes required for IHO to become a full member has not been reached and therefore the IHO will continue in its current role as an observer.

On behalf of the Directing Committee  
Yours sincerely,  
*(original signed)*

Vice Admiral Alexandros MARATOS  
President

Annex A: Member States Voting  
Annex B: Comments from Member States

The following Member States voted for the IHO to become a full member of the World VTS Guiding Board:

China  
Cuba  
Cyprus  
Denmark  
Finland  
Greece  
India  
Iran  
Italy  
Kuwait  
Malaysia  
Mexico  
Nigeria  
Pakistan  
Philippines  
Portugal  
Slovenia  
South Africa  
Sweden  
Ukraine  
United States of America

The following Member States voted for the IHO to continue as an Observer at World VTS Guiding Board Meetings:

Brazil  
Canada  
Croatia  
France  
Mozambique  
New Zealand  
Norway  
Peru  
Spain  
Thailand  
Tunisia  
Turkey  
United Kingdom

**Comments by Finland:**

Finland believes that the IHO participation to the Guiding Board of the World VTS Guide is important for the reasons that the VTS is based on the information derived by the HOs and the HOs should publish VTS information on nautical publications. Also the future developing and harmonising of the symbology on nautical charts and VTS systems demands a close co-operation between these organisations.

**Comments by France:**

Presently the World VTS Guide only has a restricted number of VTS and the information is not always up to date. The hydrographic services maintain all the information in their nautical publications.

The fact that the IHO becomes a member of the Guiding Board of the World VTS Guide could be interpreted as an endorsement from the hydrographic world, of this guide, which, at present seems slightly premature.

**Comments by India:**

VTS being a fast developing navigational system the world over, requires a central maritime agency like IHO/IMO to be the part of development process from initial stages. As the system is likely to bring a revolution in port navigation, once implemented world over, it requires standardisation of procedure, symbology and as far as possible, instrumentation. Dissemination of information to mariners, on implementation of VTS at various ports around the world also is of great impact for exploitation of VTS to its fullest. As the VTS will require mariners to meet specific requirement of navigation and communication. IHO can play a key role in this regard by becoming the permanent member of community of world VTS Guide. Also IHO can provide relevant input of fast changing hydrographic world at various stages of development of VTS. Thus we strongly recommend that the IHO should become permanent member of the world VTS Guide.

**Comments by Mexico:**

It is important that the IHO becomes a full member of the World VTS Guiding Board in order to reinforce its international participation in the activities concerning safety of navigation.

**Comments by Netherlands:**

Governments should publish officially the necessary nautical charts and nautical publications.

- Since the first attempts to publish the VTS Guide, many years ago, it has not become fully clear what the status of that publication is, in relation to the officially issued nautical publications. The VTS Guide itself advises that its contents should also be included in national publications, like Sailing Directions and Notices to Mariners. This means a deliberate duplication of sources-for-information, which does not seem in the interest of the mariner.
- It is the experience here in the Netherlands, that information collected from different sources is bound to be contradicting! For this reason much effort is put in checking, verifying, comparing and investigating any differences. Even if information on Communications is provided by highly relevant sources, the experience shows that it will be contradicting other existing Regulations or nautical charts and publications. This is especially the case in border areas, where procedures of adjoining nations overlap and ought to be harmonised, but in practise seldom are.
- So, to provide the mariner with consistent and reliable information requires much effort and often seldom compromising. In our opinion this is not a kind of action that can or will be taken by IALA. Hence the IALA Guide is bound to contain many of such inconsistencies.

- Usually, instead, it is the Hydrographic Offices who fulfil the task of verifying information from different sources. It is in the interest of the Mariner, that the charts and publications to be used on board be issued as far as possible by one appropriate (national) authority and for their updating follow identical procedures for all charts and publications.
- If IHO would become more involved in the IALA guide it would still have no influence on the contents of the Guide. But the logo of the IHO would give the impression that either the IHO or National HO's would be actively involved in quality control of the VTS Guide, which is not the case.

Concluding, it does not seem desirable that the name of IHO will be stronger connected to the VTS Guide, as long as it is not realistic that this will influence the quality of the Guide but will give the wrong impression as to the status of the Guide.

**Comments by New Zealand:**

We believe that VTS is an expert area best left to Ports, Lighthouse Authorities and Mariners to develop and promulgate. Instead the IHO needs to focus on meeting obligations to member States for delivery of improvements in worldwide hydrographic services, especially surveying and charting and delivery of ENC's The IHO should maintain a watching and observer status of the VTS Board.

**Comments by Nigeria:**

The IHO will be more effective in rendering technical advice if she becomes a full member of the Guiding Board of the World VTS Guide.

**Comments by Philippines:**

As the IHO plays an equally important role in Maritime Safety with other Associations, it is proper that it should become a full member of the Guiding Board of the World VTS Guide.

**Comments by Spain:**

This vote (NO) is based on the fact that the Circular letter does not specify the financial repercussions for National hydrographic Offices if the IHO became a full member.

**Comments by the United Kingdom:**

The UK view is that the IHO should not be too closely linked with a document that is so out of date and which contains only a small proportion of the world's VTS systems. It is unlikely to be comprehensive while there is a charge for entries. It is a reactive product unlike many national HO documents which are proactive.

One concern can be illustrated by comparing the number of countries and ports contained in the World VTS Guide against those listed in Admiralty List of Radio Signals (ALRS) Vol. 6

Publication	Counties	Ports
World VTS Guide	21	85
ALRS Vol.6	48	234

ALRS also contains many other systems which could be classified as a VTS. These have not been included in the World VTS Guide.

The Guide is a worthy initiative but, until the contents are more comprehensive, we consider it would be imprudent of the IHO to formally endorse it.