



SOLOMON ISLANDS MARITIME SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE & DEVELOPMENT

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REPORT TO:

MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL HYDROGRAPHIC ORGANIZATION

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SOLOMON ISLANDS COUNTRY REPORT

1. Background

In 2009, the Government of Solomon Islands embarked on a journey to reform its maritime sector by the formation of a modern, effective maritime regulator. The result, Solomon Islands Maritime Safety Administration or **SIMSA** is a new entity formed from the existing Solomon Islands Marine Department, with significant changes to its structure and operations, and in the way it manages Solomon Islands obligations under its own domestic legislation and in relation to the international maritime conventions to which the nation is party.

The administration was established on 1 July 2010 following restructure of the existing Marine Department, a reform process carried out under a Technical Assistance (TA) project funded by Asian Development Bank and European Community. The Executing Agency is the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and the reform process has been carried out with approval of the Public Service Commission. SIMSA is structured initially as an 'administration' within the Ministry of Infrastructure Development.

The reform process was aimed at focusing the new entity on its regulatory role, and moves SIMSA away from the traditional role of the Solomon Islands Marine Department, which, like many Government shipping departments in the Pacific Region, was both regulator and provider of shipping services. The new structure clearly defines the operational role within SIMSA as being purely the vehicle for carrying out the regulatory functions. The emphasis now is strongly on compliance and standards, the lead division led by the Principal Surveyor.

The reforms included an extensive review of maritime law and the establishment of a new act, the Maritime Safety Administration Act 2009, which, supported by five new Regulations, underpinned the establishment of the new administration. Further work in 2010 will see effectively a complete review of maritime law in Solomon Islands, which will put the country in the forefront of maritime nations in the region.

Also included in the reform, SIMSA will take on the responsibility for hydrographic activities, and the Solomon Islands Hydrographic Unit will be formed during 2011.

2. Government context

The organization is an administrative unit under the purview of the Ministry of Infrastructure Development, which has overall responsibility for all the maritime affairs of Solomon Islands on the

national and international scene. Its prime objective for SIMSA is to ensure the discharge of the Nation's obligations under its own maritime laws and the relevant International Conventions, which have the authority of domestic law. SIMSA, as the maritime regulator, therefore plays a central role in the maritime affairs in Solomon Islands and, increasingly, in the Asian/Pacific region.

The Ministry of Infrastructure & Development is one of the Solomon Islands Government's institutions. The administration is headed by the Permanent Secretary (PS), operating effectively as the Chief Executive Officer. The PS is a political appointee with the primary task of ensuring the implementation of the policies of the current government within the time frame set by the Executive arm of the government.

As an 'administration' SIMSA has more autonomy than if it were a 'department' as the Marine Department previously was, and will be in a stronger position to resist political interference, but stops short of being a corporate entity. This may change, however, and it can be expected that the Solomon Islands Government will, in due course, consider structuring SIMSA as an Authority.

3. Internal structures

The Director of SIMSA reports to the PS MID and has overall responsibility for the operation of the administration. SIMSA is structured with a two tier committee structure, the Management Committee emulating a Board of Management, supported by a Technical Committee comprising heads of all divisions and technical units. The structure will lend itself to a corporate mode if the Government should make the decision at a later date to establish SIMSA as an authority.

A formal internal communication system ensures that staff have access to the organization's policy and procedures, and includes a formalized channel for requesting preventive and corrective actions. An active training program, performance review system and a clearly defined succession plan will ensure staff are retained and committed.

4. Regulatory functions: Compliance and standards

The preparation for the establishment of SIMSA has included a comprehensive review of the maritime legislative framework in Solomon Islands. A new enabling Act (Maritime Safety Administration Act 2009) has been established. To support this Act and to allow SIMSA to act effectively five new Regulations have been drafted and passed by Cabinet.

The review of the legal framework continues and will represent a comprehensive review and redrafting of Regulation aimed at better defining and implementing Solomon Islands obligations under SOLAS, MARPOL, etc.

5. New roles for SIMSA - Hydrography

In addition to developing as an effective regulatory body, SIMSA will take on or resume tasks aimed at discharging the Solomon Islands' obligations as a maritime nation. The most important of these is Hydrography.

For many years hydrography has been the responsibility of the Lands and Survey division, which has resulted in survey and update of navigational data coming to a standstill. SIMSA is to resume responsibility for this function and progressively develop its capability to carry out surveys and provide updated data to agencies providing charts and nautical publications.

6. Summary – the way forward

SIMSA is a new organization, based on the foundations of skills and experience of the old Marine Department, but now developing as a modern maritime regulator.

Taking on the responsibilities of survey and data provision for nautical charts and publications for Solomon Islands waters is an important part of its new and expanded responsibilities.

We look forward to developing our involvement with IHO, IHB and the South West Pacific Hydrographic Committee, and in future attending these meetings as a fully-fledged member of the hydrographic community.