



SUB-COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING
35th session
Agenda item 13

STW 35/13/1
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DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCE FOR RATINGS

Submitted by the International Shipping Federation (ISF)

SUMMARY

Executive summary: ISF agrees it will be helpful for IMO to advise ILO that it will consider the implications of the outcome of discussions about the future of ILO Convention No.74. But it would seem premature to give further detailed consideration to whether or not the STCW Convention should be amended until the proposed ILO Consolidated Maritime Labour Convention has actually been adopted. ISF also welcomes the helpful suggestion in STW 35/13, paragraph 17, that this complex issue be referred to the ILO/IMO Joint Committee on Training.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 10

Related document: STW 35/13

1 This paper comments on STW 35/13 and is submitted in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 46.5 of the Guidelines of the Organization and Method of Work.

2 ISF believes that the Secretariat has produced a very helpful paper explaining ILO discussions about the future of the ILO Certification of Able Seamen Convention, 1946 (No.74) and its possible relevance to the STCW Convention. The paper appears to establish a need for IMO to consider the implications of the ILO discussions as soon as the outcome is known, and it would seem helpful to advise ILO accordingly.

3 Nevertheless, ISF still supports the view - expressed by the majority of delegations that spoke at STW 34 - that it is premature to give detailed consideration to whether or not the STCW Convention needs to be reviewed until the final text of the ILO Consolidated Maritime Labour Convention has actually been adopted. It is emphasised, however, that the valuable analysis made by the Secretariat should not be lost, and might be returned to once the outcome of the ILO discussions is certain.

4 The Sub-Committee will be aware that the complex negotiations at ILO are tripartite, with employers, unions, and governments having voting rights. The employer representatives at ILO, which are co-ordinated by ISF, have not in fact firmly agreed to proposals regarding the future treatment of ILO training requirements for Able Seamen, while many governments have not yet been involved in the ILO preparatory discussions referred to in STW 35/13. In short, nothing will be certain until the new Convention is actually adopted by a full International Labour Conference, probably in 2005.

5 It will be recalled that the requirements of ILO Convention No.74, as clarified in the IMO/ILO Document for Guidance on training, were fully taken into account by the 1995 revision of STCW, and the training to which the ILO Convention refers is comprehensively covered by Chapters II and VI (as illustrated by annex 4 of STW 35/13). It may be the case, as the Secretariat advises, that certain specific ILO requirements, such as training for ratings in "seamanship", may not be explicitly referred to in the STCW Convention. However, in addition to being covered implicitly by the provisions referred to above, competence in "seamanship" is achieved during the mandatory period of on-board training required for support level watchkeepers by STCW Chapter II.

6 Contrary to what is stated in the Secretariat paper, ISF considers that it has not yet been firmly concluded that there is a definite need to retain the term 'Able Seaman' or similar terminology. As stated above, the negotiations at ILO remain at a provisional stage.

7 ISF observes that paragraph 12 of STW 35/13 declares that retention of the term 'Able Seaman' *"would provide the international benchmark for negotiations between the representatives of employers and seafarers"*. There is no such thing as a mandatory global wage rate for seafarers, of any rank, and the statement does not reflect recent worldwide industrial relations developments affecting many of those crew contracts that may currently refer to the grade of 'AB'. Furthermore, the relevance or otherwise of the term 'AB' to wage negotiations, being unconnected to maritime safety, should not be an argument for possible changes to IMO instruments.

8 In view of the above, and pending the discussions at ILO, ISF believes that it would not be helpful, at the current time, to agree to paragraph 18.3, where the Sub-Committee is requested to *"note the need to retain the term able seaman or similar terminology as it continues to be used extensively"*.

9 As the Secretariat paper indicates, these issues are very complex. ISF therefore strongly supports the suggestion, made in paragraph 17 of STW 35/13, that the issue be referred to a joint ILO/IMO group, such as the Joint Committee on Training, in order to consider the relevance of continued use of the term "Able Seaman" or similar terminology, with a request to provide both Organizations with advice.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

10 The Sub-Committee is requested to:

- .1 Advise MSC that while the Sub-Committee should take note of the ILO discussions, and that the useful analysis in STW 35/13 should not be lost, it would be premature for the Organization to give this issue detailed consideration until the ILO Consolidated Maritime Labour Convention has been adopted, probably in 2005.
- .2 Defer reaching any definite conclusion, as requested in STW 35/13, paragraph 18.3, to the effect that there is a need to retain the term 'Able Seaman' or similar terminology.
- .3 Agree to the suggestion in STW 35/13, paragraph 17, that the issue be referred to a joint ILO/IMO group, such as the Joint Committee on Training, in order to consider the relevance of continued use of the term "Able Seaman" or similar terminology, with a request to provide both Organizations with advice.