

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Key features

Type of organisation: United Nations specialized agency

Charter/Constitution: Convention on the International Maritime Organization, https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XII-1&chapter=12&lang=en

Membership:

- Nature: Representatives from governments
- Number: 172 members

Year of establishment: 1958

Headquarters: London, United Kingdom

IMO regional presence for technical co-operation:

Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Philippines, Trinidad and Tobago

Secretariat staff: 265 (2017)

Total budget: EUR 38 million (2017)

Type of activity: Policy dialogue, data collection and analysis, information exchange, development of legal instruments

Sectors of activity: Safety, security and environmental performance of international shipping

Webpage: www.imo.org

Members

Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus (Republic of), Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cabo Verde, Chile, China (People's Republic of), Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Korea, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tanzania, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

IMO currently has three Associate Members: Faroe Islands, Hong Kong (China) and Macau (China).

Relationship with non-Members

Several non-Members have ratified specific conventions or adhere to other IMO instruments.

Observers

Under certain conditions, non-Members can observe IMO meetings. NGOs that have the capability to make a substantial contribution to the work of IMO may be granted consultative status by the Council with the approval of the Assembly. To date there are 79 NGOs in consultative status with IMO.

Mandate

The mission of the IMO, as a United Nations specialised agency, is to promote safe, secure, environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping through co-operation. This will be accomplished by adopting the highest practicable standards of maritime safety and security, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of pollution from ships, as well as through consideration of the related legal matters and effective implementation of IMO's instruments with a view to their universal and uniform application.

IRC processes taking place within the International Maritime Organization



Categories of legal and policy instruments

	Is it taking place within the IO?	Approximate number
Treaties for ratification by States (excluding the funding one)	√	60
Legally binding decisions		
Recommendations		
Political declarations		
Model treaties or law		
Production of technical standards		
Non-binding guidance/best practices document	√	Over 800

Interactions with other international organisations active in the field

Mechanisms of interaction	Approximate number of IOs involved	Examples
Develop joint instruments	√	IMO may enter into agreements of co-operation with other IGOs on matters of common interest with a view to ensuring maximum co-ordination in respect of such matters. Examples are: UN Agencies (including ILO, FAO and ITU), EU, ICS (International Chamber of Shipping), BIMCO (Baltic and International Maritime Conference) and ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation).
MoU or other agreements	√	
Participate in co-ordinating institution	√	
Joint meetings that provide forum for co-ordination	√	
Observe relevant actions of other bodies	√	
Exchange information	√	

IMO history

It has always been recognised that the best way of improving safety at sea is by developing international regulations that are followed by all shipping nations and from the mid-19th century onwards a number of such treaties were adopted. Several countries proposed that a permanent international body should be established to promote maritime safety more effectively, but it was not until the establishment of the United Nations itself that these hopes were realised. In 1948 an international conference in Geneva adopted a convention formally establishing IMO (the original name was the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, or IMCO, but the name was changed in 1982 to IMO). The IMO Convention entered into force in 1958 and the new organisation met for the first time the following year.

Source: Updated from OECD (2016), *International Regulatory Co-operation: The Role of International Organisations in Fostering Better Rules of Globalisation*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264244047-en>