

PROPOSED STRATEGY FOR PAKISTAN FOR UPCOMING ELECTIONS OF IMO COUNCIL



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1. INTRODUCTION

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN) which is responsible for measures to improve the safety and security of international shipping and to prevent pollution from ships. It is also involved in legal matters, including liability and compensation issues and the facilitation of international maritime traffic. It was established by means of a Convention adopted under the auspices of the United Nations in Geneva on 17 March 1948 and met for the first time in January 1959.

It currently has 174 Member States. IMO's governing body is the Assembly which is made up of all the Member States and meets normally once every two years. It adopts the budget for the next biennium together with technical resolutions and recommendations prepared by subsidiary bodies during the previous two years. The Council, of 40 Member States elected by the Assembly, acts as governing body in between Assembly sessions. It prepares the budget and work programme for the Assembly. The main technical work is carried out by the Maritime Safety, Marine Environment Protection, Legal Committee, Technical Co-operation and Facilitation Committees and a number of sub-committees.

2. OBJECTIVES OF IMO

The IMO slogan sums up its objectives: **Safe, secure, and efficient shipping on clean oceans**. Shipping is a truly international industry, and it can only operate effectively if the regulations and standards are themselves agreed, adopted and implemented on an international basis. As a specialized agency of the United Nations, IMO is the global standard-setting authority for the safety, security and environmental performance of international shipping. Its main role is to create a regulatory framework for the shipping industry that is fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented.

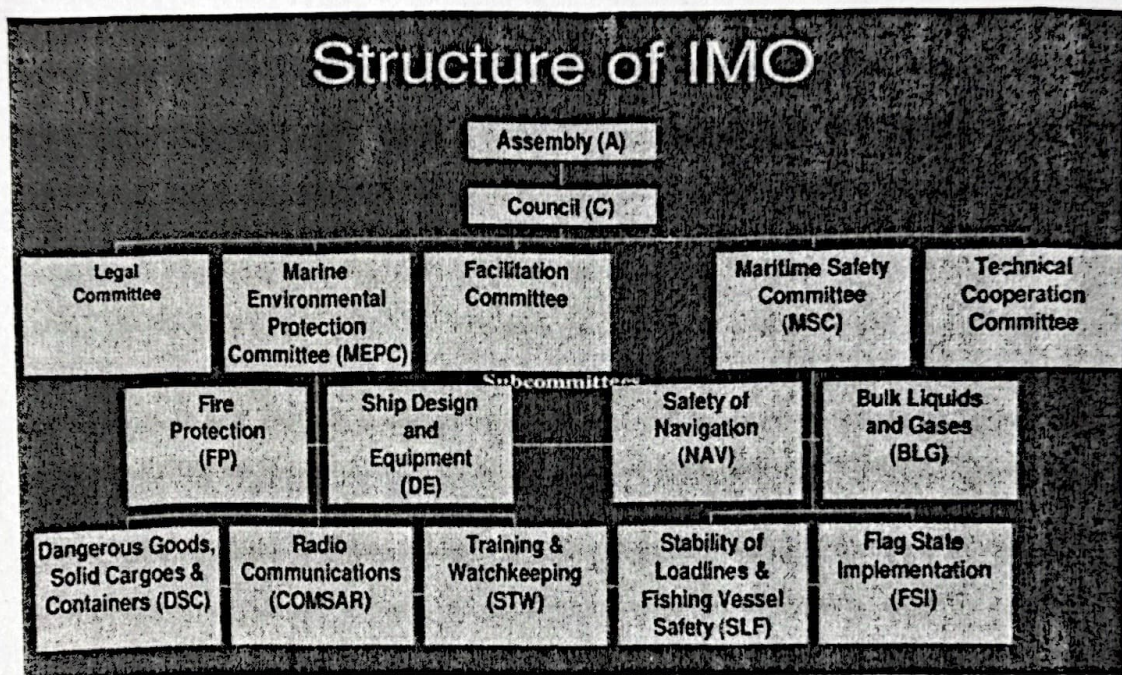
The world relies on a safe, secure and efficient international shipping industry – and this is provided by the regulatory framework developed and maintained by IMO. Its role is to create a level playing-field so that ship operators cannot address their financial issues by simply cutting corners and compromising on safety, security and environmental performance. This approach also encourages innovation and efficiency. The IMO is associated with the United Nations and makes all this possible through carefully designed international standards for all areas of overseas shipping, including:

- a. Ship design and construction
- b. Environmental hazards and pollution prevention

- c. Safe and proper material disposal
- d. Onboard operational regulations
- e. Security and piracy

3. STRUCTURE OF IMO

The IMO consists of an Assembly, a Council and five main Committees: The Maritime Safety Committee, Marine Environmental Protection Committee, Legal Committee, Technical Cooperation Committee and the Facilitation Committee and a number of Sub-Committees support the work of the main technical committees as illustrated below:



4. IMO ASSEMBLY

This is the highest Governing Body of the Organization. It consists of all Member States and it meets once every two years in regular sessions, but may also meet in an extraordinary session if necessary. The Assembly is responsible for approving the work programme, voting the budget and determining the financial arrangements of the Organization. The Assembly also elects the Council.

5. IMO COUNCIL

The Council is the executive organ of IMO and is responsible, under the Assembly, for supervising the work of the Organization. The Council is made up of 40 Member States, elected by the Assembly for two-year terms. Between sessions of the Assembly, the Council performs all the functions of the Assembly, except the function of making recommendations to Governments on maritime safety and pollution

prevention which is reserved for the Assembly by Article 15(j) of the Convention. Other functions of the Council are to:

- a. Coordinate the activities of the organs of the Organization.
- b. Consider the draft work programme and budget estimates of the Organization and submit them to the Assembly.
- c. Receive reports and proposals of the Committees and other organs and submit them to the Assembly and Member States, with comments and recommendations as appropriate.
- d. Appoint the Secretary-General, subject to the approval of the Assembly.
- e. Enter into agreements or arrangements concerning the relationship of the Organization with other organizations, subject to approval by the Assembly.

6. IMO ELECTIONS 2022

The Council is the executive organ of IMO and is responsible, under the Assembly, for supervising the work of the Organization. Between sessions of the Assembly, the Council performs the functions of the Assembly, except that of making recommendations to Governments on maritime safety and pollution prevention. The Assembly of the International Maritime Organization has elected the following States to be Members of its Council for the 2022-2023 biennium:

Category (a): 10 States with the largest interest in providing international shipping services: China, Greece, Italy, Japan, Norway, Panama, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Category (b): 10 States with the largest interest in international seaborne trade: Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Arab Emirates.

Category (c): 20 States not elected under (a) or (b), which have special interests in maritime transport or navigation and whose election to the Council will ensure the representation of all major geographic areas of the world: Bahamas, Belgium, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Philippines, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand, Turkey and Vanuatu.

7. STRATEGIES OF WINNER STATES

The states which won the membership falling in different categories have strong strategies for their country's maritime sector. The category A & B includes states with the largest interest in providing international shipping services and states with the largest interest in international seaborne trade. This shows that the strategy of these states is to promote and increase the maritime trade by using all possible means and resources, playing an active role in strengthening their national maritime sector, while contributing to the growth of the global maritime and logistics industry. Under category

C states adopt strategies to achieve special interests in maritime transport and navigation, promote functions which play pivotal role in developing strategies, policies and agreements that enhance maritime safety standards, protect the marine environment, and improve the efficiency of the global industry.

8. PAKISTAN AND IMO

Pakistan became a member of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1958. Being among the few pioneering members of IMO, Pakistan has served as an elected council member 5 times in 1977, 1979, 1987, 1989 and 1991. Pakistan is a signatory of 24 IMO conventions and ratification of five further conventions is under process. After a gap of 30 years, Pakistan presented its candidacy for IMO Elections for Category C in 2021, however it could not succeed in getting the required number of votes.

With an Exclusive Economic Zone of 290,000 Sq kms and a coastline of over 1,000 kms, Pakistan's geo-strategic location is in close proximity to some of the world's busiest sea lanes. A third of all seaborne energy flows just west of Pakistan's territorial waters at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz. Moreover, 'Regional Economic Networking' projects under CPEC have provided the much-desired impetus to these vital avenues. In recent years, great emphasis has been laid on Pakistan's Blue Economy potential and using it to transform Pakistan into a strong Maritime Power hub. The concept of Blue Economy has been front and center of the present Government's agenda and therefore the year 2020 was declared the year of Blue Economy by Govt. of Pakistan.

In line with IMO's guidelines and in recognition of the valuable services of the seafarers, Government of Pakistan declared seafarers as "Key Workers". Pakistan contributes heavily towards international shipping through its pool of over 25,000 experienced seafarers, trained to the latest STCW standards and holding certifications that are recognized internationally. Pakistan's Certificate of Competence (CoC) is recognized internationally, having signed MOUs with 29 nations for the certificate of recognition under the latest provisions of STCW.

As a maritime nation, Pakistan can play an active role in achieving the objectives of IMO for Safe, secure, and efficient shipping on clean oceans by becoming the member of IMO council.

9. STRATEGIES FOR PAKISTAN TO BECOME IMO COUNCIL MEMBER

Pakistan has to follow the guidelines provided by the IMO and start working vigorously on promoting safe, secure, environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping through regional cooperation. Pakistan should promote collaboration and bilateral partnerships with other states and maritime nations for promoting maritime trade and increasing shipping activities, thus improving regional and increasing

contribution in global maritime trade. This should 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 instruments, with a view of universal and uniform application.

Pakistan has to enhance its role as the global contributor of shipping, promote greater recognition of the sector's importance and enable the advancement of shipping, while addressing the challenges of continuing developments in technology and world trade and have to work on fulfilling the need to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The human element is currently included within the main principles of the IMO plan, so Pakistan should take initiatives on this matter as well. Its inclusion as a specific strategic direction recognizes its significance, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic when the human element has been a focus for joint work with UN sister organizations, in particular ILO, ICAO and WHO, industry associations and social partners. The human element has been the subject of numerous joint statements, resolutions, guidance and other provisions, it can be an important area for Pakistan to work on to create a strong image for next elections.

The overarching principles as to be followed and prescribed by IMO, which should be taken into account by Pakistan in all of the strategic directions:

- a. Improve implementation
- b. Integrate new and advancing technologies in the regulatory framework
- c. Respond to climate change
- d. Engage in ocean governance
- e. Enhance global facilitation and security of international trade
- g. Ensure regulatory effectiveness
- h. Ensure organizational effectiveness
- j. Collaboration for regional as well as global maritime security issues
- k. Protect and promote human (seafarers) rights

10. MARITIME AREAS REQUIRING FOCUS IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan needs to work on multi-pronged strategies for promoting its maritime sector which will ultimately contribute to world trade, safe and secure navigation, healthy oceans and regional cooperation. In this regard, following areas have been identified requiring focus by the relevant stakeholders:

- a. Pakistan is a signatory to many international maritime conventions; it needs to come up with meaningful domestic legislation to back up its commitments.
- b. Pakistan needs to provide incentive to private ownership of shipping companies which is almost non-existent. And yet it is private ownership that has made a country like Greece into such a shipping powerhouse.
- c. Our sole public sector shipping line, PNSC, doesn't possess a single container carrier, through which the bulk of global trade is currently being conducted.
- d. Gwadar, since it's commissioning in March 2007, is arguably the only underperforming port in South Asia. Gwadar needs to be operationalized up to its potential to compete with other regional ports.
- e. No worthwhile transshipment activity is carried out at any of Pakistan's terminals. Pakistan needs venture in transshipment for enhancement of connectivity.
- f. Pakistan handles Afghan transit trade that is plagued by needless bottlenecks and hurdles. All these need to be cleared for smooth flow of trade.
- g. Transit trade beyond Afghanistan to Central Asian States is non-existent. There is dire need to tap this opportunity which will enhance regional connectivity and promote trade.
- h. Pakistan doesn't possess a recognized classification and survey society of its own. It needs to ensure establishment of its own society to assist Pakistan in furthering its goal to become a maritime nation. Bahria Foundation has already started working on formulation of Pakistan's first classification society with the name of "Bahria Classification Society". This is considered a significant step in the right direction.
- j. There are plenty of passenger terminals catering to cruise liners on either side of Pakistan (India and the Persian Gulf), but none in Pakistan itself. Pakistan needs to utilize the cruise liners avenue to earn foreign exchange.
- k. There is a need to establish prize courts, Admiralty Courts or Maritime Courts in Pakistan, or even an arbitration mechanism to resolve maritime disputes.
- l. UN Ocean decade agenda as well as UN SDG 12 (Sustainable usage of natural resources including marine), SDG 13 (climate change), SDG 14 (Marine conservation) should be given highest priority by relevant ministries/ stakeholders.

Efforts should thus be directed towards eliminating these weaknesses to enable Pakistan to emerge with strong maritime credentials. And strong maritime credentials are what is primarily needed to strengthen Pakistan's candidacy. Another vital aspect

is the power of canvassing, which can only be effectively undertaken if backed up by strong maritime credentials.

11. WAY FORWARD / STRATEGY FOR PAKISTAN

a. First and foremost, it needs to be understood that there has been a lapse of nearly three decades since Pakistan last contested for a Cat C seat. A lot of ground has thus to be made up. It is imperative that on strictly merit that Pakistan should attend IMO meetings. Our Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) must play role in adjustment with other countries on seats at UN agencies so that we may get a slot in IMO council. Pakistan needs to adopt a multi-pronged approach. With that in mind the MOFA must be fully on board right from the beginning and at the highest level. All ambassadors/ high commissioners/ mission heads should be directed to do the needful to secure commitments from IMO Member States and fully followed up at regular intervals.

b. Those states that can effectively demonstrate the special interests they possess in maritime transport or navigation have a better chance of electoral success. So this is where our primary focus should be on. Pakistan should actively take part in IMO meetings and make substantive technical contributions to the meetings in the form of technical papers, offering to chair working/ drafting/ expert group meetings and coordinating correspondence groups. If chairing and coordinating the aforementioned is not possible then contribute to the deliberations. Ensure that the name of Pakistan is reflected in the reports of the various groups. Taking part in meetings as a spectator does not reflect substantive contribution to the deliberations. Technical papers could be submitted jointly with other friendly or like-minded countries. These days the meetings are held remotely/virtually or in hybrid mode. Hence, the size of the delegations could increase taking into account the gender balance. Senior faculty members and students could observe the meetings as this has a decent level of exposure and learning how deliberations take place at international level.

c. Our principal rivals this time in the geographic area that we inhabit were Saudi Arabia and Qatar, both of whom are close allies. Pakistan can't possibly be expected to match them in terms of money, influence, prestige, maritime trade or port infrastructures. It should instead focus on sharpening its technological skills and streamlining its maritime transportation process. Pakistan should make its presence known and felt in maritime circles through innovation and specialization.

d. Political level support and substantive technical contributions are key in obtaining the desired level of votes.

e. Submit the document well in advance noting that most of the decisions as to which countries are to be voted are taken by Member States well in advance of the elections. Relate the country's maritime progress to the work of

the Organization such as in the form of compliance with the instruments relevant to ship-breaking, seafarers' training etc.

f. Try to establish links with group of counties like EU, as it is believed that these counties cast their votes en bloc in international organizations.

g. Pakistan should endeavor to become a party to the numerous conventions to which it is not a party as yet.

h. Be friendly with all regardless of political, technical and/or religious affiliations.

j. If the country complies with the above recommendations, then there is no doubt that Pakistan is likely to be elected as a member of IMO Council at the next elections. While launching its campaign for 2024, Pakistan may do well, however, we need to remember that there are no short cuts to success. The country needs to be realistic while selling its achievements. Exaggerating or bluffing one's way through is a non-starter and would prove to be counterproductive.

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