

KIMO RESOLUTION 17/01

Spatial Organisation Plan and Maritime Traffic Control for the North Sea

The North Sea is one of the busiest waterways in the world. All the way up the North Sea maritime traffic obeys the International Maritime Organisation's Collision Prevention Regulations (COLREGs)¹, including the traffic separation areas up the coastal areas of the Netherlands and Lower Saxony. However, the area in which ships can exercise "free passage" is progressively shrinking, hemmed in by the industrial installations of the Energy Extraction Industry (gas and oil prospecting as well as wind energy installations). These energy installations pose an obstacle to ship traffic.

Both the energy installations and the number and size of ships are constantly increasing. Consequently, the risk of collisions increases with potentially devastating consequences for the ecology of the North Sea, for the fishing industry and for tourism. The main reasons for the increasing collision risk are:

- The 'free passage' space for ships is becoming increasingly constrained
- The lack of international agreement regarding the positioning of industrial sites
- The maritime traffic corridors drawn up between the industrial sites are incompatible because the navigation rules in and around wind energy parks are not internationally harmonised.
- There is no international legislation that goes beyond the International Maritime Organisation's Collision Prevention Regulations. There is the need to have right of way for the ships following the maritime traffic corridors instead of those crossing the corridors.

All the countries bordering the North Sea should have an integrated strategic spatial organisation plan for the industrial complexes on the one hand and the Shipping Corridors on the other hand. This is not only sensible but also, from a safety perspective, urgently needed.

The Flensburg University of Applied Sciences has, by means of its ship navigation simulations, shown the potential dangers of narrow waterways and traffic-dense routes such as "German Bight -



Pentland" and "German Bight - Skagen" and has made recommendations for minimising the risk of collisions.

Their principal recommendation is the allocation of traffic separation areas (COLREG 10) with slow traffic lanes on either side in the whole North Sea and not only as today up the coastal areas of the Netherlands and Lower Saxony. Accident risk is lowest in slow moving one-way traffic lanes. Furthermore, Flensburg University of Applied Sciences has determined that: (a) the corridors between the industrial complexes are inordinately narrow, (b) ships crossing the corridors cannot be detected because of criss-crossing radar echolocation and (c) ships often have insufficient time to stop or to perform an evasive manoeuvre. The implementation of the recommendations in COLREG 9 for narrow waterways would convert these waterways into priority lanes thereby reducing the risk of a collision.

The prerogative for deciding both which areas are best suited for the allocation of COLREG 10 style traffic separation areas to improve ship safety and for deciding where COLREG 9 would best be implemented rests with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). A prerequisite for addressing the problem is for the North Sea countries to submit a joint Planning Proposal to the IMO.

KIMO

- **recognises the necessity of coordinating the areas in the North Sea required for industrial use and of making the 'Shipping Corridors' compatible throughout the region**
- **acknowledges the growing danger of ship collisions as a result of the industrialisation of the North Sea with potentially devastating consequences for the environment, fishing industry and tourism and affirms the need to control maritime traffic in the North Sea through the implementation of the International Maritime Organisation's COLREG 9 and COLREG 10.**



KIMO therefore:

- encourages the **North Sea Countries** to acknowledge the necessity of an integrated spatial organisation plan for the entire **North Sea** and to coordinate all current and future planning, including planning for compatible shipping corridors
- urges the **North Sea countries** to jointly plan maritime traffic control measures in accordance with **COLREG 9** and **COLREG 10** in order to improve ship safety and urges the **International Maritime Organisation** to assist in the planning in order to propose an appropriate legal procedure.

KIMO members:

Agree to submit this resolution to all National Governments, the European Commission, the International Maritime Organisation and other relevant organisations.

¹<http://www.imo.org/en/About/conventions/listofconventions/pages/colreg.aspx> -accessed

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