

WORLD METEOROLOGICAL ORGANIZATION

INTERGOVERNMENTAL OCEANOGRAPHIC
COMMISSION (OF UNESCO)

JOINT WMO/IOC TECHNICAL COMMISSION FOR
OCEANOGRAPHY AND MARINE METEOROLOGY (JCOMM)
SHIP OBSERVATIONS TEAM

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ITEM IV-1.1

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VOSP-V

REPORT BY THE CHAIR OF THE VOSP

(Submitted by Ms Julie Fletcher, Chairperson of the JCOMM VOS Panel)

Summary and purpose of document

This document describes the activities undertaken by the VOS Panel Chairperson during the current intersessional period and highlights the significant issues for the VOSP-V.

ACTION PROPOSED

(A.) The VOS Panel is invited to review the activities undertaken, and to make comments or suggestions as necessary and/or appropriate.

Appendix: A. Review of Action Items from VOSP-IV undertaken by the VOSP Chairperson

DISCUSSION

Report of the VOSP Chairperson

1. There has been considerable activity during the current intersessional period (April 2005 – April 2007), with an impressive number of tasks being completed. The work has mostly been undertaken by email, but meetings with the Ship Observations Team Chairperson, the WMO Secretariat and some respective Task Team Members to progress the VOS issues, occurred at DBCP meetings and the Third Session of the Port Meteorological Officers (PMO-III, Hamburg, Germany, 23-24 March 2006).
2. Significant work has been completed in the past two years to improve the monitoring and reporting tools for the VOS, and initiatives have been undertaken with the IMO and ICS to raise the profile of the VOS. The dedicated work of the PMO network underpins the programmes coordinated under the SOT, in particular the VOS Programme, and a number of measures have been put in place to strengthen and improve the PMO services.
3. The Third International PMO Workshop, hosted by the Deutscher Wetterdienst (DWD) in Hamburg, Germany in March 2006, was attended by delegates from twenty-four countries. The Workshop was successful in informing the PMOs about recent and planned developments (e.g., Pub. 47 changes, and BUFR templates), and providing refresher training in key PMO roles, such as ship recruitment, ship inspections, and observation reporting and monitoring. The PMO Workshops provide a valuable opportunity for the PMOs to discuss issues and express concerns, and this greatly benefits global PMO cooperation.
4. The major issue overshadowing all VOS activities is the Ship Security issue. This issue is very real, and failure to adequately address it could see VOS numbers fall dramatically. There is also concern that proposed solutions must not compromise data monitoring or the ability to match metadata to real observations.
5. Another significant issue for the VOSP-V includes the introduction of the new metadata fields for the WMO Pub. 47, which will take effect from 1 July 2007. There is also concern as to whether countries will be ready to collect the new variables and have databases to collate the information.
6. The ongoing and constant change in the global shipping industry impacts on the VOS fleet. Frequent changes of ship ownership and charter occur because of shipping company mergers, acquisitions and insolvencies. This results in changes to ship names, routes and crewing and affects the stability of national VOS fleets. For example, MAERSK's recent acquisition of PONL has resulted in a worldwide revision of ships and routes.
7. With respect to the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the VOSP, the status is as follows:

- TOR 1. *Review, recommend and co-ordinate the implementation of new and improved specialised shipboard meteorological instrumentation, siting and observing practices, as well as of associated software*

Work in this area is ongoing. There is a trend towards using automated systems and the uptake of electronic logbook software is increasing. The status of VOS automation and software developments will be reported under 'Programme Implementation'. The TT 'VOS Recruitment and Programme Promotion' is working on the development of 'generic' pre-installation design standards for future issue to ship builders, designers etc. The new WMO Pub. 47 metadata also fits under this ToR.

- TOR 2. *Support the development and maintenance of new pilot projects*

There is nothing thus far to report under this ToR.

- TOR 3. *Oversee the efficient performance and operation of the VOSCLim Project*

Support for the VOSCLim is ongoing. At the Third Session of the Ship Observations Team (SOT-III, Brest, France, 7-12 March 2005), it was agreed that the management of the VOSCLim Project should be transferred to a Task Team under the VOS Panel of the SOT. The status of VOSCLim will therefore be reported under the Task Team reports.

- TOR 4. *Develop and implement activities to enhance ship recruitment, including promotional brochures, training videos*

Much of the work of the TT 'VOS Recruitment and Programme Promotion' is in this area. New initiatives such as the SOT Certificate of Appreciation, the VOS Flyer, the 'Partnership Industry with Science' PowerPoint presentation, and efforts by the WMO to interact closely with the IMO, all help to enhance ship recruitment and retention. The group email address for the PMOs and National VOS Focal Points has improved global communication on VOS issues. The Foreign VOS Inspection form and the Table of National Observing Practices were designed to assist the PMOs visiting foreign VOS. The VOS Quick Reference Guides for PMOs and National VOS Programme Managers will help to standardise global VOS practices and provide a useful framework for new PMOs and VOS managers.

- TOR 5. *Annually prepare a report on the status of VOS operations, data availability and data quality*

The SOT Annual Report format was designed so that data from the National Reports can be collated more easily. The United Kingdom Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre (RSMC) is doing an excellent job in monitoring VOS data quality and quantity. The VOS data is also displayed on global coverage maps produced by the JCOMMOPS.

8. The VOSP-V Agenda is comprehensive and addresses many of the issues facing the VOS operators. In addition to the issues regarding how to recruit and retain VOS and VOSCLIM ships, and how to improve SHIP data, the Ship Security issue must be addressed so that the VOS programme has a viable future.
9. Through the work of the VOS Panel and the Task Teams, the global VOS is becoming better coordinated and monitored. I would like to thank the respective SOT Panel Chairpersons, the WMO Secretariat and the Members of the Task Teams for their input, help and direction through the current intersessional period.

Julie Fletcher
VOSP Chairperson

APPENDIX A

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS FROM VOSP-IV UNDERTAKEN BY THE VOSP CHAIRPERSON

Paragraph	Action	Responsible Bodies
III-A/3.2.1	VOS Panel Chairperson to collate information on global VOS automation for presentation at subsequent VOS Panel sessions. Status: <i>Ongoing</i> <i>Results will be presented under VOSP V Agenda Item 2.1.1.</i>	VOS Panel Chairperson
III-A/3.2.4	Status information of VOS automation to be kept updated. The list to be included in the SOT Annual Report Status: <i>Ongoing</i> <i>VOS Automation report updated annually based on data taken from National submissions to SOT Annual Report.</i>	VOS Panel Chairperson
III-A/4.2.2	VOS Chairperson and WMO Secretariat to prepare an updated version of the Annex to MSC Circular 1017; and WMO Secretariat to request the IMO Secretariat to issue a MSC Circular accordingly. Status: <i>Under action</i> <i>VOSP Chairperson updated MSC Circ 1017 and sent it to WMO on 25/11/05 for WMO to initiate the re-issue with IMO.</i>	VOS Panel Chairperson, WMO Secretariat
III-A/4.3.4	Monitor and take appropriate action to get NMS personnel accepted as bona fide visitors acting on Government business. Status: <i>Under action</i> <i>VOSP Chairperson provided briefing on this item for WMO to raise with IMO.</i>	VOS Panel and SOT Chairpersons, WMO Secretariat
III-A/4.5.3	VOSP to provide to the VOSP Chairperson a list of other improvements to the marine meteorological services monitoring questionnaire to be passed to the ETMSS for inclusion in the next questionnaire. Status: <i>Completed</i> <i>Revised version of questionnaire submitted to Mr Henri Savina, Chairperson of the ETMSS on 30/8/06. Discussed at the Second Session of the ETMSS (ETMSS-II, Angra dos Reis, Brazil, January 2007).</i>	VOSP Chairperson, Task Team on VOS Recruitment and Programme Promotion
III-A/5.1.4	Discuss and decide the details of a procedure to inform the RSMC, Exeter of remedial actions taken by the PMOs based on suspect ship lists, based on the feedback system used for buoy monitoring. Status: <i>Completed</i> <i>Decided that a formal mechanism is not required. The RSMC welcomes email feedback from the NMS describing action</i>	RSMC, Exeter, JCOMMOPS Technical Coordinator, VOS Panel Chairperson

	<i>taken to fix a fault, or an explanation of why bad data occurred.</i>	
III-A/5.1.5	<p>Review the format of the six-monthly reports.</p> <p>Status: <i>Completed</i> <i>New format for the Monitoring of the Quality of Surface Marine Data bi-annual reports commenced from report Number 34 (July to December 2005). Reports available from the RSMC website with minimal paper copies distributed to the respective Permanent Representatives and policy makers. VOS Managers and PMOs should continue to use the weekly or monthly near real-time monitoring reports.</i></p>	RSMC, Exeter, VOS Panel Chairperson
III-A/5.1.7	<p>RSMC, Exeter (Met Office) to include timeliness information on the VOS as a whole in its monthly reports to produce timeliness plots for all VOS national fleets listed in WMO Pub. 47 and make available on the Met Office website.</p> <p>Status: <i>Completed</i> <i>Terms of Reference (ToR) results have been available on RSMC website since late 2005.</i></p>	RSMC, Exeter, VOSP Chairperson