

TOOLS FOR IMPROVED FISHING VESSEL SAFETY: THE TORREMOLINOS PROTOCOL AND THE STCW-F CONVENTION

It is a well-known fact that fishing is one of the most dangerous occupations in the world. The following statistics from the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) clearly demonstrate the extent of the safety problem in the global fishing industry.

- Each year there is an average of 24,000 fatalities and 24 million non-fatal accidents (non-fatal injuries are grossly under-reported according to the ILO).
- While fishing represents less than 1% of occupations worldwide, 7% of all worker fatalities occur in the fishing industry.
- The fishing fatality rate is estimated at 80 deaths/100,000 individuals per annum, which is 79 times higher than the overall occupational fatality rate.

The community nature of much of the world's fishing activities, and the potentially devastating impact that high injury and fatality rates can have on fishing communities, is demonstrated by another set of statistics.

- In 1995, the total world fishing fleet (of all types) was about 3.8 million vessels.
- About 15 million people are employed aboard fishing vessels and about 98% of these people work on vessels less than 24 m in length.

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- Most of the world's fishing fleet comprises boats that operate in artisanal fisheries.

According to the IMO, 80% of accidents are caused by human error and most of these errors can at some point be attributed to management deficiencies that create pre-conditions for accidents. Personnel must be effectively managed to ensure that they have appropriate training and that they work in accordance with relevant labour laws and agreed on conditions. The procedures, methods and systems used on fishing vessels must be properly managed to ensure that they work effectively and efficiently and produce the required outcomes. Finally, the mechanical components involved (hull, machinery, fishing gear, etc.) must also be managed to ensure that they are properly maintained and perform in accordance with their designed capacity.

The solutions for improving fishing vessel safety are thus straightforward: seaworthy vessels, well-trained and competent crews, and safety-oriented management.

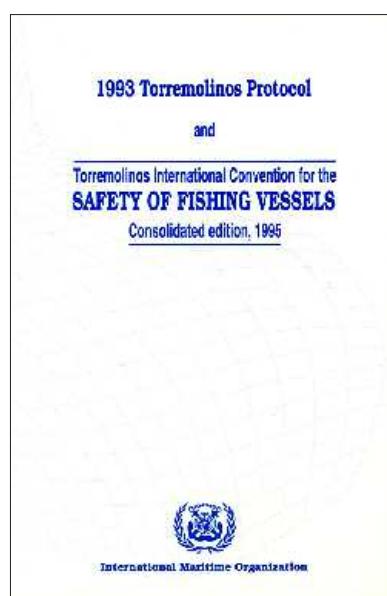
Seaworthy boats are of critical importance, but it is necessary to have standards for their design and construction, as well as for the vessel equipment and outfitting. Along with these standards there must also be standards for

maintenance and inspection; in other words, a regulatory system designed to oversee the fundamentals of safe operations. The standards must be universally adopted and this requires some sort of international binding agreement. The Torremolinos Convention and its 1993 Protocol provide the necessary framework.

Just as important as the standards for the vessels, there must be standards for the crew, their training, qualifications and work methods. Because fishing is an industry that operates in open seas, interacts with other maritime industries, and is global in operation, it is also important that common crew training standards be used, particularly when it comes to qualification and certification. Those standards must be universally adopted and recognised and the only way to do this is through the framework of an international convention. This is the purpose of the Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel, 1995 (STCW-F Convention).

The 1977 Torremolinos Convention and its 1993 Protocol

The safety of fishing vessels has been a matter of concern to IMO since it came into existence. In 1977, the first ever international conference on the safety of fishing vessels was held in Torremolinos, Spain. The conference adopted the Torremolinos Convention (1977), which established a safety regime for fishing vessels of more than 24 metres. The Convention looked at construction standards and some safety related equipment for fishing vessels in a similar way that the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) Convention does for cargo and passenger vessels. Found too stringent by the major fishing nations, however, the Convention was never ratified.



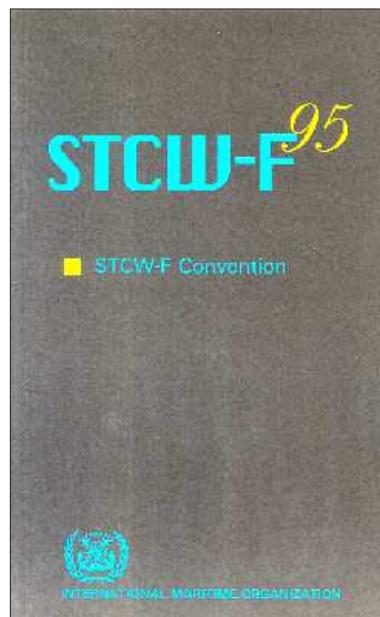
In 1993, a Protocol to the Convention was adopted (Torremolinos Protocol). The Protocol updates and amends the 1977 Convention taking into account technological evolution and the need to take a pragmatic approach to encourage ratification of the Convention. The safety provisions of the Protocol cover construction, stability, machineries, fire protection, protection of crew, life saving equipment, emergency procedures, radio communications, navigation equipment, vessel certification and port state control. Some of the provisions are restricted to fishing vessels of more than 45 m. To date, six states have ratified the Protocol (15 are required for its entry into force).

The 1995 STCW-F Convention

The STCW-F Convention complements the Torremolinos Protocol by setting the regulatory framework for the training and certification of fishing vessel personnel. STCW-F is the "sister" Convention to the 1978 STCW Convention (training and certification of seafarers), as amended in 1995, with similar provisions.

The STCW-F Convention addresses the training and certification standards for skippers and watchkeepers on fishing vessels

of more than 24 m, for engineers on vessels producing more than 750kW, and for crew in charge of radio communications. It also requires basic (pre-sea) safety training for all fishing vessel personnel. The Convention embraces the concept of competency-based training. It does not deal with manning levels. Six states have so far ratified the STWC-F Convention (15 are required).

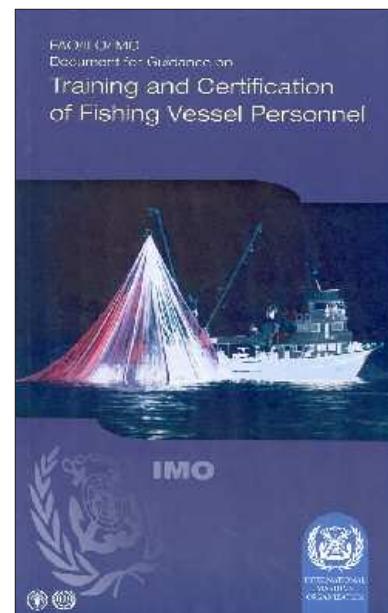


Document for Guidance on Training and Certification of Fishing Vessel Personnel

First published in 1985, and thoroughly revised in 2001, the Document combines the conventions and recommendations adopted by ILO and IMO with the wide practical experience of FAO in the field of fishermen's training.

The Document is aligned with the provisions of the STCW-F Convention. It provides guidance to set the framework for a training system for fishing vessel personnel appropriate to the size and nature of the fishery (all sizes of fishing vessels are covered). The Document addresses issues such as the methods of training and assessment (competency-based training is promoted), the content and duration of training

programmes, the competences to be assessed, and the required experience and qualification for tutors. There is a strong emphasis on sustainability (FAO Code of Conduct), fatigue management, and the active involvement of all parties in training development.



The above instruments were promoted at a regional seminar in late March, in Suva, Fiji, as part of an initiative from the IMO to urge member governments to consider accepting the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol and the 1995 STCW-F Convention. This was the eighth in a series of nine regional seminars run by Milhar Fuazudeen (IMO Technical Officer) and David Harrod (Maritime Safety Consultant). Participants included 10 maritime administrators, 8 training providers, 3 fisheries administrators and 2 fishing operators as well as staff from both SPC maritime and SPC fisheries programmes.

With regards to the likely impacts of Torremolinos and STCW-F on Pacific Islands, several important points were made at the seminar.

- The Pacific Islands region is well ahead of other regions in that it already has training and

certification standards for fishing vessel personnel: a common certification structure for trading and fishing vessels was developed by SPC's Regional Maritime Programme in the mid-1990s through a consultation process involving heads of marine departments and training institutions. It is monitored on an ongoing basis through a sub-committee of the Pacific Islands Maritime Association (PacMa) (latest version is available from SPC's Regional Maritime Programme).

- Training institutions in the region are already familiar with the concept of competency-based training, and a number of model training programmes for fishing vessel personnel are available and being used throughout the region (e.g. SPC's safety certificate and SPC/Pacific Island Qualified Fishing Deckhand certificate). The pre-sea induction training system used in Papua New Guinea for new vessel crew is also relevant as it is aligned with the requirements of STCW-F for basic pre-sea safety training for all fishing vessel personnel.
- While the Protocol and Convention apply to large fishing vessels (i.e. > 24 m),

which are very few in Pacific Island countries (PICs), the application of these instruments is flexible. It is possible for national laws to extend the applicability of Torremolinos and STCW-F to smaller classes of vessels.

- National administrations and the regional fishing industry need to be aware of and familiar with the provisions of these international instruments and to prepare for their entry into force. The current status of requirements and standards in the region means that the effective implementation of the Protocol and Convention would not be too difficult.
- Due to the current limited number of missing signatories, PICs, by ratifying the instruments, may drive their entry into force.
- SPC's Regional Maritime and Fisheries Programmes can underpin a regional mechanism and be the focal agencies in assisting countries with the implementation of the Protocol and Convention.

SPC shares the opinion of the IMO that implementing the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol and the 1995 STCW-F Convention will significantly improve the safety record of the fishing industry

and contribute to the prevention of loss of lives onboard fishing vessels.

Obviously, the introduction of relevant standards for vessel safety and crew training can only provide a safer working environment, improved safety, wider employment options, and sustainability of livelihood to fishing vessel personnel. However, the change will have a cost, not only for fishing vessel operators (upgrading of safety systems), but also for training institutions (wider application of competency-based training and assessment) and maritime administrations (certification and surveys). These cost implications need to be considered and carefully assessed: SPC and the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), through the European Union-funded DEVFISH project, will soon undertake a regional study on this issue, the results of which will be widely distributed to fisheries and maritime stakeholders.

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