

Resolutions from the 20th Session of the Assembly of IMO,  
November 1997.

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RESOLUTION A.850(20)  
adopted on 27 November 1997

HUMAN ELEMENT VISION, PRINCIPLES AND GOALS FOR THE ORGANIZATION

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THE ASSEMBLY,

RECALLING Article 15(j) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization concerning the functions of the Assembly in relation to regulations and guidelines concerning maritime safety and the prevention and control of marine pollution from ships,

RECALLING ALSO resolution A.680(17), by which it invited Governments to encourage those responsible for the management and operation of ships to take appropriate steps to develop, implement and assess safety and pollution prevention management in accordance with the Guidelines on management for the safe operation of ships and for pollution prevention,

RECALLING FURTHER that resolution A.742(18), concerning guidelines on procedures for the control of operational requirements related to the safety of ships and pollution prevention, acknowledges the close relationship between the human element and safety,

BEARING IN MIND resolution A.772(18), concerning fatigue factors in manning and safety, which aims at increasing awareness of the complexity of fatigue and encourages all parties involved in ship operations to take these factors into account when making operational decisions,

ACKNOWLEDGING the need for increased focus on human-related activities in the safe operation of ships, and the need to achieve and maintain high standards of safety and environmental protection for the purpose of significantly reducing maritime casualties,

ACKNOWLEDGING ALSO that human element issues have been assigned high priority on the work programme of the Organization because of the prominent role of the human element in maritime casualties,

HAVING CONSIDERED the recommendations made by the Maritime Safety Committee at its sixty-eighth session and by the Marine Environment Protection Committee at its thirty-ninth session,

1. ADOPTS the Human Element Vision, Principles and Goals for the Organization, set out in the Annex to the present resolution;
2. INVITES Governments to bring this resolution to the attention of their representatives who attend meetings of the Organization for appropriate action, and to encourage those responsible for the operation and design of ships to take the relevant principles into account when making design and operational decisions;
3. REQUESTS the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee to consider proposals for new or revised instruments or procedures relating to safety of life at sea or protection of the marine environment taking into account the annexed human element vision, principles, and goals;

4. REQUESTS ALSO the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee to keep the annexed vision, principles and goals under review and take action as appropriate.

## ANNEX

### HUMAN ELEMENT VISION, PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

#### VISION

to significantly enhance maritime safety and the quality of the marine environment by addressing human element issues to improve performance;

#### PRINCIPLES

- (a) the human element is a complex multi-dimensional issue that affects maritime safety and marine environmental protection. It involves the entire spectrum of human activities performed by ships' crews, shore based management, regulatory bodies, recognized organizations, shipyards, legislators, and other relevant parties, all of whom need to cooperate to address human element issues effectively;
- (b) the Organization, when developing regulations, should honour the seafarer by seeking and respecting the opinions of those that do the work at sea;
- (c) effective remedial action following maritime casualties requires a sound understanding of human element involvement in accident causation. This is gained by a thorough investigation and systematic analysis of casualties for contributory factors and the causal chain of events;
- (d) in the process of developing regulations, it should be recognized that adequate safeguards must be in place to ensure that a "single person error" will not cause an accident through the application of these regulations;
- (e) rules and regulations addressing the seafarers directly should be simple, clear and comprehensive;
- (f) crew performance is a function of individual capabilities, management policies, cultural factors, experience, training, job skills, work environment and countless other factors;
- (g) dissemination of information through effective communication is essential to sound management and operational decisions;  
and
- (h) consideration of human element matters should aim at decreasing the possibility of human error as far as possible.

#### GOALS

- (a) to have in place a structured approach for the proper consideration of human element issues for use in the development of regulations and guidelines by all committees and sub-committees;

- (b) to conduct a comprehensive review of selected existing IMO instruments from the human element perspective;
  - (c) to promote and communicate, through human element principles, a maritime safety culture and heightened marine environment awareness;
  - (d) to provide a framework to encourage the development of non-regulatory solutions and their assessment based upon human element principles;
  - (e) to have in place a system to discover and to disseminate to maritime interests studies, research and other relevant information on the human element, including findings from marine and non-marine incident investigations; and
  - (f) to provide material to educate seafarers so as to increase their knowledge and awareness of the impact of human element issues on safe ship operations, to help them do the right thing.
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