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APPLICATION OF SINGLE WINDOW CONCEPT

A perspective on the prototype maritime single window project

Submitted by ICS

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document provides a perspective on the development of a prototype maritime single window by the Organization

Strategic direction, if applicable: 5

Output: 5.1

Action to be taken: Paragraph 11

Related documents: FAL 41/17; FAL 40/WP.3; FAL 38/2/2 and FAL.5/Circ.36

Introduction

1 This document is provided in response to the Committee's invitation to Member States and international organizations to submit documents regarding the application of the Maritime Single Window (MSW) concept to FAL 42 (FAL 41/17, paragraph 5.53).

Discussion

2 The digitalization of the exchange of information required for reporting and clearance processes is part of the future evolution of efficient international maritime trade. Enabling the electronic exchange of information* using a single window as defined in section 1, part A of the FAL Convention should enhance the efficiency of international maritime trade and reduce administrative burdens. Equally it has the potential to inhibit such enhancements. It is considered essential that the latter outcome is avoided.

3 ICS accepts that an international single window is an unrealistic aspiration at this stage. This acceptance reflects an appreciation of unavoidable difference in national requirements, and a view that priority should be given to facilitating the effective implementation of single window at the national level. Specifically, addressing the proliferation

* Conforming to the standard in Standard 1.3bis.

of port single windows (PSW) and port community systems (PCS) as portals to a MSW or trade single window (TSW), or as parallel reporting systems. This development is considered contrary to the need for harmonization and standardization among individual ports (FAL 40/WP.3, paragraph 15).

4 The opportunities presented by either an MSW or a TSW depend almost exclusively on how they are implemented. In particular how existing *distributed* reporting and clearance processes are transformed into a *centralized* reporting and clearance process. Managing this process of change should take into account the following elements:

- .1 single window users and other stakeholders should agree on a commitment to a single window implementation which embodies the definition in section 1, part A of the FAL Convention. This means establishing a commitment to a *centralized* system for exchanging information amongst all public authorities, ports (including PCS) and other stakeholders. In such a system, information is exchanged only with the centralized information management system, not between the stakeholders themselves;
- .2 single window policy and procedures should deliver streamlined reporting and clearance processes, required to ensure that single windows facilitate maritime trade, and conform to the definition in section 1, part A of the FAL Convention. These policies and procedures should be technology neutral, but also enable technology to deliver further efficiencies. It should be recognized that policies and procedures which do not support streamlined reporting and clearance processes are likely to result in technology reinforcing inefficiencies; and
- .3 the technology used in a single window is important. Technology enables efficient management and exchange of information within already streamlined reporting and clearance processes. However, emphasis should not be on technology solutions alone. Technology evolves too quickly to be the foundation of an effective single window. Moreover, caution is required to ensure that any technology solution is future proofed. It should not introduce or encourage inefficiencies or duplication and so far as possible, the technology should not prevent international interoperability in the future.

5 ICS considers that the work on a prototype MSW and the revisions to the Guidelines for setting up a single window system in maritime transport (FAL.5/Circ.36) are separate but complementary:

- .1 FAL.5/Circ.36 should provide comprehensive guidance on how to implement the single window concept in general, taking into account the experience of some IMO Member States, the evolving needs of users and developments in technology; and
- .2 the prototype MSW project should provide a clear statement of the characteristics of a single window which also reduces administrative burdens. In particular, addressing the harmonization and standardization among individual ports (paragraph 15, FAL 40/WP.3).

6 In this context, the prototype MSW project would focus on providing a means of establishing whether a particular single window developed on the basis of the guidance in FAL.5/Circ.36 has the ability to also deliver demonstrable reductions in administrative burdens. This could be applied to both existing and future single windows and could be used by Member States when considering appropriate solutions in the context of bilateral or regional cooperation.

7 Taking into account the comments in paragraph 4, this could be achieved by the prototype MSW describing the user, policy and procedure, and technology characteristics of a single window which has been optimized for:

- .1 maximizing harmonization and standardization among individual ports; and
- .2 minimizing administrative burdens, including for ships and companies.

Necessarily, the emphasis of the project would shift away from technology solutions and towards a more holistic approach. This approach could further ensure that the electronic exchange of information using a single window enhances the efficiency of international maritime trade and reduces administrative burdens.

8 If a single window is selected as the means of conforming to the Standard 1.3*bis*, policies and procedures governing the implementation of the single window should effectively support its role as described by the FAL Convention and the UNECE Guidelines on Single Window. In this regard, the supporting policies and procedures should, in our view, establish a single window with at least the following characteristics:

- .1 conformity with the Standard 1.6 that public authorities shall limit the information they require from shipowners and other parties concerned to that required by the FAL Convention;
- .2 notwithstanding paragraph 8.1 above, where additional information may be required to eliminate duplication of reporting requirements by public authorities, ports (including PCS) and other stakeholders, this information is part of a single, standardized reporting procedure and format. In this regard, the single window should incorporate the recommended practice in Standard 1.3*quin*, in particular:
 - .1 the extent of the reporting requirements is defined in an agreed maximum harmonized list of data reporting requirements, which is valid in every port and meets the needs of all public authorities, ports (including PCS) and other stakeholders;
 - .2 the harmonized maximum list of data reporting requirements should be periodically reviewed to ensure that it represents the absolute minimum reporting requirement that can be achieved;
 - .3 the maximum list of data reporting requirements determines the content of the standardized single window reporting format;
 - .4 in conformance with the principle of reuse of submitted information, there should be no need for additional information to be provided by the ship or the Company to any other national or local reporting system; and
 - .5 measures should be in place for amending reporting procedures, data structures and formats. This should include notification of changes, including systems requirements, to the shipping industry well in advance of the changes becoming effective. This would be in accordance with Standard 1.3*ter*.

- .3 the single window should use a reporting procedure and format which embodies "report once" reporting by the ship and/or the Company. It should use a centralized information management system that:
 - .1 ships and companies report to (one-to-many), and receive communications regarding decisions and other information from public authorities, ports (including PCS) and other stakeholders; and
 - .2 all public authorities, ports (including PCS) and other stakeholders receive reports from, reuse and transmit communications regarding decisions and other information.
- .4 PSW and PCS should not be mandated as the only gateway to the single window. Likewise, it should not be possible for any stakeholder to implement a reporting procedure or format which runs in parallel to, or duplicates, any element of the single window;
- .5 the single window should:
 - .1 be technology neutral and capable of evolving with technological developments which may further enhance the efficiency of maritime trade;
 - .2 be provided with a robust means of ensuring ships and companies can determine the extent to which information, particularly sensitive information and information not required by the FAL Convention, is shared through the single window;
 - .3 incorporate information security measures, taking into account international standards, national legislation and guidance on information and cyber security;
 - .4 incorporate back-up arrangements to ensure that any failure or malfunction of the single window does not prevent ships from efficiently reporting or hinder clearance processes; and
 - .5 be interoperable with other single windows, internationally, in the future.

Proposal

9 When further developing the prototype MSW project, ICS suggests a more holistic approach, with less emphasis on technology solutions. In this regard, the prototype MSW could be as described in paragraphs 7 and 8 above.

10 This has the potential to be considered for use when:

- .1 encouraging further harmonization and standardization amongst ports (paragraph 15, FAL 40/WP.3); and
- .2 identifying a single window for implementation, as may be contained in FAL.5/Circ.36.

Action requested of the Committee

11 The Committee is invited to consider the comments provided in paragraphs 2 to 8, and the proposal in paragraph 9 and 10, and take action as appropriate.
