



## Governing Body

310th Session, Geneva, March 2011

GB.310/STM/3/3

Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues

**STM**

**FOR DECISION**

THIRD ITEM ON THE AGENDA

### Sectoral activities 2010–11

#### Revision of the guidelines on the medical fitness examinations of seafarers, and revision of the Addendum to the *International Medical Guide for Ships* concerning ships' medicine chests

#### Overview

##### Issues covered

The purpose of this paper is to seek Governing Body approval of the dates and composition of the joint ILO–IMO meeting on medical fitness examinations for seafarers and endorse the actions proposed by the Office concerning the proposed addendum, concerning the contents of ships' medicine chests, to the ILO–IMO–WHO *International Medical Guide for Ships*.

##### Policy implications

If adopted, the ILO's long-standing cooperation with the WHO and the IMO on maritime medical issues as per ILO Conventions and Recommendations would be further strengthened.

##### Legal implications

The existing ILO–WHO Guidelines for Conducting Pre-sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examinations for Seafarers will be revised and become an ILO–IMO document. This is due to changes in WHO internal procedures with regard to the adoption of such guidelines.

##### Financial implications

None.

##### Decision required

Paragraph 11.

##### References to other Governing Body documents and ILO instruments

GB.303/STM/4/2; GB.303/15, para. 51; GB.271/14, para. 26; GB.300/16, para. 52;

- Guidelines for Conducting Pre-sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examinations of Seafarers, ILO/WHO/D.2/1997;
- Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, Guideline B.1.2.1;
- Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188);
- Work in Fishing Recommendation, 2007 (No. 199), Paragraph 9.



1. At its 303rd Session, the Governing Body requested the Office to pursue the necessary arrangements with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) for the preparation of draft guidelines on the medical fitness examinations of seafarers, with the assistance of the International Maritime Health Association (IMHA), and decided to convene an ILO–IMO–WHO tripartite meeting of experts to be held with no additional budgetary allocation from the ILO.<sup>1</sup>
2. The IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee, at its 87th Session (May 2010), accepted the ILO proposals regarding the preparation of the abovementioned draft guidelines and also referred the issue of ships’ medical chests for consideration by the Joint ILO–IMO Working Group on Medical Fitness Examinations of Seafarers and Ships’ Medicine Chests.
3. Recognizing the complexity of the issues involving the collaboration of the three UN system specialized agencies, the Office and the IMO convened a preparatory meeting in Geneva from 4 to 7 October 2010, with the WHO invited to participate. The purpose of the preparatory meeting was to pave the way for the preparation of revised guidelines on the medical examination of seafarers leading to the issue of medical certificates, pursuant to the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, and the IMO’s International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers. The meeting was also held to consider the guidance relating to ships’ medicine chests, especially in regard to quantities of equipment and supplies, so as to supplement the information contained in the third edition of the ILO–IMO–WHO *International Medical Guide for Ships*, thereby facilitating compliance with the requirements of the relevant international Conventions.
4. The preparatory meeting was attended by representatives of IMO member State governments, and representatives of seafarers’ and shipowners’ organizations, as well as a number of other organizations. The WHO secretariat was present to provide clarifications when issues relating to the WHO were discussed.
5. The main outputs of the preparatory meeting are reflected in the final report of the Joint ILO–IMO Working Group on Medical Fitness Examinations of Seafarers and Ships’ Medicine Chests. The report, available in English, can be consulted on the ILO website.<sup>2</sup> Recommendations and actions were proposed concerning ships’ medicine chests, and a proposed draft list of changes was made to the draft revised Guidelines for Conducting Pre-sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examinations for Seafarers.
6. In the light of the above, and after consultations with the IMO secretariat and on the basis of the decision of the Governing Body at its 303th Session (GB.303/15, paragraph 51(b)), it is proposed that the joint ILO–IMO meeting on Medical Fitness Examinations of Seafarers should be held from 26 to 30 September 2011 to finalize the revision of the guidelines on the medical fitness examinations of seafarers. It will be composed of eight Government representatives nominated by the IMO, four shipowners’ representatives and four seafarers’ representatives nominated by the ILO in consultation with the Employers’ and Workers’ groups of the Governing Body. The WHO would be invited to participate in order to provide specific medical expertise.
7. A point of concern was raised on the participation of the WHO in the preparation of the guidelines. The current internal procedures of the WHO concerning guidelines prevents the WHO from being able to formally endorse the document. The WHO is willing to provide

<sup>1</sup> GB.303/15, para. 51.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/>.

technical support and comments if requested. Furthermore, WHO has agreed that it would issue a notification to its member States to inform them that the proposed ILO–IMO guidelines, once adopted, would supersede and replace the existing ILO–WHO Guidelines for Conducting Pre-sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examinations for Seafarers, and the WHO would provide a copy of this notification to IMO and ILO for appropriate action.

8. Furthermore, the Office draws the attention of the Committee to the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), which includes provisions concerning the medical examination and certification of fishers. The corresponding Work in Fishing Recommendation, 2007 (No. 199) provides more detailed guidance and refers to the ILO–WHO Guidelines for Conducting Pre-sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examinations for Seafarers as being relevant for fishers. After consultation with the social partners, it transpires that the guidelines for the larger fishing vessels would be identical or similar to those for seafarers. Other sectors of the fishing industry would benefit from having more specific advice, especially to enable fishers to enjoy the benefit of appropriate medical examinations while taking advantage of the flexibility of Convention No. 188. Different approaches could be considered, including the possibility of the adoption of an annex to the main guidelines for seafarers which would address the special concerns of the fishing industry. This annex could be developed, with the necessary consultations, in time to be considered by the joint ILO–IMO meeting.
9. Concerning the ships’ medicine chests, as discussed in the preparatory meeting, the Quantification Addendum to the *International Medical Guide for Ships*, a joint WHO/IMO/ILO publication, was published by WHO in 2010 without prior consultation with the ILO and IMO. Hence, the participants requested the Office to continue discussions with the WHO to seek the revision of the IMGS (third edition), including the list and quantities of medicines to be carried in ships’ medicine chests. In the meantime, an interim measure should be taken in order to revise the Addendum published by the WHO. Work on the contents of the medicine chest based on the discussions in the preparatory meeting should be continued by the Joint ILO–IMO Working Group through the abovementioned consultation process under ILO procedures to develop and propose a final quantification of the list of medications based on those currently listed in the IMGS (third edition).
10. It is suggested that a tripartite meeting be convened, in cooperation with the IMO and the WHO, in 2011, to review this preparatory work of the Joint ILO–IMO Working Group. In line with the Governing Body decision GB.300/16, paragraph 52, the meeting should also propose an appropriate mechanism for periodic review of the guidelines. The tripartite meeting would be composed by three Government representatives nominated by the WHO and the IMO, as well as three seafarer representatives and three shipowner representatives, nominated by the Workers’ and Employers’ groups of the Governing Body, and at no cost to the Office. The IMHA would also be invited to participate in the meeting as an observer. The revised Addendum would be submitted to the Governing Body.
11. ***The Committee may wish to recommend that the Governing Body:***
  - (a) ***take note of the actions already taken by the Office, particularly the outcomes of the Joint ILO–IMO Working Group preparatory meeting that took place from 4 to 7 October 2010;***
  - (b) ***approve, on the basis of its decision at its 303rd session, the holding of the joint ILO–IMO meeting on Medical Fitness Examinations of Seafarers from 26 to 30 September 2011, with a composition of eight Government representatives nominated by the IMO and four shipowners’ and four seafarers’ representatives nominated by the ILO, and inviting WHO to***

*participate, with a view to finalizing the revision of the existing Guidelines for Conducting Pre-sea and Periodic Medical Fitness Examinations of Seafarers, and request the Office to report the final outcome to the Governing Body prior to publication of the revised guidelines;*

- (c) request the Office to pursue discussions with IMO and WHO to address the seafarers' and fishers' specific needs;*
- (d) approve the holding of a small tripartite meeting, in cooperation with IMO and WHO, to revise the Quantification Addendum to the International Medical Guide for Ships published by WHO, as set out in paragraph 10 above.*

Geneva, 24 January 2011

*Point for decision:* Paragraph 11