



MEDIA RELEASE

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17th Co-operation Forum Advances Cooperation on Safety and Environmental Protection in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore

Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore convened the 17th Co-operation Forum in Singapore today, bringing together User States, industry and other stakeholders to strengthen cooperation on navigational safety and environmental protection in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS). The Co-operation Forum is part of the Co-operative Mechanism established by the three Littoral States in 2007 to provide a framework for such cooperation.

2. Opened by Mr Jeffrey Siow, Minister for Transport and Second Minister for Finance, and chaired by Mr Ang Wee Keong, Chief Executive of the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, the Co-operation Forum will discuss ways to strengthen navigational safety and environmental protection in the SOMS, drawing on proposals from User States and industry stakeholders. Participants will also explore how new technologies and alternative fuels can be safely introduced in the SOMS, and review ongoing technical projects to enhance navigational safety.

3. More than 300 delegates from over 125 countries and organisations are expected to attend the two-day event from 25 to 26 August 2026.

4. In his opening remarks, Mr Siow said that recent events had reminded the world that open sea lanes cannot be taken for granted, and that safe and open waterways are global commons that must be upheld through international law and mutual collaboration. Through the Cooperative Mechanism, the Littoral States and their partners have turned shared interests into collective action, underpinned by an enduring trust between neighbours and partners.

5. In a video message, Mr Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), described the Co-operative Mechanism as a proven model for States bordering vital waterways to build trust among themselves and with User States, while facilitating cooperation among stakeholders with a shared interest in their safe and sustainable use. He reaffirmed IMO's support for the Co-operative Mechanism and encouraged User States and industry stakeholders to continue supporting it. Mr Arsenio's Keynote Address can be found in Annex A.

6. Dr Hassan Wirajuda, former Indonesian Foreign Minister (2001–2009) and current Rector of Universitas Prasetiya Mulya, delivered the keynote address. Dr Hassan had played a key role in the discussions that led to the establishment of the

Co-operative Mechanism in 2007. He stressed the importance of sustaining collaboration among the three Littoral States and with the international maritime community to keep the SOMS safe and resilient amid evolving maritime and geopolitical challenges. Drawing on ASEAN's experience, he also highlighted the importance of respect for international law and a culture of dialogue in managing differences and maintaining regional peace and stability.

7. The 17th Co-operation Forum also heard statements from User States, international organisations and industry stakeholders expressing their continued support for the Co-operative Mechanism and commitment to working together with the Littoral States¹. They underscored the importance of keeping the SOMS safe and open, and of respecting navigational rights and freedoms, including the right of transit passage. Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore will also issue a joint press release reaffirming their commitment to keeping the SOMS open and safe for international shipping, and to continued cooperation on navigational safety and environmental protection.

8. Held annually on a rotational basis by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, the Co-operation Forum is one of three pillars of the Co-operative Mechanism on Safety of Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore. The other two pillars are the Project Co-ordination Committee and the Aids to Navigation Fund. Further details can be found in Annex B.

9. Since 2007, 15 Straits Projects have been initiated through the Project Co-ordination Committee. The international maritime community has also contributed around US\$26 million cumulatively to the Aids to Navigation Fund to support the provision and maintenance of critical aids to navigation in the SOMS.

10. Indonesia and Malaysia were represented by Bapak Hernadi Tri Cahyanto, Director of Navigation, Directorate General of Sea Transportation, Ministry of Transportation of Indonesia, and Datuk Haji Dickson bin Dollah, Director General of Marine, Malaysia Marine Department, respectively.

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¹ A total of 26 General Statements were delivered during the Opening Session of the 17th Co-operation Forum, comprising delegates from: Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, India, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Spain Timor-Leste, Türkiye, European Commission, ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre, Asian Shipowners' Association, BIMCO, INTERTANKO, Witherby Publishing Group, and World Shipping Council.

Annex A

2026 Co-operative Mechanism and TTEG Meetings, MPA

Keynote Address by IMO Secretary-General

Arsenio Dominguez, 25 August 2026

This year's 17th Co-operation Forum and Co-operative Mechanism meetings take place as global attention is focused on developments in and around the Strait of Hormuz and other critical maritime chokepoints.

The conflict in the Middle East and developments in and around the Strait of Hormuz have placed seafarers in harm's way, threatened the safety and security of international shipping, and severely disrupted global trade.

These developments are a stark reminder that the principles underpinning international shipping must never be taken for granted.

Navigational rights and freedoms, including the Right of Transit Passage, must be respected and upheld by all States. With no exception.

Equally, innocent seafarers must not be caught in the crosshairs of geopolitical tensions. They deserve to work in a safe and secure environment, free from risks beyond their control.

Last month, the IMO Council adopted a resolution on Protection of vital shipping lanes, reaffirming a fundamental principle which underpins international shipping and global trade: Straits used for international navigation must always remain open, safe and secure.

I thank Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and the many Member States represented here today for your leadership and support in this regard.

The Straits of Malacca and Singapore are among the world's most important maritime arteries, supporting international trade, global supply chains and economic prosperity far beyond the region.

Ensuring the safe, secure and efficient movement of ships through these waters is not only a regional responsibility but also a matter of global significance.

The Cooperative Mechanism was established in 2007 to foster cooperation and communication between the Littoral States, User States and stakeholders of the Straits of Malacca and Singapore under IMO's "Protection of Vital Shipping Lanes" initiative.

For close to twenty years, it has proven to be a remarkable example of practical and constructive international cooperation and a durable and effective platform, with the

three Littoral States, together with User States, industry partners and other stakeholders, including IMO, working collaboratively to enhance navigational safety and strengthen marine environmental protection in the Straits.

The success of the Cooperative Mechanism lies in its balanced and inclusive approach and the trust it has fostered. It promotes dialogue, builds trust and facilitates cooperation among all those with an interest in the safe and sustainable use of these vital waterways.

I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of IMO's ongoing support to the Co-operative Mechanism and to contributing to its continued success through our technical support, capacity building programmes and the IMO–Malacca and Singapore Straits Trust Fund.

I also encourage User States, industry partners and all relevant stakeholders to continue supporting the Co-operative Mechanism, including by making voluntary contributions to the Aids to Navigation Fund.

By investing in the Co-operative Mechanism, we also invest in the continued safety, security and sustainability of one of the world's most important waterways.

Grounded in international law, and principles of mutual respect and shared responsibility, the Cooperative Mechanism has shown us how States bordering vital waterways can engage with Users. It presents us with a proven model of cooperation that I believe the wider maritime community can learn from and replicate.

I wish you productive deliberations and every success in your meetings.

Thank you.

Annex B

Background on the Co-operative Mechanism

The Co-operative Mechanism on Safety of Navigation and Environmental Protection in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (Co-operative Mechanism) was launched at the 2007 International Maritime Organization (IMO) - Singapore Meeting following a series of IMO-sponsored meetings on the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS) under the IMO's "Protection of Vital Shipping Lanes" initiative. This was a historic and significant event for the international maritime community as it realised, for the first time, the spirit and intent of Article 43 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).^[3]

- 2 The Co-operative Mechanism is the key platform for the three Littoral States of the SOMS (Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore), User States, the industry, and other stakeholders to engage in dialogue on issues relating to navigational safety and marine environment protection in the SOMS. Established within the framework of the Tripartite Technical Experts Group (TTEG), the Co-operative Mechanism comprises three inter-connected and complementary components:
 - c) The **Co-operation Forum** serves as a platform for dialogue between the Littoral States and international maritime community on issues of common interest in the SOMS;
 - c) The **Project Co-ordination Committee (PCC)** co-ordinates and oversees the implementation of Straits Projects to promote safety of navigation and environmental protection in the SOMS;^[4] and
 - c) The **Aids to Navigation Fund (ANF)** receives voluntary financial contributions from the international maritime community for the provision and maintenance of critical aids to navigation in the SOMS.

About the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA)

MPA was established in 1996 with the mission to develop Singapore as a global hub port and international maritime centre, and to advance and safeguard Singapore's strategic maritime interests. MPA takes on multiple roles as Singapore's maritime and port regulator and planner, international maritime centre champion, national maritime representative, and champion of maritime digitalisation and decarbonisation efforts. MPA partners industry, research community and other agencies to enhance safety, security and environmental protection, facilitate maritime and port operations and growth, expand multi-domain capabilities, and support the cluster of maritime services and manpower development.

For more information, please visit www.mpa.gov.sg/.

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