Action Required: IR Commission members are invited to note the relevant outcomes of FAL50.

The International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Facilitation Committee (FAL) held its 50th session (FAL 50) in London from 23-27 March 2026. The meeting focused on maritime digitalisation, cybersecurity, trade facilitation, public health measures, autonomous ships, stowaway management and maritime security.

Key Outcomes

1. IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalisation

- Approved a new IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalisation to make digitalisation a core IMO policy.
- The strategy promotes interoperability, standardisation, data sharing and governance across the maritime sector.
- Aims to improve efficiency, safety, environmental performance and cyber resilience.
- Will be further reviewed by other IMO committees before adoption by the IMO Assembly in 2027.

2. Cybersecurity Requirements for Maritime Single Windows (MSWs)

- Approved amendments to the FAL Convention requiring governments to implement cybersecurity measures for MSWs.
- These digital platforms are critical for information exchange between ships and authorities.
- Expected to enter into force on 1 January 2029.

3. Maritime Single Window (MSW) Implementation

- Reviewed global implementation of MSWs, mandatory since January 2024.
- Established a monitoring programme through 2029, including surveys in 2026 and 2028 to assess effectiveness and user impact.
- Approximately 42 Member States have reported implementation progress.

4. New IMO Compendium on Facilitation and Electronic Business

- Approved an updated IMO Compendium to improve standardisation of maritime data exchange.
- Added new datasets covering:
    - Meteorological and oceanographic observations
    - Mail delivery documentation
    - Ship sanitation certificates
    - Seafarer information and STCW certificates

5. Continued Development of the IMO Compendium

- Ongoing work led by the Expert Group on Data Harmonization.
- Future additions will include medical fitness certificate data and further business process models.

6. Advance Passenger and Crew Information (API) and Booking and Reservation Information (BRI)

- Approved amendments requiring ships to submit API and BRI data when arriving at and departing from ports.
- Intended to improve border controls and operational efficiency.
- Expected to enter into force on 1 January 2029.

7. Crew Vaccination and Medical Care

- Adopted amendments recommending that governments:
  - Consider crew vaccinations within national health programmes.
  - Ensure seafarers have access to medical care during international public health emergencies.
- Effective from 1 January 2028.

8. Revised Stowaway Guidelines

- Adopted updated guidelines aimed at:
  - Preventing stowaways from accessing ships.
  - Clarifying responsibilities for resolving stowaway incidents.
- Includes revised definitions, preventive measures and state responsibilities.

9. Stowaway Statistics

- IMO recorded:
  - 26 stowaway cases.
  - 37 stowaways during 2025.
- This represents the lowest number of reported cases in the last decade.
- Member States were encouraged to continue reporting incidents through the GISIS database.

10. Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS)

- Approved a revised roadmap for addressing autonomous ship issues under the FAL Convention.

- The Committee will assess both future non-mandatory and mandatory MASS Codes and determine whether regulatory amendments are required.

11. Recovery of Deceased Persons

- Approved joint MSC-FAL guidelines on managing deceased persons recovered from migrant boats.
- Covers legal, cultural, public health and coordination considerations for handling and transferring bodies.

12. Drug Smuggling Prevention

- Continued development of updated guidelines to combat drug smuggling in international maritime traffic.
- Proposed revisions aim to address modern threats while preventing the unjust criminalisation of seafarers, port personnel and companies.

13. New Work Programme for 2026-2027 The Committee agreed three new outputs:

1. Development of guidelines on port nautical information.
2. Amendments to align the FAL Convention with the 2024 International Health Regulations amendments.