International Maritime Organization (IMO)

- The United Nations established IMO after an agreement during the Geneva Conference of 1948.
- Ten years later, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) had its first meeting in 1959.
- With its headquarters in London, United Kingdom, the IMO is responsible for the safety and security of shipping.
- IMO also looks after the prevention of marine pollution by ships.
- The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is administered by an assembly of members.
- A separate council of members elected from the assembly looks after the funds and other financial matters.
- Currently, IMO comprises of 174 member states and three associate members.

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Organisational Structure of IMO

The IMO’s structure comprises the Assembly, the Council, the Maritime Safety Committee, the Marine Environment Protection Committee, the Legal Committee, the Technical Cooperation Committee, and the Secretariat, headed by a Secretary-General.

Objectives and Functions of IMO

- Mission statement.
  “The mission of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), as a United Nations specialized agency, is to promote safe, secure, environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping through cooperation. This will be accomplished by adopting the highest practicable standards of maritime safety and security, the efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of pollution from ships, as well as through consideration of the related legal matters and effective implementation of IMO instruments, with a view to their universal and uniform application.”

The objectives and functions of the IMO can be listed as follows:

- Develop and maintain a thorough regulatory framework for shipping.
- Looking after the safety and security of ships.
- Administering environmental concerns related to shipping.
- Handling legal matters for maritime cases.
- Provision of technical co-operation
- To improve the overall efficiency of shipping.

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FAL Convention
The Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) was adopted in 1965.

**Objective of the FAL Convention:**

- Achieving the most efficient shipping/nautical transport system along with the provision of smooth transit in ports for Ships, Cargo as well as Passengers.
- The Facilitation Convention encourages the use of a “single window” for data, to enable all the information required by public authorities in connection with the arrival, stay and departure of ships, persons and cargo, to be submitted via a single portal, without duplication.
- Under the requirement for electronic data exchange, all national authorities should now have provision for the electronic exchange of this information.

**India and IMO**

- India has been one of the earliest members of the IMO, having ratified its Convention and joined it as a member-state in the year 1959.
- India has had the privilege of being elected to and serving the Council of the IMO, ever since it started functioning till date, except for two years for the period 1983-1984.
- India is a party to 34 IMO Conventions and protocols and is currently in the advanced stage of ratifying Ballast Water Convention and Bunker Convention.
- India continues to provide services of its expert manpower to the IMO, as and when required. The IMO’s panel of auditors for the Voluntary IMO Member State Audit Scheme (VIMSAS) and Goal-Based Standards (GBS) has a number of auditors from India.
- With re-election in IMO, India will continue to engage with the international maritime community to further her maritime interests and promote the welfare of her citizens.
- India launched a Port Community System — ‘PCS1x’— at ports in 2018.
  - Port Community System (PCS1x) is a cloud-based new generation technology, with a user-friendly interface.
  - This system will enable maritime trade to have improved communication with customs.

**UPSC Questions related to IMO**

**What are the most important IMO conventions?**

- Some of the important conventions of IMO are:
  - International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)
  - International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)
  - International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW)
  - International Convention for the Unification of Certain Rules of Law relating to Bills of Lading a.k.a Hague-Visby Rules
  - Hamburg Rules

- The majority of conventions adopted by IMO usually fall into three main categories - maritime safety, prevention of marine pollution, and liability and compensation, especially in relation to damage caused by pollution.

**What is the purpose of the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code?**
The International Maritime Dangerous Goods or IMDG Code was adopted in 1965 as per the SOLAS (Safety for Life at Sea) Convention of 1960 under the IMO.

The IMDG Code was formed with an objective to enhance the safe carriage of dangerous goods while facilitating the free unrestricted movement of such goods and prevent pollution to the environment.