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ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Use of the destination-field in AIS messages

Submitted by Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden

SUMMARY

Executive summary: The AIS message includes a data field called “destination” where up to 20 characters can be used to specify the ship’s destination. The data field may now be used “at masters discretion” according to the AIS Performance standard (MSC 69/22/Add.1). This document proposes the mandatory use of UN/LOCODE in a standardized way in the AIS destination field, which will eliminate confusion and allow an automatic processing of the information.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 14

Related documents: Resolution MSC.74(69), Annex 2

Introduction

1 Evidence shows that mariners are using different names for the same location when entering destination data in their AIS units. This situation leads to confusion and inefficiency in data interchange. Therefore, there is a need to harmonize data input when entering port information, by adopting an available universal protocol.

2 The carriage of AIS on SOLAS vessels permits the mariner to enter vessel destination into the AIS at the start of each voyage, and to keep this information updated.

3 The AIS field for destination allows for “free text” of up to 20 characters. This results in numerous variations in the spelling of the same port, making it difficult for other vessels and shore authorities to identify the port uniquely. Also the use of the data in information systems is difficult or impossible without a considerable manual effort.

4 Consideration should be given to using the existing destination field for entering both the port of departure and the next port of call (space for 20 characters of 6 bit ASCII is available), using the UN/LOCODE.

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Notes

AIS do not have fields to enter information on all the last and future ports required by the ISPS Code.

The UN/LOCODE

5 The UN Economic Commission for Europe's Recommendation 16, entitled, *UN/LOCODE – CODES FOR PORTS AND OTHER LOCATIONS* states, *inter alia*:

The identification of a particular location is frequently required in information interchange in international trade and transport, to direct the movement of goods e.g. in addresses, in shipping marks and in data elements identifying ports of call, ports or places of loading and unloading, ports or places of transshipment and destination etc.

The names of such locations are often spelt in different ways and sometimes the same location is give different names in different languages (e.g. LIVORNO – LIBOURNE – LEGHORN-LONDON-LONDRES-LONDRA-WARSAW-VARSOVIE-WARSZAWA), which creates confusion and difficulties in data interchange. The identification in a unique unambiguous way of any place involved in international trade is therefore an essential element for facilitation of trade procedures and documentation. This can be achieved using agreed, unique coded designations for such locations; this would have the added advantage of permitting the exchange of data in a safer and more economic way.

6 Therefore, a five character code system has been created and agreed upon internationally. The first two characters represent the country and the last three the location. Whilst it is recognized that the Code is not exhaustive, it is currently the best available tool and commonly used within shipping.

7 Further information can be found at:
www.unece.org/cefact/locode/service/main.htm

8 A sample of the data set is attached.

(NL) NETHERLANDS

Ch	LOCODE	Name	NameWoDiacritics	SubDiv	Function	Status	Date
	NL ROD	Roden	Roden		--3----	AF	9602
	NL ROR	Rodenrijs	Rodenrijs		--3----	AF	9602
	NL RAV	Roelofarendsveen	Roelofarendsveen		--3----	AF	9602
	NL OMD	Roermond	Roermond		--3----	AF	9602
	NL ROG	Roggel	Roggel		--3----	AF	9602
	NL ROO	Roosendaal	Roosendaal		-23-5---	AF	9602
	NL RMA	Rosmalen	Rosmalen		--3----	AF	9602
	NL RTM	Rotterdam	Rotterdam		12345--	AF	9602
	NL ROZ	Rozenburg	Rozenburg		1-----	AF	9602
	NL RZD	Rozendaal	Rozendaal		--3----	AF	9602
	NL RCP	Rucphen	Rucphen		--3----	AF	9602

Suggested use of the UN/LOCODE

9 With the available space of 20 characters and the use of six characters to define each location (two for country, one space, and three for location name), it is possible to enter reference to the port of departure and to the next port of call.

10 The suggested protocol would be to indicate the port of departure at the first six positions of the data field followed a separator and then the code for the next port of call.

11 In order to identify that it is a LOCODE, to separate the locations and to indicate the 'from' and 'to' ports, it is suggested that a '>' symbol be used as a separator.

12 An example is below:

A vessel is leaving Dubai bound for Rotterdam. Use of the UN/LOCODE would represent this voyage as below:

AE DXB>NL RTM

If the next port of call is unknown shall "?? ???" be entered instead of the UN/LOCODE in the corresponding place in the data field. See example below:

AE DXB>?? ???

If the next port of call doesn't have a designated UN LOCODE shall the commonly accepted English name of the destination port be given, preceded by "===" (3 "equals signs"). If no such name is known shall the locally used name be entered. In this case is not enough space available to indicate the port of departure. See example below:

===Orrviken

If the port of departure and doesn't have a designated UN/LOCODE shall "XX XXX" be entered instead of the UN/LOCODE in the corresponding place in the data field. See example below.

XX XXX>US PBI

Summary

13 The document suggests that

- .1 The use of the destination field shall be made mandatory for all ships carrying AIS.
- .2 The UN/LOCODE should be used for entering country and port information, in the manner outlined in the examples above in order to maintain consistency and avoid confusion in the interpretation of information entered by mariners.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

14 The Sub-Committee is invited to consider the document and decide as appropriate.