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PRESS RELEASE

EMSA takes over the LRIT-IDE, ensuring ship position information flows between data centres worldwide as part of the LRIT system

(Lisbon, 18 October 2011) 4 times per day, 7 days per week, merchant ships around the world broadcast information about their position to satellites via a system called *Long Range Identification and Tracking*, or LRIT. Information from ships is relayed by satellites to Data Centres around the world, and the LRIT system enables maritime authorities to keep a constant eye on the position of ships that form a part of their country's fleet. On 18 October 2011, EMSA becomes the operator of the LRIT-International Data Exchange, or 'LRIT-IDE', the central node which acts like a 'switchboard' to manage the flow of LRIT information between various LRIT Data Centres around the world.

"We are extremely pleased that the transfer of the responsibility for the IDE from the US Coast Guard to EMSA has been achieved successfully" said Willem de Ruyter, Executive Director of the Agency "The cooperation with the International Maritime Organization and the US Coast Guard, the former operator and developer of this system, has been very good: a positive example of international collaboration aimed at enhancing maritime safety worldwide".

What is LRIT?

LRIT tracks the position of any merchant ship (> 300 gross tonnage), passenger ship or mobile offshore drilling on a global scale every 6 hours. The location of each ship is transmitted, via satellites, to data centres established by their Flag States (SOLAS Contracting Governments) which store and make available the information to all participating States upon request. The LRIT system answered a need to gain a worldwide picture of merchant shipping: it was established in 2009 under the supervision of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) for the purposes of maritime safety, security, and marine environment.

What role does the LRIT-IDE play?

The LRIT-IDE acts like the 'switchboard' of a telephone network: it is the central node that relays LRIT position reports between all Data Centres, and is at the centre of a secure network which spans five continents. It handles issues such as availability (is the system available? are all the data feeds running smoothly?) and access rights (who can access the information?). This system has been developed, hosted and operated on a temporary basis since 2009 by the United States Coast Guard agency. EMSA was appointed as the IDE Operator by the IMO Maritime Safety Committee during its 87th session, and the transfer process has now been successfully completed.

Who uses the LRIT system?

The LRIT information offers a global picture of merchant vessels, and this is valuable for a number of purposes. Users can have four different roles: Flag States, Coastal States, Port States, and Search and Rescue services. Search and Rescue centres make use of the system to support their daily salvage operations. National Administrations, Coast Guards and Port Authorities use the LRIT service to handle

issues such as maritime traffic management and the scheduling of their day-to-day interaction with merchant ships.

What is the LRIT used for, and what are its benefits?

Any activity that requires an accurate overview of ship movements. For example, the LRIT information has recently supported anti-piracy activities in the Indian Ocean, refugee evacuation in Libya during the outbreak of the war, and the monitoring of the maritime traffic off the Japanese coast during the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

What is EMSA's experience with LRIT?

In addition to its new role as operator of the LRIT-IDE, EMSA is also the operator of the European Union LRIT Cooperative Data Centre, the world's largest LRIT Data Centre, which collects position reports from the fleet of the EU Member States, as well as those from several overseas territories, Norway and Iceland and some third countries (approximately 9000 vessels).

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