

2010 CONFERENCE OF PARTIES TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON STANDARDS OF TRAINING, CERTIFICATION AND WATCHKEEPING FOR SEAFARERS, 1978

A Diplomatic Conference of Parties to the International 1978 Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW 78) was convened from 21 to 25 June 2010 in Manila, the Philippines, under the aegis of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Its purpose was to adopt amendments to the STCW Convention and Code.

The Conference was attended by representatives of 85 States Parties to the Convention, one State non-Party, three associated IMO Member States, International Labour Organization (ILO), two intergovernmental and 18 non-governmental organizations.

The Conference adopted the amendments to the STCW Convention and Code; its Final Act was signed by representatives of 82 States Parties to the Convention, including the representatives of the Russian Federation. Following the decision taken by the Conference, the agreed modifications were entitled 'the Manila amendments'.

Among the most important amendments adopted by the Diplomatic Conference, the following are worth to note:

- introduction of modified requirements for working hours and hours of rest for seafarers that are harmonized with the requirements of the ILO's 2006 Maritime Labour Convention;
- establishment of competence standards for electro-technical specialists;
- introduction of changes into requirements related to the seafarers' health.

A number of other amendments have been introduced reflecting the overall technical progress in the sea shipping, as well as the development of its international regulatory basis. In particular, documents adopted by the Conference took due account of such current challenges as suppression of piracy and unlawful acts against merchant shipping, acquisition of skills when working with electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS), accessibility and transparency of seafarers' certificates. With regard to the latter, decision was taken that the access to these data for all Parties to the Convention shall be provided as from 1 January 2017 by electronic means of communication. It is expected that, upon adoption by IMO of the mandatory Polar Code, the STCW Convention and Code would be supplemented by specific requirements concerning crew training of ships intended for navigating in ice conditions.

In general, the decisions taken by the Conference are aimed at enhancing the quality of training for seafarers, improvement of sea profession image, widening of possibilities to obtain a proper maritime education by young people of all interested States.

The entry into force of the amendments subject to the tacit acceptance procedure is expected on 1 January 2012.