

Briefing by the IMO Secretary General

10 April 2026

The IMO Secretary-General (SG) convened a briefing on 10 April 2026 for all Member State delegations and observer organisations to provide an update on the Strait of Hormuz situation and the actions being taken by the IMO to safeguard the approximately 20,000 seafarers and vessels currently affected. The SG addressed the following key points:

Current situation

The SG confirmed that the IMO does not yet have official information on any ceasefire or the reopening of the Strait. Regarding media reports of alternative routes for the Strait of Hormuz, the SG indicated that no official confirmation of such alternatives had been received and stressed the importance of continuing to rely on existing mechanisms consistent with IMO regulations and customary international law on freedom of navigation, including the established IMO traffic separation scheme.

Safe evacuation corridor

The IMO has been developing a proposal for a safe corridor to evacuate the vessels and seafarers affected. The proposal includes a prioritisation framework to identify which vessels should be evacuated first, with particular consideration given to situations involving shortages of supplies or cargo-related concerns. The SG noted that the IMO had coordinated with industry stakeholders to design an orderly approach aligned with the IMO traffic separation scheme and had consulted with Iran and Oman for comments. Discussions with regional countries remain ongoing and feedback continues to be gathered.

The key principles underpinning the safe corridor framework are as follows:

- The arrangement will be voluntary and will not restrict freedom of navigation, nor affect the provisions of UNCLOS or customary international law of the sea.
- The framework will apply to SOLAS vessels operating within the Persian Gulf, west of a defined latitude, and transiting eastbound through the Strait of Hormuz consistent with the right of innocent passage.
- A list of relevant vessels will be compiled by the IMO in consultation with concerned parties, flag States, and industry representatives.
- All parties to the conflict will commit to refraining from attacks against civilian vessels, port infrastructure, and the Gulf area for the duration of the framework.
- No military vessels or naval escorts will be deployed under this arrangement.
- Iran and Oman will serve as the designated coastal States, consistent with existing IMO-adopted traffic separation schemes.
- The identification of vessels requiring evacuation will be based on objective needs and circumstances, ensuring equal treatment of all vessels. Cargo considerations,

including crude oil cargo, will not factor into prioritisation; the primary focus will be the welfare of seafarers, with priority given to vessels in distress.

Timeline

The SG indicated that, should confirmation be obtained that the traffic separation scheme is safe for navigation (e.g. free of sea mines), and agreement secured from Iran and Oman to resume operations alongside assurances from all conflict parties that no attacks will occur, the evacuation plan could be initiated without delay. However, the process will require careful organisation and coordination, and will not be implemented overnight.

Tolls and payments

The SG confirmed that the IMO does not currently have information on reports concerning tolls or payments being imposed on vessels, but is raising the matter with the relevant countries. The SG stressed that, in accordance with UNCLOS, no toll mechanisms should be introduced, warning that such precedents could have broader negative implications for global navigation. The SG reiterated that all parties must respect the rights of innocent passage and freedom of navigation.

Use of alternative waterways

The SG noted that if an opportunity arose to use an alternative waterway on a temporary basis to evacuate vessels in urgent need, this could be considered in consultation with the relevant parties, strictly in relation to seafarer safety. The SG expressed hope that such a scenario would not materialise and that established traffic separation schemes would continue to be used, while emphasising the need to remain realistic and prepared.