

SG Briefing

26th June 2026

The IMO Secretary-General (SG) convened a briefing on 26 June 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 evacuate the vessels that remain stranded in the area. The SG addressed the following key points:

- Iran and the United States have agreed on an MOU, two pages of which focus on the Strait. Point 5 of the memorandum outlines the resumption of traffic in the area. It also refers to Iran's demining of the IMO traffic separation scheme. The IMO has received information indicating it is not yet safe to transit, though this is expected to change.
- In the meantime, the IMO has been working on an evacuation corridor framework, with seafarer wellbeing as the stated priority. This has been developed in close cooperation with Oman and in ongoing dialogue with Iran, the US, and other regional countries.
- Two routes have been announced, a northern route and a southern route, with details available on the IMO website. The northern route is coordinated with Iran; the southern route with Oman. These are temporary solutions and do not follow the traffic separation scheme, which remains unsafe due to mines.
- The IMO does not decide which route a vessel should take; it provides the information and leaves the decision to the vessel. The two coastal states, Iran and Oman, retain authority over their respective routes.
- The evacuation corridor was launched on Tuesday. Between 23 June and the morning of 26 June, approximately 115 vessels and 2,500 seafarers have transited.
- However, operations have been paused following two concerning developments: first, a statement by Iran's IRGC warning that vessels not transiting the authorised route would be penalised; and second, a Singapore-flagged vessel was struck while transiting the southern route. Although that vessel was not formally part of the evacuation framework, the IMO has decided to pause operations to reassess the safety guarantees and ensure that transiting vessels will not be targeted.
- The SG noted that vessels continue to transit independently (4 via the northern route and 11 via the southern route today, for instance). The IMO's aim is to maintain a level of coordination to make those transits as safe as possible, even if the formal framework is not immediately re-established.

Questions:

- Information-sharing: the SG requested that the session not be recorded and that its contents not be posted on the IMO website. He later clarified that the information could be shared with NGO observer members, but should not be communicated to the media.
- Strait of Malacca comparison: A delegation raised media reports of a possible arrangement modelled on the Strait of Malacca. The delegation cautioned against a like-for-like comparison, noting that the Malacca arrangement was developed in

response to piracy, whereas the current threat involves a state actor. However, SG acknowledged the need for creative thinking and indicated the IMO is exploring mechanisms that respect international law, provide broader engagement beyond the coastal states, and help rebuild trust in transit through the Strait. The SG stated he cannot accept the status quo and is committed to bringing proposals to the table.