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**IMO MEETING REPORT**

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| DATE: 27th May 2025 | COMMITTEE: MSC |
| ATTENDEES: Andy Williams | SUB-GROUP: NCSR |

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| This was the 12th session of the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) held from the 13th to 22nd May 2025. I attended remotely on 22nd May.  ITEMS OF INTEREST TO THE LEISURE/SUPERYACHT INDUSTRY  **Routeing measures and ship reporting systems –** The Sub-Committee agreed to the establishment of an area to be avoided of the coast of the Indian Ocean island of Réunion, in the Mascarene Basin. The primary goal was to mitigate the risk of grounding and the resulting pollution along Réunion’s coastline, particularly in areas most vulnerable to Southern Ocean weather and powerful cyclonic swells, by directing maritime traffic further offshore. Full details of the area to be avoided, including a chart, can be found at annex 1 of the report of the Experts group in attached document NCSR 12/WP.4.  The Sub-Committee agreed a draft MSC resolution on amendments to an existing mandatory ship reporting system in the Adriatic Sea (ADRIREP). The purpose of the amendments are:   * To reduce administrative burdens on ships by automating reporting. * To include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Greece to improve overall safety. * To expand the application of ships required to report:   + Oil tankers of 150 gross tonnage and above.   + Ships of 10,000 gross tonnage and above.   + Ships carrying dangerous or polluting goods. * Utilise AIS and maritime national single window systems to reduce reliance on VHF communication. * To reduce the risk of pollution in the semi-enclosed Adriatic Sea.   The amendments are expected to enter into force 12 months after adoption at MSC 111 in May 2026 which means May 2027. Full details of the reporting system and the amendments can be found at annex 2 of the report of the Experts group in attached document NCSR 12/WP.4.  The Sub-Committee agreed draft amendments to Resolution MSC.314(88) as a new annex for In the Sound Between Denmark and Sweden (SOUNDREP) and draft amendments to MSC.332 (90) in the existing annex for In the Storebælt (Great Belt) Traffic Area (BELREP) ship reporting systems.  Described by the proposers of the amendments as minor in nature, the amendment aims to improve coastal States' access to essential information, including maritime insurance details, for more efficient monitoring and management of maritime traffic. This enhancement will help States better protect the marine environment, particularly in areas designated as Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA). Additionally, the amendment seeks to streamline electronic ship-to-shore information exchange and automate ship reporting processes, reducing administrative burdens on ships while enhancing navigation monitoring through modern technologies and tools.  The draft amendments to the SOUNDREP and BELREP ship reporting systems can be found at annexes 3 and 4 respectively of the Addendum to the report of the Experts group in attached document NCSR 12/WP.4/Add.1.  **Electronic nautical publications –** Due to the increasing use of electronic versions of the publications required by SOLAS V/19.2.1.4 and V/19.2.1.5 for voyage planning, display and monitoring, official guidelines are required to ensure consistent global standards.  The adoption of electronic nautical publications (ENPs) as an alternative to traditional printed nautical resources has significantly increased in recent years due to their distinct advantages. However, there remains no International Maritime Organization (IMO) instrument providing standardized instructions, despite some guidance from national hydrographic offices. Consequently, the development of specific IMO-level guidance is deemed necessary to ensure consistent and global implementation of relevant SOLAS regulations.  In response, the NCSR finalized a draft MSC circular on “Guidelines for the carriage and use of electronic nautical publications (ENP) systems on board”. These draft guidelines are designed for digital versions of existing paper-based publications utilized on ships, rather than ENPs integrated into Electronic Chart Display and Information Systems (ECDIS). Importantly, they do not override ECDIS performance standards.  The guidelines emphasize key aspects such as hardware and software requirements, appropriate backup solutions, and reliable power supply, rather than specifying detailed performance standards. The draft guidelines are slated for submission for approval at MSC 111 in May 2026 and, once sanctioned, will take immediate effect. The draft circular can be found at annex 10 of the attached report of working group 2 in document NCSR 12/WP.6.  **Introduction of VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) - SOLAS amendments in development –** It may be recalled from the NCSR 11 report that VDES is a radiocommunication system in the VHF maritime mobile band, capable of exchanging digital data faster than AIS (Automatic Identifying System) in the ship-to-ship, ship-to-shore and shore-to-ship directions, using both terrestrial and satellite components. At the last session of NCSR it was agreed that implementation of VDES would be on a voluntary basis while further developments with the system take place.  Work on this agenda item progressed during this session and the Sub-Committee agreed to the following:   * Draft amendments to SOLAS chapter V and the appendix to introduce the VHF Data Exchange System, as well as the consequential amendments to the 1994 and 2000 HSC Codes. * Draft MSC resolution on Introduction of VHF data exchange system (VDES) into the IMO regulatory framework. * Draft MSC resolution on Performance standards for shipborne VHF data exchange system (VDES). * Draft MSC circular on Guidelines for the operational use of shipborne VHF data exchange system (VDES).   The draft SOLAS amendments, draft 1994 HSC code amendments, draft 2000 HSC code amendments, draft MSC resolution on the introduction of VDES, draft MSC resolution on performance standards and draft MSC circular on guidelines for the operational use of VDES can be found at annexes 2,3,4,5,6 and 7 respectively of the report of working group 2 in attached document NCSR 12/WP.6.  The draft instruments are expected to be submitted for approval at MSC 110 in June 2025 as an urgent matter and adopted at MSC 111 in May 2026, with an anticipated entry into force on 1 January 2028. It should be noted that VDES equipment will not be mandatory and that the SOLAS regulations require AIS ***or*** VDES.  **Development of guidelines for software maintenance of shipboard navigation and communication equipment and systems –** The sub-committee agreed to the draft MSC circular on “Guidelines for software maintenance of shipboard computer-based navigation and communication equipment and systems”.  With the increasing reliance on computer-based navigation and communication systems, maintaining software effectively has become essential for maritime safety and operational efficiency. To address industry challenges and emerging cyber threats, MSC 107 approved the development of non-mandatory guidelines, specifically targeting equipment governed by SOLAS chapters IV (Radiocommunications) and V (Safety of Navigation).  These draft guidelines build upon an initial industry standard, collaboratively developed by shipowners, service providers, classification societies, and equipment manufacturers. NCSR 12 subsequently reviewed this draft guidance, focusing on establishing standardized, secure, and transparent software maintenance practices. The guidelines are designed to enhance system reliability, minimize downtime, improve crew awareness, and bolster cybersecurity—all without increasing the frequency of maintenance tasks.  The draft guidelines incorporate several essential elements, including:   * Clearly defined roles and procedures for initiating, planning, and carrying out maintenance * Comprehensive cybersecurity and safety protocols throughout the maintenance lifecycle * Implementation of electronic service reports and onboard software logs * Training and certification of service personnel by equipment manufacturers * Specific guidance for conducting remote maintenance   The draft guidelines are expected to be submitted for approval at MSC 111 in May 2026 and will take effect immediately upon approval. They can be found at annex 6 of the attached report of working group 1 in document NCSR 12/WP.5.  **Amendments to the IAMSAR Manual –** The current edition of the IAMSAR manual was published on 1 June 2022 and the next edition is due to be published in June this year. This is a mandatory publication and vessels are required to carry the most up to date edition.  Work has begun on the 2028 edition and the following items are under consideration for inclusion:   * Psychology of emergency, including the possibility of developing a draft circular on the subject. * Optimizing homing operations for 406 MHz distress beacon and automatic identification system (AIS) signals (NCSR 12/7, paragraph 2.7). * Guidance on submarines and passenger submersible craft and related SAR issues.   **Revision of the Performance Standards for Shipborne BeiDou Satellite Navigation System (BDS) Receiver Equipment –** The Chinese global navigation satellite system, BeiDou was fully commissioned in 2022. Since then, the system has been enhanced to include additional services such as improved positioning accuracy, dual-frequency capabilities and global positioning, navigation and timing services (PNT) and messaging functions.  As a result of these improvements, the drafting group was tasked with revising resolution MSC.379(93) on “Performance standards for shipborne BeiDou Satellite Navigation System (BDS) receiver equipment”. The Sub-Committee approved the draft performance standards which can be found at the annex to the report of the drafting group in attached document NCSR 12/WP.8.  The draft revision is scheduled for submission to MSC 111 in May 2026 for approval and is expected to apply to BDS receiver equipment installed on or after 31 July 2028.  **Draft report:** The draft report of the Sub-Committee is contained in attached document NCSR 12/WP.1   |  | | --- | | PRINCIPAL ISSUES:  The meeting agenda was as follows:   1. Adoption of the agenda 2. Decisions of other IMO bodies 3. Routeing measures and mandatory ship reporting systems 4. Update to the LRIT system 5. Developments in GMDSS satellite services, including guidelines on Maritime Safety Information (MSI) 6. Response to matters related to the ITU-R Study Groups and ITU World Radiocommunication Conference 7. Development of global maritime SAR services, including harmonization of maritime and aeronautical procedures and amendments to the IAMSAR Manual 8. Development of procedures and requirements for the recognition of augmentation systems in the Worldwide Radionavigation System (WWRNS) 9. Development of amendments to SOLAS chapters IV and V and performance standards and guidelines to introduce VHF data exchange system (VDES) 10. Development of guidelines for software maintenance of shipboard navigation and communication equipment and systems 11. Development of guidelines for EPIRB which implement the two-way communication service via the SAR/Galileo Return Link service as a complement to EPIRB performance standards (resolution MSC.471(101)) 12. Development of guidelines for the use of electronic nautical publications (ENP 13. Revision of the Performance standards for shipborne BeiDou Satellite Navigation System (BDS) receiver equipment (resolution MSC.379(93)) 14. Development of guidance to establish a framework for data distribution and global IP-based connectivity between shore-based facilities and ships for ECDIS S-100 products 15. Validated model training courses 16. Unified interpretation of provisions of IMO safety, security, environment, facilitation, liability and compensation-related conventions 17. Biennial status report and provisional agenda for NCSR 13 18. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2026 19. Any other business 20. Report to the Maritime Safety Committee   Three working groups, one experts group and one drafting group were established as follows:   1. Working Group 1. The terms of reference of this group were:   Agenda item 6 – Response to matters related to the ITU-R Study Groups and ITU World Radiocommunication Conference   1. Finalize the draft IMO position on relevant WRC-27 agenda items concerning matters relating to maritime services (NCSR 12/6, annex, annex 1), taking into account document NCSR 12/6/5. 2. Finalize the draft reply liaison statement to ITU-R Working Party (WP) 4C on WRC-27 agenda item 1.12 (NCSR 12/6, annex, annex 2), taking into account document NCSR 12/6/4. 3. Finalize the draft reply liaison statement to ITU-R WP 5B on revision of Recommendation ITU-R M.1371-5 (NCSR 12/6, annex, annex 3), taking into account the relevant outcomes of the WP 5B meeting conducted from 29 April to 8 May 2025. 4. Consider the draft liaison statement to ITU-R WP 5B on blockage of the AIS signal reception by the operation of VHF radiotelephony nearby (NCSR 12/6, annex, annex 4), taking into account document NCSR 12/6/6 and the relevant outcomes of the WP 5B meeting conducted from 29 April to 8 May 2025, and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate. 5. Prepare a revision of MSC.1/Circ.1657 on *Procedure for responding to DSC distress alerts by ships,* taking into account the proposed modifications identified by the Experts Group (NCSR 12/6, annex, annex 10) as a result of discrepancies with Recommendation ITU-R M.541-11, and advise the Sub-Committee on any consequential amendments to other instruments. 6. Prepare draft terms of reference for the twenty-first meeting of the IMO/ITU Experts Group, provisionally scheduled to take place during the week of 6 to 10 October 2025, taking into account the instructions of MSC 109 (MSC 109/22, paragraphs 19.8 and 19.26) and the relevant provisions of the Committees' method of work (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.6), and advise the Sub-Committee on the number of days required for the meeting.   Agenda item 10 – Development of guidelines for software maintenance of shipboard navigation and communication equipment and systems   1. Consider the draft MSC circular on Guidelines for software maintenance of shipboard navigation and communication equipment and systems (NCSR 12/10) and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate.   Agenda item 14 – Development of guidance to establish a framework for data distribution and global IP-based connectivity between shore-based facilities and ships for ECDIS S-100 products   1. Consider the:    1. Draft guidance to establish a framework for data distribution and global IP-based connectivity for shore-based facilities and ships supporting ECDIS S-100 products (NCSR 12/14).    2. Draft list of elements associated with the implementation of S-100 capable ECDIS (NCSR 12/14/3).   Taking into account documents NCSR 12/14/1, NCSR 12/14/2, NCSR 12/14/4, NCSR 12/14/5, NCSR 12/14/6, NCSR 12/14/7, NCSR 12/14/8 and NCSR 12/INF.14, and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate, including on any actions to continue progressing this work intersessionally, if necessary.   1. Working Group 2. The terms of reference of this group were:   Agenda item 8 – Development of procedures and requirements for the recognition of augmentation systems in the Worldwide Radionavigation System   1. Consider the development of procedures and requirements for the recognition of augmentation systems in the Worldwide Radionavigation System, taking into account documents NCSR 12/8 and NCSR 12/8/1, and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate.   Agenda item 9 – Development of amendments to SOLAS chapters IV and V and performance standards and guidelines to introduce VHF Data Exchange System (VDES)   1. Consider the report of the Correspondence Group on VDES (NCSR 12/9), taking into account documents NCSR 12/9/1, NCSR 12/9/2 and NCSR 12/9/3, and:    1. Finalize the draft MSC resolution on Performance standards for shipborne VHF data exchange system (VDES) (NCSR 12/9, annex 2).    2. Finalize the draft MSC circular on Guidelines for the operational use of shipborne VHF data exchange system (VDES) (NCSR 12/9, annex 3)    3. Prepare any necessary draft amendments to the 1974 SOLAS Convention and related mandatory instruments and advise the Sub-Committee on the appropriate date for entry into force of the draft amendments.    4. Finalize any necessary draft amendments and/or revisions to existing non-mandatory instruments, including the development of a draft MSC resolution outlining the use of VDES to comply with AIS provisions.    5. Finalize the check and monitoring sheet for the process of amending the SOLAS Convention and related mandatory instruments required by SC.1/Circ.1500/Rev.3; and prepare the checklist for the identification of capacity-building implications, as required in the Committee's method of work (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.6).    6. Prepare relevant advice in response to the instructions given by the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 103/21, paragraph 18.13).   Agenda item 12 – Development of guidelines for the use of electronic nautical publications (ENP)   1. Finalize the draft MSC circular on Guidelines on carriage and use of electronic nautical publications system (NCSR 12/12, annex), taking into account document NCSR 12/12/1. 2. Working Group 3. The terms of reference of this group were:   Agenda item 5 – Developments in GMDSS services, including guidelines on maritime safety information (MSI)   1. Consider NAVDAT implementation issues and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate, on the following:    1. The road map on the issues to be considered regarding the introduction of the NAVDAT service (NCSR 12/6, annex 9).    2. The draft NAVDAT manual (NCSR 12/6, annex 8, taking into account documents NCSR 12/5/5 and NCSR 12/5/7).    3. The comments of the Chair of the IMO NAVTEX Coordinating Panel concerning the introduction and implementation of NAVDAT (NCSR 12/5, annex 2). 2. Prepare a draft MSC circular with revised terms of reference of the IMO NAVTEXT Coordinating Panel, along with any other necessary guidance or information (NCSR 11/5, annex 3), and advise the Sub-Committee on the name of such panel. 3. Consider the draft amendments to the SOLAS Convention, including any necessary consequential amendments to related instruments (NCSR 12/6, annexes 5 to 7), to clearly state the requirement for dissemination of maritime safety information and search and rescue related information through all operational recognized mobile satellite services, taking into account the proposals in documents NCSR 12/5/4 and NCSR 12/5/8, and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate.   Agenda item 7 – Development of global maritime SAR services, including harmonization of maritime and aeronautical procedures and amendments to the IAMSAR Manual   1. Consider the work carried out by the ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group on the following matters for inclusion into the IAMSAR Manual:    1. Psychology of emergency, including the possibility of developing a draft circular on the subject (NCSR 12/7, paragraph 2.4).    2. Optimizing homing operations for 406 MHz distress beacon and automatic identification system (AIS) signals (NCSR 12/7, paragraph 2.7).    3. Guidance on submarines and passenger submersible craft and related SAR issues (NCSR 12/7, paragraph 2.9).   and advise the Sub-Committee as appropriate.   1. Consider the work carried out by the ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group on the development of a strategic outlook for the global SAR operating environment (NCSR 12/7, paragraph 2.6), and advise the Sub-Committee as appropriate. 2. Consider the draft provisional agenda for the thirty-second meeting of the ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group (NCSR 12/7, annex, appendix 5) and provide any necessary advice and instructions concerning the scope of the work that should be conducted by JWG 32, taking into account the instructions of MSC 109 (MSC 109/22, paragraph 19.8) and the Committees' method of work (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.6). 3. Consider document MSC 109/13/7 (Colombia) proposing amendments to IAMSAR Manual Volume I and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate. 4. Review and finalize the draft COMSAR circular on Guidance for entering and updating information on search and rescue services into the Global SAR Plan and on how to get access to the information for operational use (NCSR 12/7/1). 5. Give initial consideration to the review of the appropriateness and effectiveness of SOLAS regulation V/7.3 (Search and rescue services), taking into account the background information provided in document NCSR 12/7/2, and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate. 6. The Ships’ Routeing Experts Group. The terms of reference of this group were: 7. Consider document NCSR 12/3/1 proposing the establishment of an area to be avoided off the coast of Réunion, taking into account documents NCSR 12/INF.5 and NCSR 12/INF.6 and the preliminary assessment in document NCSR 12/WP.3, and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate. 8. Consider document NCSR 12/3 proposing amendments to the existing mandatory ship reporting system in the Adriatic Sea (ADRIREP), taking into account the preliminary assessment in document NCSR 12/WP.3 and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate. 9. Consider document NCSR 12/3/3 proposing amendments to existing mandatory ship reporting systems BELTREP, BONIFREP, CANREP, COPREP, FINREP, GDANREP, MANCHEREP, OUESSREP, SOUNDREP, TRANSREP, as contained in resolutions MSC.63(67), amended by MSC.332(90); MSC.73(69); MSC.251(83); MSC.278(85); MSC.63(67), amended by MSC.162(78); MSC.249(83); MSC.110(73), amended by MSC.251(83); MSC.52(66), amended by MSC.127(75) and MSC.251(83); MSC.314(88); MSC.250(83) amended by MSC.316(88), respectively, taking into account the preliminary assessment in document NCSR 12/WP.3, and advise the Sub-Committee, as appropriate.   5. The Drafting Group. The terms of reference of this group were:   1. Review and finalize the draft revision of resolution MSC.379(93) on *Performance standards for shipborne BeiDou Satellite Navigation System (BDS) receiver equipment* (NCSR 12/13), taking into account the provisions of paragraph 4.2.6.3 of MSC.1/Circ.1500/Rev.2 concerning the use of the term "installed" in the application statements of an IMO instrument. | | ATTACHMENTS/SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION: | |
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