

Summary of IMO meetings held during the first half of 2024

The first six months of 2024 have been busy at the IMO and IMCA's Margaret Fitzgerald has participated in all the meetings on behalf of its members.

The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) is IMO's senior technical body on safety-related matters.

It is aided in its work by 7 Maritime Safety Sub-Committees:

- 1) Carriage of Cargos & Containers (CCC)
- 2) Human Element, Training & Watchkeeping (HTW)
- 3) Implementation of IMO Instruments (III)
- 4) Navigation, Communications, Search & Rescue (NCSR)
- 5) Pollution Prevention & Response (PPR)
- 6) Ship Design and Construction (SDC)
- 7) Ship Systems & Equipment (SSE).

Five of these met in the first half of the year and the highlights of those meetings are captured in the relevant links.

1 Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction (SDC 10)

The Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction (SDC) considers a wide range of technical and operational matters related to ship design and construction, including subdivision and stability. The Sub-Committee also covers testing and approval of construction and materials, load lines, tonnage measurement, safety of fishing vessels and the carriage of industrial personnel.

The **10th session of the Sub-Committee** was held from 22-26 January 2024 and discussed the key issues set out below (paragraphs 1.1 – 1.2).

1.1 Underwater Radiated Noise

One of the main outcomes of the meeting is the agreement of an Action Plan to further prevent and reduce underwater radiated noise (URN) from ships, with the aim of minimising its adverse effects on the marine environment, particularly on marine wildlife and indigenous communities. The Action Plan, which intends to increase awareness, uptake, and implementation of Revised Guidelines for the reduction of URN from shipping, took effect in October 2023.

The Action Plan outlines a number of tasks for implementation, including:

- ◆ establish an experience-building phase (EBP) for the Revised Guidelines
- ◆ enhance public awareness, education, and seafarer training

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- ◆ standardise a URN Management Planning process
- ◆ develop URN targets
- ◆ further develop policy for URN reduction
- ◆ create IMO processes/technical groups to share information and take into consideration other IMO regulatory goals
- ◆ develop tools to collect data and share information
- ◆ encourage research on URN and greenhouse gas (GHG)/URN and biofouling management
- ◆ encourage research on impacts of URN on species and habitats.

The Sub-Committee recommended a three-year experience-building phase (EBP) during which Member States and international organisations are invited to share lessons learned and best practices that have emerged in the implementation of the Revised Guidelines.

In addition, the Sub-Committee agreed on amendments to the Revised Guidelines for the reduction of URN from shipping, pertaining to the URN planning reference chart. This will be submitted for approval at the 82nd session of MEPC (MEPC 82) to be held 30 September – 4 October 2024.

1.2 Emergency Towing Arrangements for Ships other than Tankers – Guidelines in Development

Following MSC 107's approval of draft amendments to SOLAS regulation II-2/3-4 to include emergency towing arrangements for ships other than tankers, the SDC Sub-Committee has commenced developing associated guidelines, based on the existing instruments for tankers. The SDC Sub-Committee has invited interested Member States and international organisations to submit more information, including data, to facilitate further considerations at the next session of the Sub-Committee (SDC 11) to take place in 2025.

The Guidelines are expected to take effect from 1 January 2028, when the above-mentioned SOLAS amendments are expected to enter into force.

2 Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW 10)

The Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW) deals with the human side of shipping, including training and certification; the review, updating and revision of IMO model courses; and guidance addressing issues such as fatigue.

The **10th session of the Sub-Committee** was held from 5-9 February 2024 and discussed the key issues set out below (paragraphs 2.1 – 2.3).

2.1 Comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code

The meeting laid the groundwork for the comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code.

The Sub-Committee agreed on a roadmap, methodology and a list of specific areas for the comprehensive review of the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) and the accompanying STCW Code to adapt the existing global standards for seafarer training to reflect new trends, developments and challenges in the maritime sector.

In progressing the work, the Sub-Committee agreed:

- ◆ 22 specific areas of the Convention and Code to be reviewed, including addressing training requirements for emerging technologies on ships, e-certification, mental health and gender sensitisation, among others
- ◆ a two-step methodology, consisting of a review of the Convention and Code to identify gaps (Phase 1) and then a revision stage to develop amendments to address those gaps (Phase 2)
- ◆ establishment of an Inter-sessional Working Group before the next session of the Sub-Committee (HTW 11) to advance the work
- ◆ a roadmap outlining a timeline for action, including finalising the list of gaps identified by Spring 2025 (HTW11); finalising draft text of amendments and resolutions by Spring 2027 (HTW13).

2.2 Enhanced Efforts on Prevention and Addressing Bullying and Harassment

MSC 108 was requested to adopt draft amendments to STCW Code to prevent and respond to bullying and harassment in the maritime sector, including sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH).

2.3 Training for Seafarers on Ships Using Alternative Fuels

The Sub-Committee discussed the development of training provisions for seafarers on ships using alternative fuels and agreed that the work related to this issue should be separate from the work on the comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code.

3 Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR 11)

The Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR) deals with all matters relating to pollution prevention and response which falls within IMO's remit. This ranges from all annexes of the MARPOL Convention through to the control and management of harmful aquatic organisms in ships' ballast water and sediments; biofouling; anti-fouling system; pollution preparedness, response and cooperation for oil and hazardous and noxious substances; and the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships. The Working Group on the Evaluation of Safety and Pollution Hazards of Chemicals works under the auspices of the PPR Sub-Committee.

The **11th session of the Sub-Committee** was held from 19-23 February 2024 and discussed the key issues set out below (paragraphs 3.1 – 3.4).

3.1 Local Oil and Hazardous and Noxious Substances Marine Pollution

The Sub-Committee agreed to draft guidelines for developing a local contingency plan for spills or pollution involving oil or hazardous and noxious substances which outline emergency organisation, procedures, and response capability for accidental spills, whatever the source. They are aimed primarily at key local governmental institutions which have emergency planning responsibilities for communities and areas affected by marine pollution, to assist them in developing a marine pollution contingency plan covering their responsibilities.

The guidelines will be submitted to MEPC 82 in October 2024 for approval and subsequent publication.

3.2 Controlling Nitrogen Oxide Emissions

The NOx Technical Code aims to control the emission of nitrogen oxides (NOx) from marine diesel engines, which contributes to smog and air pollution. The Code specifies the requirements for the testing, survey, and certification of marine diesel engines to ensure they comply with the NOx emission limits set out by Regulation 13 of MARPOL Annex VI.

The Sub-Committee finalised draft amendments to the NOx Technical Code 2008 and MARPOL Annex VI on the use of multiple engine operational profiles for a marine diesel engine, including clarifications of engine test cycles, as well as draft amendments to the NOx Technical Code 2008 on certification of an engine subject to substantial modification.

Both sets of amendments will be submitted to MEPC 82 for approval, with a view to subsequent adoption.

3.3 Guidance Related to In-Water Cleaning

The Sub-Committee continued its work to develop guidance on matters relating to in-water cleaning – an important step for minimising the transfer of invasive aquatic species which involves the removal of biofouling from a ship's hull, propeller or other underwater structures and niche areas, with additional benefits also for ship energy efficiency. The guidance may cover various elements including:

- ◆ planning, conducting, and reporting on in-water cleaning operations
- ◆ verification and testing of in-water cleaning systems
- ◆ conducting pre-cleaning and post-cleaning inspections
- ◆ expectations for in-water cleaning service providers.

The work on preparing draft guidance will continue intersessionally and a report will be submitted to the next session of the Sub-Committee (PPR 12).

3.4 Discharge of Sewage from Ships

Raw sewage from ships can create a health hazard as well as impact the environment. The Sub-Committee continued its work on the revision of MARPOL Annex IV and the associated guidelines, regarding the discharge of sewage from ships into the sea which has been primarily focused on sewage treatment plants and on measures that will ensure that the systems have a satisfactory performance throughout their lifetime.

The Sub-Committee agreed on a preliminary timeline for the revision exercise, aiming for adoption of the whole package in 2028/2029.

The work on preparing draft guidance will continue intersessionally and a report will be submitted to the next session of the Sub-Committee (PPR 12).

4 Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment (SSE 10)

The Sub-Committee on Ship Systems and Equipment (SSE) deals with a wide range of technical and operational matters related to systems and equipment on all types of ships, vessels, craft and mobile units covered by IMO instruments. This includes life-saving equipment, appliances and arrangements; and fire detection and fire extinguishing systems.

The **10th session of the Sub-Committee** was held from 4-8 March 2024 and discussed the key issues set out below (paragraphs 4.1 – 4.4).

4.1 Revision of SOLAS Chapter III and LSA Code on Lifesaving Appliances

Of interest to IMCA members is the ongoing revision of the Life-Saving Appliance (LSA) Code.

SOLAS chapter III outlines international requirements for life-saving appliances and arrangements, including requirements for lifeboats, rescue boats and lifejackets according to the type of ship. The International Life-Saving Appliance Code (**LSA Code**) gives specific technical requirements for the manufacturing, testing and maintenance of life-saving appliances. These sets of regulations are being revised, based on safety objectives, functional requirements and expected performance.

The Sub-Committee agreed on a draft roadmap for the drafting of related functional requirements and expected performances for SOLAS chapter III and LSA Code. This roadmap will be utilised by an intersessional Correspondence Group, which will report the progress at SSE 11.

4.2 Lifejacket Carriage Requirements for High-Speed Craft (HSC)

The Sub-Committee finalised draft amendments to the International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft (1994 HSC Code and revised 2000 HSC Code), to harmonise the lifejacket carriage requirements for adults and infants onboard, with SOLAS chapter III provision.

The HSC Code is a complete set of comprehensive requirements for high-speed craft engaged in international voyages, including equipment and conditions for operation and maintenance.

The draft amendments to the 1994 and 2000 HSC Codes will be submitted for approval by MSC 109 and subsequent adoption by MSC 110.

4.3 Free-Fall Lifeboats

The Sub-Committee agreed in principle to draft amendments to paragraph 4.7.6.4 of the LSA Code. This regulation covers the testing of release systems of free-fall lifeboats as survival craft, ensuring that they meet relevant safety standards.

The Sub-Committee noted that these amendments would require consequential adjustments to resolutions MSC.81(70), as amended and MSC.402(96). These amendments are planned to be submitted for approval by MSC 110 and subsequent adoption by MSC 111.

4.4 Maintenance, Examination and Testing of Life-/Rescue Boats and Launching Appliances

The Sub-Committee continued its work on the comprehensive review of the requirements for maintenance, examination, and testing of lifeboats and rescue boats, and their launching appliances, as contained in resolution MSC.402(96). The review aims to ensure consistent implementation of the requirements therein by amending the resolution accordingly.

5 Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR 11)

The Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) deals with all matters related to navigation and communication, including the analysis and approval of ships routing measures and ship reporting systems; carriage requirements and performance standards for navigational and communication equipment; the long-range identification and tracking (LRIT) system

and the development of e-navigation. It also deals with search and rescue matters and the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), including recognition of service providers. Joint working groups reporting to the NCSR Sub-Committee include the ICAO/IMO Joint Working Group on Harmonization of Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue and the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group on Maritime Radiocommunication Matters.

The **11th session of the Sub-Committee** was held from 4-13 June 2024 and discussed the key issues set out below (paragraphs 5.1 – 5.3).

5.1 Pilot Transfer Arrangements and Amendments to SOLAS Regulation V/23 Agreed

Getting pilots on board a ship must be done with the highest safety standards. To improve compliance and address inconsistencies and ambiguities in existing regulations, the Sub-Committee finalised draft amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23 and associated instruments on the safety of pilot transfer arrangements.

The Sub-Committee also finalised a draft MSC resolution on Performance standards for pilot transfer arrangements, including detailed requirements for design, manufacture, construction, rigging, installation of pilot ladder winch reels, operational readiness, onboard inspection and maintenance, familiarisation, and approval in relation to pilot transfer arrangements required under SOLAS regulation V/23.

In addition, the Sub-Committee finalised a draft MSC circular on Voluntary early implementation of the amendments to SOLAS regulation V/23 on pilot transfer arrangements.

All the above will be submitted to the upcoming session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 109) in December 2024 for approval.

5.2 Performance Standards for NAVDAT and Criteria for Providing a NAVDAT Service Agreed

NAVDAT is a digital broadcasting system operating on selected medium- and high-frequency (MF and HF) bands. It can communicate texts, images, graphs, and data to compatible receiving equipment on ships, at speeds much higher than NAVTEX.

The Sub-Committee finalised new Performance standards for the reception of maritime safety information (MSI) and search and rescue (SAR)-related information by MF and HF digital navigational data (NAVDAT) system.

The Sub-Committee also approved a draft revision of resolution MSC.509(105) on Provision of radio services for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), which includes criteria for providing a NAVDAT service.

Both resolutions will be submitted to Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 109) in December 2024 for adoption.

5.3 Introduction of VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) – SOLAS Amendments in Development

VDES is a radiocommunication system in the VHF maritime mobile band, capable of exchanging digital data faster than an Automatic Identifying System (AIS) in the ship-to-ship, ship-to-shore, and shore-to-ship directions, using both terrestrial and satellite components. The Sub-Committee continued discussions on the introduction of the proposed VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) into the SOLAS framework, including the development of related performance standards and guidelines.

The work on preparing draft guidance will continue intersessionally and a report will be submitted to the next session of the Sub-Committee (NCSR 12).

The Marine Policy and Regulatory Affairs (MPRA) Committee follows the work of the IMO and has produced Information Notes highlighting the key issues from the various meetings for IMCA members:

- ◆ Information Note 1658 – [Control and Management of Ships' Biofouling](#)
- ◆ Information Note 1670 – [Limiting Underwater Radiated Noise \(URN\) at the IMO](#)
- ◆ Information Note 1680 – [Working at Sea: IMO review of STCW identifies new focus areas.](#)

A comprehensive review of the outcome of the 108th session of the Maritime Safety Committee is found in Information Note 1684 – [Outcome of the 108th Session of IMO's Maritime Safety Committee \(MSC 108\)](#).

A comprehensive review of the outcome of the 81st session of the Marine Environment Protection Committee is found in Information Note 1666 – [Outcome of the 81st session of IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee \(MEPC\) on GHG discussions](#) and the adoption of the revised Life Cycle Assessment Guidelines by MEPC 81 is contained in Information Note 1675 – [MEPC 81 Adopts Revised Guidelines on Life Cycle GHG Intensity of Marine Fuels \(LCA Guidelines\)](#).

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