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APPLICATION OF SOLAS REGULATION III/26 CONCERNING FAST RESCUE BOATS AND MEANS OF RESCUE SYSTEMS ON RO-RO PASSENGER SHIPS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-fourth session (30 May to 8 June 2001), noted that SOLAS regulation III/26, as amended by resolution MSC.47(66), which entered into force on 1 July 1998, requires all ro-ro passenger ships to be fitted with a fast rescue boat and a means of rescue not later than the first periodical survey after 1 July 2000.

2 The Committee was informed of many accidents and near-accidents as a result of trials and drills involving the launching and recovery of fast rescue boats and means of rescue that have been fitted to date onboard ro-ro passenger ships. Concerns were also expressed that the masters of these ships and the crews involved in the launching and operation of fast rescue boats and means of rescue do not, at present, have confidence in this equipment, especially for their use in emergency conditions when the weather and sea state may be unfavourable.

3 The Committee was also informed that the national requirements of some Member Governments require that all shipboard operations and duties are planned and conducted taking into account an evaluation of the risks involved to ensure the safety of all persons involved. Such considerations are not only relevant to the conduct of drills involving fast rescue boats and means of rescue but the launching and operation of all survival craft.

4 The Committee agreed that the Sub-Committees on Ship Design and Equipment (DE) and on Standards of Training and Watchkeeping (STW) should be instructed to undertake a review of the arrangement, specification, testing and operation of fast rescue boats and means of rescue, and the training of the relevant crew members, respectively, as a matter of urgency.

5 The Committee noted that this study would of necessity take at least two years to complete, and that the final form of the revised requirements and recommendations could not be anticipated at the present time.

6 Until the study is completed and any revised measures are agreed by the Organization, it is recommended that due caution is exercised when installing, testing, launching and operating fast rescue boats and means of rescue.

7 Member Governments and other parties involved in the design, installation, testing, approval, survey and operation of this equipment are urged to take note of the foregoing information and the recommendation in paragraph 6 above. It is especially considered necessary that Member Governments bring to the attention of their port State control officers that they should not require the carrying out of drills on this equipment if the master of the ship, considering the safety of the crew, does not agree.