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MSC/MEPC CIRCULAR

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SAFETY MANAGEMENT (ISM) CODE BY 1 JULY 2002

Introduction

1 Assembly resolution A.848(20) on Implementation of the International Safety Management (ISM) Code, *inter-alia*, urged all parties concerned to recognize that ships which were not certified in accordance with the provisions of the ISM Code would be regarded as not being in compliance with the requirements of the SOLAS Convention. The resolution urged Member Governments and Contracting Governments to SOLAS to make the utmost effort to finalise as soon as possible the ISM Code certification of ships entitled to fly their flags as required by SOLAS regulation IX/2.

2 It was subsequently noted with satisfaction that implementation of the Code for passenger ships, including passenger high speed craft, oil tankers, chemical tankers, gas carriers, bulk carriers and cargo high speed craft of 500 gross tonnage and upwards subject to the first implementation date of 1 July 1998, had been planned and effected in a timely manner.

3 Assembly resolution A.880(21), adopted on 25 November 1999, reiterated the invitation to Member Governments and Contracting Governments to the SOLAS Convention to:

- .1 be aware that there was a significant amount of work required to ensure application of the ISM Code to other general cargo ships and mobile offshore drilling units of 500 gross tonnage and upwards by 1 July 2002; and
- .2 expedite the process of application of the ISM Code to those ships well in advance of the enforcement date.

Implementation of 'Phase 2' of the ISM Code

4 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-third session (27 November to 6 December 2000) and the Marine Environment Protection Committee, at its forty-sixth session (23 to 27 April 2001), being firmly convinced of the beneficial impact the ISM Code would have on enhanced safety and environmental protection, recalled the action taken by the Assembly and the two Committees to promote the Code's timely and effective implementation.

5 The Committees also recalled that the purpose of the Code is to provide an international standard for the safe management and operation of ships and of pollution prevention; and that it is the commitment, competence, attitudes and motivation of individuals at all levels that determines the end result in accomplishing the Code's objectives.

6 Resolution A.880(21) draws the attention of Member Governments, Contracting Governments to SOLAS and the industry to the fact that SOLAS regulation IX/2 does not provide for any extension of implementation dates for the introduction of the ISM Code.

7 It should also be noted that verification of compliance with the ISM Code should include objective evidence demonstrating that the Company Safety Management System (SMS) has been in operation for at least three months, and an SMS has been in operation on board at least one ship of each type operated by the Company for at least three months, prior to the issue of valid Documents of Compliance (DOCs) and Safety Management Certificates (SMCs).

8 In the light of the foregoing, it is important that Governments are mindful of the considerable time needed for effectively implementing the ISM Code, and thus the need for well- planned time schedules for the implementation process, which should be put in place in good time before the Code's implementation date of 1 July 2002. Member Governments are, therefore, invited to take urgent action, as explained above, and to bring this circular to the attention of all concerned, particularly shipowners, ship operators and managers, and recognized organizations.

9 This circular has been issued following consultations between the Chairmen of the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee and the Secretary-General for the purpose of promoting the ISM Code's timely and effective implementation.
