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MSC.1/Circ.1196

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MEANS OF EMBARKATION ON AND DISEMBARKATION FROM SHIPS

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-seventh session (28 May to 6 June 2003), in view of a number of accidents involving accommodation ladders resulting in loss of life and injury, instructed the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Equipment (DE) to develop amendments to SOLAS regulations I/7 and I/8 to require inspections of the means of crew access to and from ships, such as gangways and accommodation ladders as part of the survey of the ship's equipment.

2 The DE Sub-Committee, at its forty-eighth session (21 to 25 February 2005), discussed the development of the above-mentioned SOLAS amendments and agreed that this was not mainly a design and specification issue, but very much related to maintenance and that a number of national and international standards, including an ISO standard, addressing the matter, already existed. The Sub-Committee also agreed that pilot ladders¹ should also be considered and invited the submission of concrete proposals on inspection and survey requirements for accommodation and pilot ladders.

3 The Sub-Committee, at its forty-ninth session (20 to 24 February 2006), following discussion of the matter on the basis of proposals for a draft new SOLAS regulation II-1/3-9 and related guidelines for inspection and survey for accommodation and pilot ladders, decided that further consideration should be given to the issue at DE 50. However, it was agreed that, in the meantime, Member Governments should be made aware of the existing problems regarding inspection and maintenance of accommodation and pilot ladders.

4 The Committee, at its eighty-first session (10 to 19 May 2006), recognized that, in the light of this development, some time may lapse before the eventual regulatory framework could be adopted and enter in force. As a result, in an effort to reduce the number of accidents involving means of embarkation on and disembarkation from ships, and the resulting loss of life and injury, it recommended that Administrations should review and update, as necessary, any existing national requirements relating to the matter, as well as the associated survey and inspection provisions. If such national requirements do not already exist, Administrations should consider establishing, in the interim and as appropriate, national requirements, taking into account other national practices and related standards.²

5 Member Governments are invited to bring this circular to the attention of shipowners, shipbuilders, designers, port State control authorities and seafarers with a view to ensuring an improvement of the current situation, particularly in relation to inspection and maintenance procedures to secure the operational safety of this equipment.

¹ See also SOLAS regulation V/23 on Pilot transfer arrangements.

² See ISO 799:2004 Ships and marine technology – Pilot ladders; ISO 5488:1979 Ships and marine technology – Accommodation ladders; ISO 5489:1986 Ships and marine technology – Embarkation ladders; and ISO 7061:1993 Ships and marine technology – Aluminum shore gangways for seagoing vessels.