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MARITIME SAFETY AND INMARSAT SHIP EARTH STATION BARRING PROCEDURES

1 The Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR) at its first, second and third sessions (1996 to 1998) considered issues relating to the use of satellite services as an integral part of ship communications and, in particular, in the context of the impending implementation date of 1 February 1999 for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), as mandated by SOLAS chapter IV.

2 During this period, the Organization was informed by Inmarsat of the increasing number of Inmarsat Ship Earth Station (SES) owners who have failed their obligation to pay for services provided in respect of chargeable communications emanating from SESs.

3 The Organization was also informed by Inmarsat that respective terminals may be barred from using the applicable satellite services provided by Inmarsat and of the special arrangements that have been put in place to minimize disruption to safety-related communications from any SES concerned.

4 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its sixty-ninth session (11-20 May 1998), being informed by the COMSAR Sub-Committee that Inmarsat SESs, which serve as the main GMDSS equipment, may be barred from using all Inmarsat communication services, including those related to the GMDSS, with the exception of distress priority communications, under such circumstances, expressed serious concern for the safety of such a ship if it were to sail whilst the terminal is barred.

5 The Committee, at its seventieth session (7-11 December 1998), noting that information on barred terminals may be made available by Inmarsat to appropriate national authorities, invited Member Governments to encourage national authorities to confirm the operational status of Inmarsat terminals appearing on a relevant safety certificate when undertaking inspections, as appropriate.

6 Member Governments are also invited to take all necessary actions to ensure that any such ship will be prevented from sailing if its seaworthiness is affected, particularly with regard to non-compliance with SOLAS chapter IV, by the non-availability of the satellite terminal(s) necessary for it to perform the required communication services.