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IMO UPDATE:

**MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE – 111th
SESSION (MSC 111), 13th – 22nd MAY 2026**

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SUMMARY OF 110th SESSION OF MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE (MSC-111)

The 111th session of the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111) met in-person at IMO Headquarters in London (in-person supported with hybrid capabilities) was held from 13th – 22nd May 2026.

MSC 111 Highlights

- Amendments to mandatory instruments and related non-mandatory instruments
- Expected adoption of the goal-based International Code of Safety for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS Code)
- Impacts on shipping and seafarers of the situation in the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman, and the Gulf region, particularly in and around the Strait of Hormuz
- Enhancing maritime security
- Piracy and armed robbery against ships
- Development of a GHG safety regulatory framework
- Goal-based ship construction standards audit
- Review of the financial architecture of the LRIT system
- Maritime digitalization
- Reports of Sub-Committees
- Media attendance - information

Amendments to mandatory instruments and related non-mandatory instruments

During the MSC 111 session, several significant amendments were adopted for mandatory instruments, alongside the approval or adoption of various related non-mandatory instruments designed to support their implementation.

• Amendments to Mandatory Instruments

The Committee adopted amendments to the following mandatory international conventions and codes:

- SOLAS (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea):
 - Chapters IV/5 and V/5: Amendments require the dissemination of Maritime Safety Information (MSI) and Search and Rescue (SAR) information through all operational recognized mobile satellite services.
 - Chapter V (Regulations 18 and 19): Introduction of the VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) into the regulatory framework.
 - Chapter III (Regulation 19): Updated references regarding emergency training and drills, specifically for abandon ship drills using lifeboats. The amendments will enter into force on 1 January 2028.
- IP Code (International Code of Safety for Ships Carrying Industrial Personnel):

Amendments change the assumed mass of an industrial person from 75kg to 90kg for stability calculations to provide more realistic data.

- LSA Code (International Life-Saving Appliance Code): New requirements for the design of arrangements used for simulated launches of free-fall lifeboats, ensuring they have a safety factor of at least 6.
- 2011 ESP Code: Amendments introduce Remote Inspection Techniques (RIT) as an alternative to close-up surveys for bulk carriers and oil tankers.
- 1988 Load Lines Protocol: Requirements were updated to enhance crew safety on open decks, mandating guard rails or bulwarks at least 1 meter high around exposed decks and sea access holes like moonpools.
- IMDG Code (International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code): Adoption of Amendment 43-26, which includes new entries for lithium and sodium ion batteries and updated segregation requirements for radioactive materials.
- HSC Codes (1994 and 2000): Consequential amendments were made to align with SOLAS regarding the introduction of VDES.
- 2009 MODU Code: Amendments to Chapter 6 regarding electrical equipment capable of operating after an emergency shutdown.

• **New and Amended Non-Mandatory Instruments**

MSC 111 approved or adopted several non-mandatory codes and guidelines to provide technical frameworks for emerging technologies and safety procedures:

- **MASS Code:** Adoption of the non-mandatory International Code for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships, effective July 1, 2026. This serves as the basis for a future mandatory code expected in 2032.
- **Hydrogen and Ammonia Fuels:**
 - Approved Interim guidelines for the safety of ships using hydrogen as fuel.
 - Approved Interim guidelines for the use of ammonia cargo as fuel on gas carriers.
 - Approved interim guidelines for the training of seafarers on ships using methyl/ethyl alcohols and ammonia as fuels.
- **Fibre-Reinforced Plastic (FRP):** Revised interim guidelines for the use of FRP elements in ship structures, focusing on fire safety assessment.
- **Remote Surveys:** Approved guidance on the assessment and application of remote

surveys, ISM Code audits, and ISPS Code verifications.

- **Safe Return to Port (SRtP):** Revised explanatory notes to support passenger ship systems' capabilities after a fire or flooding casualty, including guidance on voyages exceeding SRtP range.
- **Digitalization and Cyber Security:**
 - Approved the IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization.
 - Approved revised guidelines on maritime cyber risk management.
 - Approved guidelines for software maintenance of shipboard navigation and communication systems.
- **Electronic Nautical Publications (ENP):** New guidelines were approved to ensure uniform implementation of SOLAS regulations regarding digital publications used in place of paper charts.
- **LSA Testing:** Amendments to the Revised Recommendation on Testing of Life-Saving Appliances (Resolution MSC.81(70)).
- **Lost Containers:** Agreed on standardized templates for reporting the loss or observation of drifting freight containers to enhance maritime safety.

Expected adoption of the goal-based International Code of Safety for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS Code)

The Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111) has finalized and adopted the non-mandatory International Code for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS Code), marking a significant milestone in the regulation of autonomous vessels.

The non-mandatory MASS Code is designed to serve as a baseline global regulatory framework to ensure that the operation of autonomous ships is safe, secure, and environmentally sound. Key characteristics include:

- **Addressing Regulatory Gaps:** It aims to fill operational and safety gaps that are not currently covered by existing international treaties, such as SOLAS.
- **Technology-Neutrality:** The code is designed to remain technology-neutral to encourage commercial maritime innovation.
- **Effective Date:** The non-mandatory code is set to take effect on 1 July 2026.

The non-mandatory version will form the basis for a future mandatory MASS Code. The roadmap for this transition includes:

- **Experience Building Phase (EBP):** A draft framework for an EBP was developed at MSC 111 and will be progressed further at MSC 112. This phase will allow for the gathering of real-world data and experience to inform the mandatory requirements.
- **Timeline:** The mandatory code is currently expected to enter into force on 1 January 2032. While some committee members suggested a target of 2036 might be more realistic, the existing 2032 date was maintained for now, subject to future revision.
- **Inter-Committee Support:** Other IMO bodies (including CCC, HTW, Ill, NCSR, SDC, and SSE) have been identified to assist in developing the mandatory code.

During the finalization of the non-mandatory code, several critical operational and safety points were established:

- **Remote Operations Centres (ROC):**
 - Administrations may consider the training and watchkeeping standards of the 1978 STCW Convention for roles assigned in an ROC.

- The ROC can be designated as a location directly associated with the ship's navigational bridge and machinery space.
- ROCs must comply with the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code.
- Presence of a Master: The committee reaffirmed that whenever crew or other persons are on board a MASS, the master must be physically present on the ship.
- Safety Equipment: Emergency towing arrangements (per SOLAS II-1/3-4) must apply to MASS regardless of their size. These systems
- must allow for remote or autonomous activation if no alternative rapid deployment method is available.
- Certification: MSC finalized the formats for MASS and ROC certificates and records. However, these are provided as examples only; individual member States are responsible for creating their own standardized statutory forms.
- Registration: It was clarified that trials of MASS should only be conducted by ships that are duly registered and certificated with a flag State.

Impacts on shipping and seafarers of the situation in the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman, and the Gulf region, particularly in and around the Strait of Hormuz

MSC 111 focused heavily on the worsening security situation in the Arabian Sea, the Sea of Oman, and the Gulf region, especially around the Strait of Hormuz. The committee held extensive, and at times politicized, debate on the risks to navigation and seafarers, influenced by broader concerns over dark fleet incidents and regional maritime instability.

As a result, MSC 111 adopted a resolution addressing the safety and security of navigation and seafarers in the Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and Gulf region, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz. The resolution condemns the unlawful activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and it will be included as an annex to the final report and published on the IMODOCS portal.

Enhancing maritime security

During the MSC 111 session, several key measures were approved and discussed to enhance maritime security, focusing primarily on cybersecurity, the review of existing security codes, and the application of remote verification techniques.

• Maritime Cybersecurity Management

The Committee took significant steps to address the evolving digital threats to the maritime industry:

- Revised Cyber Risk Guidelines: MSC approved the revised Guidelines on maritime cyber risk management (MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev.4). These updated guidelines now include references to the IAPH Cyber Resilience Guidelines specifically for emerging technologies within the maritime supply chain.
- Non-Mandatory Maritime Cyber Code: A roadmap was approved for the development of a non-mandatory maritime cyber code, with a target completion date set for 2028.

Work on this code will continue through an intersessional working group meeting scheduled for 2027.

• International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code

The Committee addressed both operational updates and potential future revisions to the ISPS Code:

- Code Review: MSC considered a proposal to review the ISPS Code in response to the increasing risks from organized crime and other illicit activities. While the proposal was noted, interested parties have been invited to submit specific amendment proposals for future meetings.
- Remote Operations Centres (ROC): As part of the new MASS Code framework, it was agreed that Remote Operations Centres—which are used for the operation of autonomous ships—should be subject to the ISPS Code.

- Remote Verifications: New guidance was approved regarding the assessment and application of remote ISPS Code verifications. Due to the sensitive nature of security

information, the use of remote methods is restricted to extraordinary circumstances and is limited to interim, intermediate, and additional shipboard verifications.

Piracy and armed robbery against ships

MSC 111 reviewed 2025 piracy and armed robbery trends and found a rise to 171 reported or attempted incidents worldwide, up 17% from 2024. Hostage and kidnapping cases fell, with fewer crew affected, and the worst-hit areas were the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, the Indian Ocean, and the South China Sea.

The committee also noted that only 22 Member States and one Associate Member have

provided information on requirements for privately contracted armed security personnel. In addition, it highlighted IMO support for three EU- and Korea-funded projects worth about €9 million for the Djibouti Code of Conduct region and the Yaoundé Code of Conduct region, and urged States to report incidents and support the related trust funds.

Development of a GHG safety regulatory framework

The development of a safety regulatory framework for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) reduction is a major priority for the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), focusing on the safety risks associated with new technologies and alternative fuels. During MSC 111, the Committee endorsed a comprehensive work plan to address 51 identified regulatory gaps and barriers that currently limit the deployment of these technologies.

• The "One Ship, One Code" Policy

A central pillar of this framework is the integration of the "one ship, one code" policy. This policy aims to provide regulatory clarity for different vessel types using alternative fuels:

- IGF and SOLAS Amendments: Approved amendments to SOLAS Chapter II-1 and the IGF Code confirm that the IGF Code applies to ships using gas or low-flashpoint fuels but explicitly excludes gas carriers. These changes align definitions for "gaseous fuel" and "low-flashpoint fuel" across instruments.
- IGC Code Jurisdiction: Gas carriers using alternative fuels (even those not listed as cargo) remain under the jurisdiction of the IGC Code rather than the IGF Code.
- Implementation: These amendments are scheduled for adoption at MSC 112 with an expected entry into force date of July 1, 2028.

• Interim Guidelines for Alternative Fuels

To support the immediate safe adoption of new fuels, MSC 111 approved several sets of interim guidelines:

- Hydrogen: The Committee approved interim guidelines for the safety of ships using hydrogen as fuel, which use a goal-based approach to address hydrogen's unique safety challenges. Additionally, revised recommendations for the carriage of liquefied hydrogen in bulk were adopted, including new requirements for membrane-type containment systems.
- Ammonia: Interim guidelines for the use of ammonia cargo as fuel on gas carriers were approved. These guidelines include requirements for ammonia fuel supply piping, fixed gas detection systems, and Ammonia Release Mitigation Systems (ARMS).
- Seafarer Training: New guidelines were approved for the training of seafarers serving on ships using ammonia, as well as those using methyl/ethyl alcohols (methanol).

• Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

The Committee is progressing work on the use of batteries as a primary power source:

- Sub-Committee Transfer: Elaboration of interim guidelines for battery energy storage systems was transferred from the SSE to the SDC Sub-committee to better align with ship design and construction expertise.

- SOLAS Updates: Work is ongoing to develop draft amendments to SOLAS Regulation II-1/41, which would allow batteries to be used as the main source of electrical power and lighting.

- **IGC Code Technical Updates**

Consolidated draft amendments to the IGC Code were finalized to support GHG reduction technologies on gas carriers. Key updates include:

- Technical Provisions: Requirements for finite element analysis (FEA) for Type C tanks,

updated emergency shutdown (ESD) valve closure times, and enhanced fire protection capacity.

- Fuel Scope: Provisions were added to govern the use of LPG, ethane, and CO₂ as fuel or cargo.
- Application: A "three-date" application system was agreed upon, meaning these requirements will apply to ships based on their contract (July 1, 2028), keel laying (January 1, 2029), or delivery date (July 1, 2032).

Goal-based ship construction standards audit

Under the Goal-Based Standards (GBS) framework, the construction rules for bulk carriers and oil tankers set by classification societies (acting as recognized organizations, or ROs) are verified by audit teams established by the IMO. During MSC 111, the Committee focused on the results of the latest maintenance audit and planned future improvements to the process.

- **The Fourth GBS Maintenance Verification Audit**

MSC 111 approved the report of the fourth maintenance verification audit, which involved fourteen recognized organizations, including all 12 members of the International Association of Classification Societies (IACS). This audit covered rule changes submitted during the 2023–2025 cycle.

- **Key Audit Findings**

While the report concluded that all 14 ROs generally demonstrate conformity with GBS, several specific issues and non-conformities were highlighted for rectification:

- Definition of Ship Length (IACS and All ROs): The audit found a lack of "consequent assessment" regarding bulkhead requirements and loading conditions following the change from "rule length" (L) to "freeboard length" (LLL) that took effect in July 2023.
- Design Transparency (ABS, RS, and NK): These

organizations failed to meet design transparency requirements because certain IACS recommendations were kept as internal or confidential documents, which limited their availability to shipyards and designers.

- Rule Inconsistencies (IRS): Inconsistencies were identified in ship length definitions across different rule volumes, and no consequential assessment was provided for these variations.

- **Committee Actions and Next Steps**

Following the approval of the audit report, MSC 111 invited all involved ROs to take immediate steps to rectify the identified non-conformities and address all observations.

To support the continued evolution of these standards, the Committee agreed in principle to:

- Re-establish a GBS Working Group: This group will meet at MSC 112 to work on actions required to address the audit's observations.
- Standardize Audit Guidance: A proposal will be developed to create standardized GBS audit guidance to ensure more consistent verification processes in the future.
- GBS Format for Performance Standards: The Committee also approved a roadmap for Engine Control Room Alert Management (ECRAM) performance standards, which will use the GBS format with Tier IV requirements.

Review of the financial architecture of the LRIT system

During the MSC 111 session, the Committee approved significant changes to the financial architecture of the Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) system. These changes aim

to enhance maritime safety and security by encouraging coastal States to make better use of the system through the removal of cost barriers.

MSC approved draft amendments to SOLAS V/19-1 to make LRIT information free of charge for entitled coastal States, with entry into force expected on 1 January 2032 if adopted at MSC 112.

It also approved, in principle, a related revision of the LRIT performance standards and functional requirements for adoption at MSC 112.

Maritime digitalization

During the MSC 111 session, the Committee reached several key milestones regarding maritime digitalization, most notably the approval of a global strategy and the introduction of new technical standards for digital communication and software maintenance.

• The IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization

A central outcome was the approval of the IMO Strategy on Maritime Digitalization, which was originally developed by the Facilitation (FAL) Committee.

- **Work Plan and Action Plan:** The Committee approved a work plan for the strategy's further development and encouraged Member States to participate in a Correspondence Group to provide input for the associated action plan.
- **Inter-Committee Coordination:** The strategy will be submitted to MEPC 85 for concurrent approval to ensure a harmonized approach across the IMO's environmental and safety bodies.c

Circulars adopted by MSC 111

Circulars will be available on IMODOCS once the MSC 111 report (WP 1) is finalized by the IMO Secretariat.

Adoption date is 22 May 2026.

Specific application dates may be specified in the Circulars. The resolution and circular reference numbers have yet to be finalized.

IMO Circulars / Guidelines	Topic
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1529/Rev.1	Unified interpretations of paragraphs 4.4.7.6 and 4.7.7 of the LSA Code, as amended by resolutions MSC.320(89) and MSC.[...](111)
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.[...]	Unified interpretations of the IGC Code
Resolution MSC- MEPC.5/Circ.3/Rev.1	Revised unified interpretation of the date of completion of the survey and verification on which the certificates are based 2000 HSC Codes, relating to fire-extinguishing media restrictions, with the effective date of 1 January 2026
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.[...]	Guidelines for the onboard operational use of shipborne VHF data exchange system (VDES)
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1205/Rev.2	Revised guidelines for developing operation and maintenance manuals for lifeboat systems
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1578/Rev.1	Revised guidelines on safety during abandon ship drills using lifeboats
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1630/Rev.4	Revised standardized life-saving appliance evaluation and test report forms (survival craft)
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.[...]	Guidelines on the use of remote inspection techniques for ESP Code surveys
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.[...]	Interim Guidelines for the safety of ships using hydrogen as fuel

IMO Circulars / Guidelines	Topic
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.[...]	Interim Guidelines for the safety of ships using ammonia cargo as fuel
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1574/Rev.1	Revised interim guidelines for use of fibre reinforced plastic (FRP) elements within ship structures: fire safety
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.[...]	Guidelines for software maintenance of shipboard computer-based navigation and communication equipment and systems
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.[...]	Guidelines on carriage and use of electronic nautical publications (ENP) system
Resolution MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev.4	Revised Guidelines on maritime cyber risk management
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1588/Rev.4	Revised emergency response procedures for ships carrying dangerous goods (EmS Guide)
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1630/Rev.4	Revised standardized life-saving appliance evaluation and test report forms (survival craft)
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1689/Rev.1	Escape arrangements from the lower part of machinery spaces (SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1 and 13.4.2)
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1163/Rev.14	Parties to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, confirmed by the Maritime Safety Committee to have communicated information which demonstrates that full and complete effect is given to the relevant provisions of the Convention
Resolution MSC.1/Circ.1369/Rev.1	Explanatory Notes for Safe Return to Port and Orderly Evacuation and Abandonment After a fire or flooding casualty

Amendments adopted to mandatory instruments and Codes by MSC 111.

The resolution number have yet to be finalized.

Resolutions Reference	Contents
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to Chapters I MSC (...) 111 and V, and the Appendix of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974;
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the International Code on the Enhanced Programme of Inspections During Surveys of Bulk Carriers and Oil Tankers, 2011 (2011 ESP Code).
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft, 1994 (1994 HSC Code)
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the International Code of Safety for High-Speed Craft, 2000 (2000 HSC Code)
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG) Code
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the International Code of Safety for Ships Carrying Industrial Personnel (IP Code)
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the International Life-Saving Appliance (LSA) Code
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the Requirements for Maintenance, Thorough Examination, Operational Testing, Overhaul and Repair of Lifeboats and Rescue Boats, Launching Appliances and Release Gear (Resolution MSC.402(96))
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the Protocol Of 1988 Relating to the International Convention On Load Lines, 1966 (1988 Load Lines Protocol)

Other resolutions adopted by MSC 111.

Resolutions Reference	Contents
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Actions to Ensure the Safety and Security of Navigation and of Seafarers in the Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman and the Gulf Region, particularly in and around the Strait of Hormuz, Resulting from the Unlawful Activities of the Islamic Republic of Iran
Resolution MSC.509(105)/REV.2	Provision of Radio Services for the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Introduction Of VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) Into the IMO Regulatory Framework
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Performance Standards for Shipborne VHF Data Exchange System (VDES)
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the Revised Recommendation on Testing of Life-Saving Appliances (Resolution MSC.81(70))
Resolution MSC (...) 111	International Code of Safety for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS CODE)
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Revised Guidelines on the Prevention of Access by Stowaways and the Allocation of Responsibilities to Seek the Successful Resolution of Stowaway Cases
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Amendments to the Code for the Construction And Equipment of Mobile Offshore Drilling Units, 2009 (2009 MODU CODE)
Resolution MSC.314(88)/REV.1	Mandatory Ship Reporting System "In the Adriatic Sea" (ADRIREP)
Resolution MSC.332(90)/REV.1	Mandatory Ship Reporting System "In the Sound Between Denmark And Sweden" (SOUNDREP)
Resolution MSC.379(93)/REV.1	Amendments to the Worldwide Radionavigation System (Resolution A.1046(27))
Resolution MSC (...) 111	Performance Standards for Shipborne Beidou Satellite Navigation System (BDS) Receiver Equipment

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