

SUMMARY REPORT

MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
108th session

MSC 108 – May 2024



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 108th session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) was held in person in London (15 – 24 May 2024) with hybrid facilities allowing remote participation.

MSC 108 **adopted amendments** to the following Convention and Codes, for entry into force on 1 January 2026:

- SOLAS Chapter II-2
 - Part B, Regulation 4, Probability of ignition
 - Part C Suppression of fire
 - Part G, Regulation 20 Protection of vehicle, special category and ro-ro spaces
- SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 31, Danger Message
- International Code of Safety for Ships using Gases or other Low-flashpoint Fuels (IGF Code)
- International Code for the Safe Carriage of Grain in Bulk (Grain Code)
- International Code on the Enhanced Programme of Inspections during Surveys of Bulk Carriers and Oil Tankers, 2011 (2011 ESP Code)
- International Life-Saving Appliance Code (LSA Code)
- International Code for Fire Safety Systems (FSS Code)

MSC 108 also **adopted**:

- amendments to SOLAS Chapter II-1/3-4 on emergency towing arrangements and procedures for all new ships other than tankers, over 20 000 GT, constructed on or after 1 January 2028. Entry into force on 1 January 2028.
- over 20 circulars (new or revised circulars), including the revised Guidelines on maritime cyber risk management
- several Unified Interpretations of SOLAS and mandatory Codes

MSC 108 **approved**:

- draft amendments to IGF and IGC Code, for adoption at MSC 109

MSC 108 **progressed** its work on:

- the development of a non-mandatory goal-based instrument regulating the operation of maritime autonomous surface ships (MASS) for 2025
- the development of a safety regulatory framework to support the reduction of GHG emissions from ships using new fuels and technologies

A summary table of finalized/adopted texts is provided in the appendix of this report ([see page 8](#)).

Consideration and adoption of amendments to mandatory instruments (Item 3)

Amendments to SOLAS and other mandatory instruments

In 2021, MSC 104 introduced an amendment to address concerns about a delayed four-year cycle for SOLAS and related mandatory instruments amendments due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This amendment to MSC.1/Circ.1481, under the exceptional circumstances clause, sets the entry into force date for draft amendments to SOLAS to 1 January 2026 when adopted before 1 July 2024 (instead of 1 January 2028), aiming to minimize disruption to the amendment cycle.

MSC 108 adopted several amendments, as summarized in the table below:

<i>The list of associated MSC resolutions is available in the appendix of this report</i>	
1974 SOLAS Convention	Amendments to chapter II-1 on the structure of ships, to include a new section requiring emergency towing arrangements to be fitted on all new ships other than tankers of not less than 20,000 GT. Entry into force 1 January 2028
	Amendments to chapters II-2 and V of SOLAS 1974, on oil fuel parameters other than flashpoint; fire detection within control stations and cargo control rooms; fire safety of ro-ro passenger ships; and reporting of the loss of containers. Entry into force 1 January 2026
IGF Code	Amendments including regulations pertaining to specific requirements for ships using natural gas as fuel; bunkering operations; and manufacture and testing for the fuel containment system. Entry into force 1 January 2026
Grain Code	Amendments introducing a new class of loading conditions for special compartments. Entry into force 1 January 2026
2011 ESP Code	Amendments regarding procedures for approval and certification of a firm engaged in thickness measurement of hull structures. Entry into force 1 January 2026
LSA Code	Amendments regarding the in-water performance of lifejackets; single fall and hook systems; and lowering speed of survival craft and rescue boats. Entry into force 1 January 2026
FSS Code	Amendments with regards to fire safety of ro-ro passenger ships. Entry into force 1 January 2026
IMDG Code	Amendment 42-24. Updates throughout the Code, including all parts 1 to 7. Entry into force 1 January 2026, with possible voluntary application from 1 January 2025. The IMDG Code is amended every two years and a consolidated text of the Code should be produced every four years. Therefore, a consolidated text of the IMDG Code was adopted at MSC 108

STCW Code	Amendments to table A-VI/1-4 of STCW Code To prevent and respond to bullying and harassment, including sexual assault and sexual harassment (SASH)
STCW-F	Revised annex to the 1995 STCW-F Convention and new STCW-F Code

Amendments to Resolutions MSC.215(82) and MSC.288(87)

- Performance standard for protective coatings for dedicated seawater ballast tanks in all types of ships and double-side skin spaces of bulk carriers;
- Performance standard for protective coatings for cargo oil tanks of crude oil tankers;
- Minor correction to replace the references to "NACE Coating Inspector Level 2" with "AMPP Certified Coatings Inspector".

Amendments to Resolution MSC.402(96)

- Requirements for maintenance, thorough examination, operational testing, overhaul and repair of lifeboats and rescue boats, launching appliances and release gear;
- Amendment to reflect the new ventilation requirements for survival craft adopted by resolution.MSC.535(107);
- Resolution associated to SOLAS Chapter III.

Development of a goal-based instrument for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS) (Item 4)

BACKGROUND

In 2017, MSC 98 agreed to include in its 2018-2019 biennial agenda the Regulatory Scoping Exercise (RSE) for the use of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS), with a target completion year of 2020. A work collaboration was also established with the Legal Committee and the Facilitation Committee (Joint Working Group on MASS). In 2019, MSC 101 published the first Interim Guidelines for MASS Trials (MSC.1/Circ.1604). The aim is to adopt a non-mandatory goal-based Code for MASS in 2025 and a mandatory Code in 2030 at latest.

MSC 108 considered the reports of the MASS Correspondence Group on the draft non-mandatory MASS Code and the Intersessional MASS Working Group (November 2023), as well as the outcome of the Joint MSC-LEG-FAL Working Group 3 on MASS which took place the week prior to this session.

A Working Group was established during MSC 108 to further develop the draft non-mandatory MASS Code. The drafting work will continue through the existing Correspondence Group (solely on part 1 "Introduction", including terms and definitions and some chapters in part 2 "Main principles for MASS and MASS functions") and will submit an oral report to MSC 109 (December 2024) and a written report to MSC 110 (May 2025). It was also agreed to establish an intersessional working group which will take place on 9-13 September 2024 (solely on part 3 "Goals, Functional Requirements and Expected performance" and remaining chapters of part 2 not discussed at CG) and submit a report to MSC 109.

The Working Group clarified several aspects, including:

- involvement of relevant IMO sub-committees (HTW, NCSR...) to develop guidance on specific matters after adoption of the non-mandatory Code (to be discussed at MSC 110 in May 2025);
- instruct HTW to review two MSC circulars on MASS regarding trials under regulation I/13 of the STCW Convention in which the officer of the navigational watch acts as the sole lookout in periods of darkness (Circ.733 and Circ.867) which would be in conflict with Circ.1604 on MASS trials and the future MASS Code when people are remote;
- application to cargo ships to which SOLAS chapter I applied, except for cargo high speed craft;
- if there is a crew onboard, a master should be onboard as well to ensure safety personnel and operations;
- authority remains with the master while onboard over any remote operators;
- no specific methodology would be required for MASS regarding the risk assessment;
- clarify compliance with COLREG to be achieved for MASS under Operational Design Domain (ODD) when entering a fallback state or emergency;
- distinction between the chapters on “connectivity” and “radiocommunication”;
- a Remote Operation Management (ROM) concept as a potential alternative to the ISM Code scheme of certification for the safe operation of a Remote Operation Center (ROC). Guidance will be discussed and developed in the Correspondence Group.

The roadmap for developing the goal-based MASS Code was updated as followed:

- MSC 109 (December 2024): further develop the draft MASS non-mandatory Code;
- MSC 110 (May 2025): finalization and adoption of the new non-mandatory MASS Code;
- MSC 111 (Spring 2026): develop a framework for an experience-building phase after the adoption of the non-mandatory version.

Following the experience-building phase, the mandatory MASS Code will be developed and adopted on 1 July 2030 (latest) for an entry into force expected on 1 January 2032.

Development of a safety regulatory framework to support the reduction of GHG emissions from ships using new technologies and alternative fuels (Item 5)

BACKGROUND

In 2023, MSC decided to undertake an assessment to understand safety risks associated with the use of new fuels/technologies for the reduction of GHG emissions from ships. The work would consist in:

- listing technologies and alternative fuel sources considered in response to GHG targets set by IMO;
- listing instruments under the MSC purview causing a barrier to deployment of the said fuels/technologies, and gaps in the regulations;
- developing a road map to deliver a regulatory framework and remove barriers and gaps.

A Correspondence Group was set up to initiate the development of a safety regulatory framework to support the reduction of GHG emissions from ships using new technologies and alternative fuels.

MSC 108 considered the report of the Correspondence Group concerning the development of a safety regulatory framework to support the reduction of GHG emissions from ships using new technologies and alternative fuels, which was established at MSC 107 as a new work output. A dedicated working group aimed to progress the work at this session.

Taking into account the ongoing works on interim guidelines for alternative fuels at CCC sub-committee (completion of works concerning hydrogen, ammonia, low-flash point fuels, methyl/ethyl alcohols and fuel cells until 2026), the working group discussed on the following:

- nuclear power will need a review of the Code of Safety for Nuclear Merchant ships (Resolution A 491(XII)1981) to take into account significant progress;
- Wind propulsion, considered both as an energy and an assistant to propulsion, will require specific attention on vessel's stability, manoeuvrability and visibility (SOLAS Chapter V);
- batteries (including Lithium) will require Fire Safety systems requirements and Alternative Designs;
- a special attention was paid to Onboard Carbon Capture and Storage which may present also specific questions of safety (status of the carbon captured as cargo or waste).

The tasks may entail a complete revision of SOLAS Chapter VIII, development of IGF Code or SOLAS on low-flash point fuels as well as important developments concerning crew training as such fuels require strong skills to operate and ship-specific familiarization. MSC will have to prepare a roadmap on how to proceed for the allocation of works taking into account the current workload, the most viable solutions and the strategy to decarbonize shipping industry.

Revision of the Guidelines on Maritime Cyber Risk Management (MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev.2) and identification of next steps to enhance maritime cybersecurity (Item 6)

Cyber threats in the maritime industry have evolved and with the increased use of cyber-connected systems, MSC 107 agreed to initiate a revision of the 2017 Guidelines on Maritime Cyber Risk Management, for completion in 2024, and to identify next steps to enhance maritime cybersecurity.

The revised guidelines should harmonize the requirements within existing frameworks clarifications on regarding what to expect during surveys and inspections with respect to cyber risk management. Key elements of the revision are:

- new definitions;
- enhanced definition of “effective cyber risk management” and each step of the “risk management framework”;
- incorporation of “cyber resilient security features”;
- additional reference to existing industry standards (IACS UR E26 and E27 on cyber resilience);
- clarified recommendation on cybersecurity training for senior management and employees;
- clarified recommendation to report and record cyber incidents.

MSC 108 approved the revised Guidelines on maritime cyber risk management, for the concurrent approval of the Facilitation Committee (FAL) in March 2025, and later circulation as circular [MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev.3](#).

Measures to enhance maritime security (Item 7)

MSC 108 considered an update on developments related to maritime security and a report on related capacity-building projects implemented by the Secretariat. Member States are invited to continue to effectively implement, in partnership with industry, IMO security measures, including SOLAS Chapter XI-2 and the ISPS Code, taking into account new and emerging security threats notably in the Red Sea area and the Gulf of Aden, and to request IMO's technical assistance as appropriate.

MSC 108 adopted resolution MSC.564(108) on the Security situation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden resulting from Houthi attacks on commercial ships and seafarers.

Piracy and armed robbery against ships (Item 8)

MSC 108 considered developments concerning piracy and armed robbery against ships, including 2023 statistics and updates on the situation in the Gulf of Guinea.

MSC 108 noted the following:

- 150 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships reported to the Organization for 2023 (increase of 15% at the global level compared to 2022);
- the areas most affected in 2023 were: the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (85), West Africa (22) and South America (Pacific) (14);
- incidents in the Gulf of Guinea (West Africa) increased in 2023 by 5% compared to 2022;
- implementation of the Djibouti Code of Conduct: standard operating procedures adopted in the region, to ensure seamless information sharing among national and regional centres, and communication with international naval forces supporting maritime security efforts in the region.

Unsafe mixed migration by sea (Item 9)

MSC 108 was informed of developments concerning refugees and migrants moving by sea. A proposal to develop guidelines concerning non-survivors in migrant boats was reviewed but no action was taken.

Domestic ferry safety (Item 10)

MSC 108 considered an update on developments since the adoption of resolution MSC.518(105) on the Model Regulations on Domestic Ferry Safety, which provide framework provisions on domestic ferry safety for incorporation into national law. It was noted that China had developed online training material on domestic ferry safety and agreed to include the training on the IMO e-Learning platform.

Report of the Sub-Committees (Items 12 to 16)

MSC 108 formally adopted or approved several amendments, circulars, Unified Interpretations, as prepared by the following sub-committees on:

- Navigation, Communication and Search and Rescue 10th session (NCSR, item 12)
- Implementation of IMO Instruments 9th session (III, item 13) held in August 2023.
 - Detailed information on III work is available in [BV Summary for III 9](#).
- Carriage of Cargoes and Containers 9th session (CCC, item 14) held in September 2023.
 - MSC 108 agreed to move forward the entry into force of amendment to paragraph 16.9.2 of the IGC Code, for adoption at MSC 109 and earlier entry into force on 1 July 2026, as an exceptional circumstance. This would remove the prohibition to use of ammonia cargo as fuel. The rest of the draft amendments to the IGC Code would remain applicable from 1 January 2028. Detailed information on CCC work is available in [BV Summary for CCC 9](#).
- Ship Design and Construction 10th session (SDC, item 15) held in January 2024.
 - MSC 108 noted that SDC 9 agreed to develop draft amendments to the International Code on the Enhanced Programme of Inspections during Surveys of Bulk Carriers and Oil Tankers, 2011 (2011 ESP Code) to permit the use of remote inspection techniques (RIT) for the close-up survey of the structure of ships during surveys, as well as to develop related guidelines on RIT under the ESP Code. Detailed information on SDC work is available in [BV Summary for SDC 10](#)
- Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping 10th session (HTW, item 16) held in February 2024
 - MSC 108 approved a list of 22 specific areas for the comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code, the methodology and the roadmap for the comprehensive review. Under the roadmap, the draft amendments would be finalized in spring 2027 and the meeting for their adoption would be held in autumn 2027.

Work programme (Item 18)

MSC 108 agreed to the agendas of Sub-committees SDC 11, SSE 11, HTW 11, CCC 10, NCSR 11 and III 10. The Committee also discussed the increased workload of the Committee and its subsidiary bodies and how to prioritize the proposals for new work outputs. In consequence, MSC 108 initiated a review of its internal work procedures. The work will carry on at MSC 109.

Any other business (Item 19)

LEGAL ADVICE ON THE APPROVAL OF UNIFIED INTERPRETATIONS

Unified interpretations are of a recommendatory nature and do not need to be approved unanimously but through consensus. The term "unified" does not concern the method of approval but rather the substance of the unified interpretation. Although not legally binding, they are the product of an agreement, and it is therefore recommended to implement them for consistency.

The technical unified interpretations are approved by the respective committee and disseminated in the form of circulars of the committees (MSC, MEPC, FAL), or circulars related to the convention for which the interpretation was approved (BWM, AFS, etc.). Their approval shall be examined based on three safeguards:

- UIs are not meant to amend mandatory requirements in Conventions and associated instruments;
- UIs should not go beyond an interpretation of requirements;
- UIs should not contradict the text of mandatory requirement.

MSC 108 agreed to amend, at a later stage, the Committees' method of work (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.5) to include the decision-making process for UIs and the safeguards to ensure that UIs do not go beyond mandatory requirements and do not circumvent the requirement development process.

APPENDIX

Table 1. Amendments adopted to mandatory instruments and Codes

Resolutions are published as annexes to the MSC 108 Report (WP 1) and are available once finalized by the IMO Secretariat, on IMODOCS and on the IMO website.

AMENDMENTS TO MANDATORY INSTRUMENTS	
SOLAS Convention Resolution MSC.550(108)	Entry into force (EIF)
Chapter II-2 Part B, Prevention of fire and explosion Regulation 4 - Probability of ignition Oil fuel delivered to and used on board ships shall not jeopardize the safety of ships or adversely affect the performance of the machinery or be harmful to personnel	1 January 2026
Chapter II-2 Part C Suppression of fire Regulation 7 Detection and alarm Protection of accommodation and service spaces and control stations	
Chapter II-2 Part G Special requirements Regulation 20 Protection of vehicle, special category, open and closed ro-ro spaces, and weather decks intended for the carriage of vehicles. Contains several amendments and new provisions	All ships constructed before 1 January 2026 comply with the requirements of paragraph 4.1.6 (not later than the first survey after 1 January 2028). Ships constructed on or after 1 January 2026.
Chapter V Safety of navigation Regulations 31 and 32 - Danger messages Reporting for ship involved in the loss of freight container(s), and for ship that observes freight container(s) drifting at sea	1 January 2026
Resolution MSC.549(108) SOLAS Chapter II-1 Emergency towing arrangements to be fitted on all new ships other than tankers of not less than 20,000 GT, constructed on or after 1 January 2028.	1 January 2028 all new ships other than tankers > 20,000 GT
IGF Code	EIF
Resolution MSC.551(108) Amendments to the IGF Code	1 January 2026 New structural provisions applicable to ship constructed on or after 1 January 2026
LSA Code	EIF
Resolution MSC.554(108) Amendments to the LSA Code	1 January 2026
GRAIN Code	EIF
Resolutions MSC.552(108) Amendments to the Grain Code	1 January 2026

FSS Code	EIF
Resolution MSC.555(108) Amendments to the FSS Code	1 January 2026
2011 ESP CODE	EIF
Resolution MSC.553(108) Amendments to the ESP Code	1 January 2026
IMDG Code	EIF
Resolution MSC.556(108) Amendments to the IMDG Code	1 January 2026 Early voluntary application from 1 January 2025

Table 2. Other MSC resolutions adopted by MSC 108

Resolutions are published as annexes to the MSC 108 Report (WP 1) and are available once finalized by the IMO on IMODOCS and on the IMO website. Date of adoption is 24 May 2024. Entry into force is either on adoption date or as specified in the Resolution.

OTHER MSC RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED BY MSC 108	
Resolution reference	Entry into force
Resolution MSC.557(108) Amendments to the Performance standard for protective coatings for dedicated seawater ballast tanks in all types of ships and double side skin spaces of bulk carriers	1 January 2026
Resolution MSC.558(108) Amendments to the Performance standard for protective coatings for cargo oil tanks of crude oil tankers	1 January 2026
Resolution MSC.559(108) 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))	1 January 2026
Resolution SC.560(108) Amendments to part a of the seafarers' training, certification and watchkeeping (STCW) Code	1 January 2026
Resolution MSC.561(108) Amendments to the Annex to the international Convention on standards of training, certification and watchkeeping for fishing vessel personnel, 1995	1 January 2026
Resolution MSC.562(108) Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F) CODE	1 January 2026
Resolution MSC.563(108) Amendments to the revised Recommendation on testing of Life-Saving Appliances (MSC.81(70))	24 May 2024 For new testing of life-saving appliances
Resolution MSC.564(108) Security situation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden resulting from Houthi attacks on commercial ships and seafarers	24 May 2024
MSC.530(106)/Rev.1 Performance standards for electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS). To introduce the capability of digital exchange of ships' route plans	24 May 2024 For equipment installed on or after 1 January 2029
Resolution MSC.565(108) Revised Interim Recommendations for carriage of Liquefied Hydrogen in Bulk	24 May 2024

Table 3. Circulars adopted by MSC 108

Circulars will be available on IMODOCS once the MSC 108 report (WP 1) is finalized by the IMO Secretariat. Adoption date is 24 May 2024. Specific application dates may be specified in the Circulars.

CIRCULARS ADOPTED BY MSC 108	
Unified Interpretations	
MSC.1/Circ.1456/Rev.1	Revised unified interpretations of SOLAS chapter II-2 and the FSS and FTP Codes
MSC.1/Circ.1572/Rev.2	Unified interpretations of SOLAS chapters II-1 and XII, the technical provisions for means of access for inspections (resolution MSC.158(78)); and the Performance standards for water level detectors on ships subject to SOLAS regulations II-1/25 and 25-1, and XII/12 (resolution MSC.188(79)/Rev.2)
MSC.1/Circ.1680	Unified interpretations of SOLAS regulation XV/5.1 and paragraph 3.5 of part 1 of the International Code of Safety for Ships Carrying Industrial Personnel (IP Code) on the harmonization of the Industrial Personnel Safety Certificate with SOLAS safety certificates
MSC.1/Circ.1509/Rev.1	Unified interpretations of the Code on Noise Levels on Board Ships (resolution MSC.337(91))
MSC.1/Circ.1511/Rev.1	Unified interpretations of SOLAS regulations II-2/9 and 13
Guidelines	
SC.1/Circ.1330/Rev.1	Revised guidelines for maintenance and repair of protective coatings
MSC-MEPC.2/Circ.18	Guidelines for the sampling of fuel oil for determination of compliance with MARPOL Annex VI and SOLAS chapter II-2
MSC.1/Circ.1399/Rev.1	Revised guidelines on procedures for in-service maintenance and repair of coating systems for cargo oil tanks of crude oil tankers
MSC.1/Circ.1678	Guidelines on the medical examination of fishing vessel personnel
MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev.3	Guidelines on maritime cyber risk management
MSC.1/Circ.1599/Rev.3	Revised guidelines on the application of high manganese austenitic steel for cryogenic service
MSC.1/Circ.1622/Rev.1	Revised Guidelines for the acceptance of alternative metallic materials for cryogenic service in ships carrying liquefied gases in bulk and ships using gases or other low-flashpoint fuels
MSC.1/Circ.1679	Interim guidelines for use of LPG cargo as fuel
MSC.1/Circ.1212/Rev.2	Revised guidelines on alternative design and arrangements for SOLAS chapters II-1 and III
Other	
MSC.1/Circ.1677	Voluntary early implementation of the amendments to paragraphs 4.2.2 and 8.4.1 to 8.4.3 of the IGF code, adopted by resolution MSC.551(108)
MSC.1/Circ.1628/Rev.2	Revised standardized life-saving appliance evaluation and test report forms (personal life-saving appliances)

MSC.1/Circ.1588/Rev.3	Revised emergency response procedures for ships carrying dangerous goods (EmS Guide)
MSC.1/Circ.1610/Rev.1	Descriptions of Maritime Services in the context of e-navigation
MSC-MEPC.2/Circ.19	Guidance in relation to the IMO Member State Audit Scheme (IMSAS) to assist in the implementation of the III Code by Member States
MSC.1/Circ.797/Rev.40	List of competent persons maintained by the Secretary-General pursuant to section A-I/7 of the STCW Code
MSC.1/Circ.1500/Rev.3	Revised guidance on drafting of amendments to the 1974 SOLAS Convention and related mandatory instruments

This summary report has been prepared on the closing day of the Committee meeting, based on IMO Working papers and Plenary comments. Resolutions, Circulars and other IMO references may be rectified on publication of final versions by the IMO Secretariat

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact:

m&o.regulatory-watch@bureauveritas.com

Regulatory & Institutional Affairs

4 Place des Saisons
 92937 Paris La Défense Cedex – France
marine-offshore.bureauveritas.com