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**CIRCULAR LETTER 12/2013**  
**08 February 2013**

**REPORT ON THE 17<sup>th</sup> SESSION OF THE IMO SUB-COMMITTEE ON  
RADIOCOMMUNICATIONS AND SEARCH AND RESCUE (COMSAR 17)**

- References:
- A. CL 89/2012 dated 10 October: *WWNWS4*.
  - B. CL 7/2013 dated 21 January: *IHO contribution to the development of a mandatory code for ships operating in polar waters*.

Dear Hydrographer,

1. The 17<sup>th</sup> session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR 17) was held at the IMO Headquarters in London from 21 – 25 January. Director Iptes, Assistant Director Wyatt and the Vice-Chair of the IHO World-Wide Navigational Warning Service Sub-Committee (WWNWS) represented the IHO. The NAVAREA Coordinators from: *NAVAREA I (UK)*; *NAVAREA II (France)*; *NAVAREAs IV and XII (USA)*; *NAVAREAs XVII and XVIII (Canada)* and *NAVAREA XIX (Norway)* were also represented. The session was followed by a meeting of the WWNWS Document Review Working Group (DRWG) as announced in Reference A.

**COMSAR 17**

2. The following paragraphs cover matters of particular interest to the IHO.

3. The Sub-Committee considered three submissions by the IHO. It noted the outcome of WWNWS4, it approved a revision to Annex 7 of MSC.1/Circ.1382/Rev.1 containing the Questionnaire on Shore-based Facilities for the Global Maritime Distress Safety System (GMDSS), and it approved the proposed draft amendments to IMO Resolutions A.705(17) on the Promulgation of Maritime Safety Information and A.706(17) on the World-Wide Navigational Warning Service. The Sub-Committee also noted the report by the Chair of the IMO NAVTEX Coordinating Panel.

4. COMSAR 17 considered various proposals and issues relating to the modernization of the GMDSS and decided to establish a Technical Working Group (TWG). The TWG was directed to provide comment and advice on the proposed overarching principles, to consider how existing radiocommunications systems should be taken into account, to prepare an initial draft document on the outcome of the high-level review of the GMDSS and to prepare terms of reference for the Correspondence Group on the Review of the GMDSS, which is to report to the next meeting.

5. COMSAR also continued its work on e-Navigation and continued its work on preparing a final list of potential solutions relevant to radiocommunications. The Sub-Committee noted that a trial conducted in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore had successfully demonstrated the use of the IHO S-100 standard for the promulgation of Maritime Safety Information (MSI).

6. The Sub-Committee considered relevant aspects of the draft Polar Code, all of which were referred to the SAR and Technical Working Groups for further consideration before being passed to the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Equipment (DE). The items discussed had no direct impact on the IHO contribution to DE57 presented in Reference B.

7. COMSAR 17 completed its work with a detailed discussion on the proposed reorganization of the IMO sub-committee structure.

8. It was decided not to hold an election of officers for 2014 until the reorganization of the IMO sub-committee structure is finalised. It was confirmed that Mr. C. Salado (Chile), Chair, and Mr. Ringo Lakeman (Netherlands), Vice-Chair, would continue in their respective roles for the remainder of 2013.

9. The full report to the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), document COMSAR17/14, will be placed on the IMO documents page of the IHO web site when issued by IMO.

#### **WWNWS Document Review Working Group**

10. The Document Review Working Group (DRWG) of the Worldwide Navigational Warning Service Sub-Committee (WWNWS) is reviewing the WWNWS documentation as reported in Reference A. The WG met at IMO in the week following COMSAR 17 taking advantage of the presence of WG members who had previously attended COMSAR 17 (China, France, UK, USA, Inmarsat, IMSO, WMO and IHB). The WG undertook final proof editing of IMO Resolutions A.705(17), as amended "*Promulgation of Maritime Safety Information*"; and A.706(17), as amended, "*World-Wide Navigational Warning Service*", and prepared draft editorial amendments to the Joint IMO/IHO/WMO Manual on MSI (IHO Publication S-53) for further consideration at WWNWS 5.

11. The NAVAREA and national entries in Annex 8 of the GMDSS Master Plan were reviewed and elements identified for action by the relevant NAVAREA, Sub-Area and National Coordinators. A revised WWNWS customer feedback survey questionnaire was developed for circulation and comment by WWNWS Members, prior to posting on the world-wide web.

12. The WG also reviewed the draft agenda for WWNWS 5 and updated the "List of Actions" from WWNWS 4. These documents are available on the WWNWS page of the IHO web site.

On behalf of the Directing Committee

Yours sincerely,



Mustafa IPTES  
Director