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REPORT ON THE 93rd SESSION OF THE IMO MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE

Reference: IHO CL 28/2014 dated 25 March - *IHO Contribution to the Development of a Mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (Polar Code)*.

Dear Hydrographer,

1. The 93rd session of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 93) was held at the IMO Headquarters in London from 14 to 23 May. President Robert WARD and Assistant Director David WYATT represented the IHO.
2. The following paragraphs cover matters of particular interest to the IHO.
3. The MSC approved in principle the proposed text of the mandatory Code for Ships Operating in Polar Waters (the Polar Code) prepared by the Polar Code Working Group (PCWG). In particular the text in document MSC 93/10/11, submitted by the IHO and co-sponsored by Australia and New Zealand (see reference), was accepted with minor amendments. The submission made reference to the poor state of charting in the Polar Regions and the additional precautions necessary to mitigate some of the risks. The text was inserted into the Polar Code Preamble and Part I-B Chapter 10 Additional Guidance, as follows:

Preamble

3. *The Code acknowledges that the Polar Waters impose additional navigational demands beyond those normally encountered. In many areas, the chart coverage may not currently be adequate for coastal navigation. It is recognized even existing charts may be subject to unsurveyed and uncharted shoals.*

Part I-B Chapter 10 Additional Guidance

10.2 *As the chart coverage of polar waters in many areas may not be adequate for coastal navigation, mariners should:*

- .1 *exercise care to plan and monitor their voyage accordingly, taking due account of the information and guidance in the appropriate nautical publications;*
- .2 *be familiar with the status of hydrographic surveys and the availability and quality of chart information for the areas in which they intend to operate;*
- .3 *be aware of potential chart datum discrepancies with GNSS positioning;*
- .4 *aim to plan their route through charted areas and well clear of known shoal depths, following established routes whenever possible.*

10.3 Any deviations from the planned route should be undertaken with particular caution. For example, and when operating on the continental shelf:

.1 the echo-sounder should be working and monitored to detect any sign of unexpected depth variation, especially when the chart is not based on a full search of the sea floor;

.2 independent cross-checking of positioning information (e.g. visual and radar fixing and GNSS) should be undertaken at every opportunity. Mariners should ensure to report to the relevant charting authority (Hydrographic Office) any information that might contribute to improving the nautical charts and publications.

4. It was also agreed to include the second phase of the planned output on the Polar Code, related to non-SOLAS ships, on the agenda for the second session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Construction (SDC 2), noting the importance of continuing the discussion and taking into account the work completed so far.

5. The MSC also addressed various matters related to hydrography and nautical charting including those resulting from the 59th session of its Sub-Committee on Safety of Navigation (NAV 59) that took place in September 2013. The main items included adopting three new routing measures and traffic separation schemes covering the Pacific coast of Panama, the approaches to Puerto Cristobal, Panama, and the Great Barrier Reef and Torres Strait; amendments to the Off Ushant TSS were approved. The MSC revoked the area to be avoided and mandatory no anchoring area at El Paso deep-water port in the Gulf of Mexico. It was decided these measures would be implemented on 1 December 2014, which would be six months after adoption.

6. The MSC noted the progress being made on e-Navigation matters, the endorsement by the NAV 59 of the preliminary draft of the e-Navigation Strategy Implementation Plan and the re-establishment of the correspondence group to progress that work intersessionally. Despite the strong support shown at the NAV 59 for an intersessional meeting on e-Navigation, the MSC did not accede to the request. Additionally the MSC approved an MSC.1/Circ on the Policy on the use of AIS Aids to navigation. The Committee also agreed to include in the 2014-2015 biennial agenda of the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) an unplanned output on 'Recognition of Galileo as a component of the WWRNS' with a target completion date of 2016.

7. The MSC unanimously re-elected Captain Christian BREINHOLT of Denmark as Chair and Captain Muhamad SEGAR of Singapore as Vice-Chair of the Committee for 2014.

8. The final report of MSC 93 (MSC 93/22) will be available on the IMO website under IMODOCS when issued. The 94th session of the MSC is currently scheduled to be held at IMO Headquarters in London from 17 to 21 November 2014.

On behalf of the Directing Committee
Yours sincerely,



Robert WARD
President