

RESOLUTION A.671(16) adopted on 19 October 1989
SAFETY ZONES AND SAFETY OF NAVIGATION AROUND
OFFSHORE INSTALLATIONS AND STRUCTURES



ASSEMBLY - 16th session
Agenda item 10

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SAFETY ZONES AND SAFETY OF NAVIGATION AROUND
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THE ASSEMBLY,

RECALLING Article 15(j) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization concerning the functions of the Assembly in relation to regulations and guidelines concerning maritime safety and the prevention and control of marine pollution from ships,

HAVING CONSIDERED articles 60 and 80 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982,

NOTING article 5 of the Geneva Convention on the Continental Shelf, 1958,

RECOGNIZING the need for ensuring unencumbered exploitation of natural resources on the continental shelf and in the exclusive economic zone, as well as safety at sea,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the congestion of navigable waters by offshore installations or structures could result in ships colliding with such installations or structures thereby causing loss of life, pollution of the marine environment and economic loss,

RECALLING requirements for ships to maintain a continuous listening watch on VHF channel 16 prescribed by regulation IV/8 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (the 1974 SOLAS Convention), as amended,

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RECALLING ALSO requirements for ships to carry adequate and up-to-date charts, notices to mariners and other nautical publications prescribed by regulation V/20 of the 1974 SOLAS Convention,

RECALLING FURTHER:

- (a) resolution A.572(14) on general provisions on ships' routing, and
- (b) resolution A.578(14) on guidelines for vessel traffic services,

BEING INFORMED of infringements by vessels, in particular fishing vessels, of safety zones around offshore installations or structures,

BEING CONCERNED about the safety of personnel and the risk of serious damage to offshore installations or structures, vessels and the environment in the event of a collision,

BEING FURTHER INFORMED that:

- (a) some flag States do not consistently take action, in accordance with resolution A.379(X), when complaints of infringements of safety zones around offshore installations or structures by their vessels are received,
- (b) on occasion, vessels do not respond to radiotelephone calls initiated by offshore installations or structures and that near misses and collisions could have been avoided if vessels maintained a continuous listening watch on VHF channel 16,
- (c) vessels identified as having infringed safety zones around offshore installations or structures have, on occasion, been found not to be carrying adequate and up-to-date charts of the area, in violation of regulation V/20 of the 1974 SOLAS Convention,

BEING ALSO INFORMED that not all offshore installations or structures are adequately equipped with devices that would help prevent vessels infringing the safety zones established around them, including lights and sound signals, racons and means for permanent visual look-out and radar watch, and that not all of them listen for and warn vessels on appropriate VHF channels,

BEING AWARE that safety zone regulations are applied by coastal States to protect mobile offshore drilling units* on station, production platforms, artificial islands, accommodation platforms, units and ancillary equipment referred to herein as installations or structures,

BEING ALSO AWARE of the value of accurate and prompt information concerning the existence and location of offshore installations and structures,

DESIRING to bring an end to the infringement of safety zones established around offshore installations or structures,

HAVING CONSIDERED the recommendation made by the Maritime Safety Committee, at its fifty-fourth session, that it would be advantageous to consolidate resolutions:

- A.341(IX) - Recommendation on dissemination of information, charting and manning of drilling rigs, production platforms and other similar structures,
- A.379(X) - Establishment of safety zones and fairways or routing systems in offshore exploration areas, and
- A.621(15) - Measures to prevent infringement of safety zones around offshore installations or structures,

HAVING ALSO CONSIDERED the recommendation made by the Maritime Safety Committee at its fifty-seventh session,

1. RECOMMENDS that Governments:

- (a) study the pattern of shipping traffic through offshore resource exploration areas at an early stage so as to be able to assess potential interference with marine traffic passing close to or through such areas at all stages of exploitation;

* For the purpose of this resolution mobile offshore drilling units (MODUs) used for exploratory drilling operations offshore are considered to be vessels when they are in transit and not engaged in a drilling operation, but are considered to be installations or structures when engaged in a drilling operation.

- (b) ensure that the exploitation of natural resources on the continental shelf and in the exclusive economic zone does not seriously obstruct sea approaches and shipping routes;
- (c) where traffic patterns warrant it, consider, as appropriate, the establishment of safety zones around offshore installations or structures, or the establishment and charting of fairways or routeing systems through exploration areas;
- (d) take all necessary steps to ensure that, unless specifically authorized, ships flying their flags do not enter or pass through duly established safety zones;
- (e) ensure that the prohibition on vessels, other than those involved in rendering services related to the operation of the offshore installation or structure, should not apply to vessels entering or remaining in the safety zone:
 - (i) when in distress;
 - (ii) for the purpose of saving or attempting to save life or property; or
 - (iii) in cases of force majeure;
- (f) draw the attention of seafarers to the need, in the cases referred to in paragraph (e) above, to make early radio contact with the offshore installations or structures, associated vessel traffic services and other vessels in the area;

2. RECOMMENDS FURTHER that flag States should, if necessary, take appropriate measures to ensure that suitable procedures exist to take action against the owner, master or any person responsible at the material time for the conduct of any vessel flying their flag which commits an infringement against any duly established safety zone, and that they inform the coastal State concerned of the follow-up action taken;

3. ADOPTS the Recommendation on Safety Zones and Safety of Navigation around Offshore Installations and Structures which is set out in the Annex to the present resolution;

4. REQUESTS the Maritime Safety Committee, in consultation with the Legal Committee, to keep the present resolution under review and to report to the Assembly as necessary;

5. REVOKES resolutions A.341(IX), A.379(X) and A.621(15).

ANNEX

RECOMMENDATION ON SAFETY ZONES AND SAFETY OF NAVIGATION AROUND OFFSHORE
INSTALLATIONS AND STRUCTURES

1 General

Every coastal State which authorizes and regulates the operation and use of offshore installations and structures under its jurisdiction should:

- .1 issue early Notices to Mariners by appropriate means to advise vessels of the location or intended location of offshore installations or structures, the breadth of any safety zones established and the rules which apply therein, and any fairways available;
- .2 require operators of MODUs to provide advance notice of any change of their location to the appropriate authority of the coastal State so as to allow timely issue of relevant Notices to Mariners;
- .3 require operators of offshore installations or structures, including MODUs which are on station, either moored or resting on the sea-bed, and not actively engaged in drilling operations either prior to commencing such operations or during temporary stoppages for whatever reasons, to take adequate measures to prevent infringement of safety zones around such offshore installations or structures. Such measures may include effective lights and sound signals, racons, permanent visual look-out and radar watch, listening for and warning vessels on VHF channel 16 or other appropriate radio frequencies and the establishment of vessel traffic services; and
- .4 request operators of offshore installations or structures to report actions by vessels which jeopardize safety including infringement of safety zones.

2 Vessels navigating in the vicinity of offshore installations or structures

Vessels which are navigating in the vicinity of offshore installations or structures should:

- .1 navigate with caution, giving due consideration to safe speed and safe passing distances taking into account the prevailing weather conditions and the presence of other vessels or dangers;
- .2 where appropriate, take early and substantial avoiding action when approaching such installation or structure to facilitate the installation's or structure's awareness of the vessel's closest point of approach and provide information on any possible safety concerns, particularly where the offshore installation or structure may be used as an aid to navigation;
- .3 use any routeing systems established in the area; and
- .4 maintain a continuous listening watch on the navigating bridge on VHF channel 16 or other appropriate radio frequencies when navigating in the vicinity of offshore installations or structures to allow radio contact to be established between such installations or structures, vessel traffic services and other vessels so that any uncertainty as to a vessel maintaining an adequate passing distance from the installations or structures can be alleviated.

3 Infringements of safety zones

3.1 Every coastal State which is aware of an infringement of the regulations relating to safety zones around offshore installations or structures under its jurisdiction should take action in accordance with international law and, where it considers necessary, notify the flag State of the infringement allegedly committed by a vessel flying its flag and provide available factual evidence to substantiate the allegation as follows:

- .1 name, flag and call sign of the vessel;
- .2 course and speed of the vessel;
- .3 identification of the offshore installation or structure and its operators;
- .4 description of the operational status of the offshore installation or structure (i.e. its latitude and longitude, nature and duration of activity on station, breadth of the safety zone, text and date of notice to mariners giving warning of the offshore activity and rules applicable to the safety zone);
- .5 weather conditions at time of the alleged infringement;
- .6 details of attempts by installation or structure personnel or personnel on service vessels to contact the approaching vessel including radio frequencies used and the interval between attempts;
- .7 description of any communications with the vessel;
- .8 statement as to whether the installation or structure exhibited the proper lights and sounded appropriate signals;
- .9 photographic evidence or a complete and detailed radar plot, or both, and indication of whether a radar beacon or warning device was in operation;
- .10 details of any apparent contravention of any other regulation by the intruding vessel such as the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 as amended, or the 1974 SOLAS Convention; and
- .11 name of the Government official to contact regarding the complaint.

3.2 Every flag State which receives a report of an infringement of a safety zone by a vessel flying its flag should make inquiries, take action, where appropriate, in accordance with its national legislation and inform, as appropriate, the coastal State concerned of the follow-up action it has taken.

4 Dissemination of information related to offshore installations and structures

4.1 The coastal State authorizing the search for, and any subsequent exploitation of, any natural resources on the continental shelf or in the exclusive economic zone should be responsible for the dissemination of information essential for the safety of navigation or any other legitimate activity within the area in which, in accordance with international law, it has sovereign rights and jurisdiction.

4.2 This dissemination of information should take the form of radio-warnings and Notices to Mariners (temporary, preliminary and permanent) to cover all stages of activity, initial search and investigation, trial drilling and subsequent exploitation. The information so dealt with should take into account:

- .1 the area, period and nature of the initial search;
- .2 the position of a subsequent drilling, any warning or navigational marking and period of operation;
- .3 the state in which the sea-bed is left, the nature of any obstructions remaining after test drilling and any navigational marking;
- .4 the nature and duration of any works connected with the establishment of permanent production installations or structures, and any associated work such as laying of pipelines;
- .5 details of any safety zone around the installation or structure and any fairways and routing systems established in its vicinity including, where relevant, their marking.

4.3 The coastal State responsible for authorizing the above activities should take all steps necessary, either directly or via the development and research agencies, to ensure that all information concerning the said activities is conveyed to the hydrographic authority concerned in complete detail at the earliest possible moment at all stages.

5 Charts and nautical publications

5.1 Any features of a sufficiently permanent nature such as permanent installations or structures, bottom obstructions, pipelines, navigational marks and prohibited areas should be shown on all appropriate navigational charts. When such features exist in such density or are of a sufficiently mobile nature as to preclude accurate charting, then information on the areas concerned, together with any associated aids to navigation and fairways and appropriate warning notes should be promulgated and marked on the navigational charts.

5.2 Associated publications, such as Sailing Directions and Notices to Mariners, should carry full details of any related regulations which affect navigation or other maritime activity.

5.3 In cases where the authorizing coastal State has no facility, or inadequate facility for charting or disseminating information as described above, it should take all appropriate steps to convey, either directly or via the development and research agencies, all necessary information to the hydrographic authority/authorities which normally carry primary charting and associated responsibility for the area concerned.

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