

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION



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**Adopted on 5 December 2003
(Agenda item 17)**

MARITIME ASSISTANCE SERVICES (MAS)

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,

NOTING the provisions of regulations V/31, VII/6, VII/7-4 and VIII/12 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, as amended, concerning ship reports in the event of dangers or incidents,

NOTING ALSO the provisions of article 8 of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), 1973, as amended by the Protocol of 1978 thereto concerning ship reports in the event of incidents,

CONSIDERING that, in addition to the circumstances giving rise to mandatory reporting where the organizations to which reports are to be made have already been designated, it would be useful for the master of a ship in need of assistance to use the same contact point in each coastal State legitimately affected by that ship's situation, particularly in connection with the search for a place of refuge,

CONSIDERING ALSO that States have the right to receive initial information and thereafter be kept informed of marine salvage operations conducted off their coasts at the initiative of parties with a legitimate interest in a ship in need of assistance,

CONSIDERING FURTHER that it would be useful for coastal States and easier for shipmasters if any organization with responsibility for receiving reports and thereafter continuing to maintain contact with a ship in need of assistance and its owner bore, in all those States, a common acronym representing the minimum common duties laid down by the Organization,

CONSIDERING FINALLY the difficulty for the master to assess, when an accident occurs aboard the ship, whether there will be a need for marine assistance (salvage) or rescue of persons aboard and, in relation to rescue proper, the value to the MRCC of being informed as soon as possible of problems experienced by the ship concerned, so as to prepare an appropriate search and rescue operation should the need for such an operation arise at a later stage,

HAVING CONSIDERED the recommendations made by the Maritime Safety Committee at its seventy-sixth and seventy-seventh sessions, the Marine Environment Protection Committee at its forty-eighth session, and the Sub-Committee on Safety of Navigation at its forty-ninth session,

1. RECOMMENDS that coastal States establish a maritime assistance service (MAS) for the purpose of:

- (a) receiving the reports, consultations and notifications required by the IMO instruments referred to in Annex 1 to the present resolution;
- (b) monitoring the ship's situation if a report, as referred to in paragraph (a) above, discloses an incident that may cause the ship to be in need of assistance;
- (c) serving as the point of contact between the master and the coastal State concerned, if the ship's situation requires exchanges of information between the ship and the coastal State but is not a distress situation that could lead to a search and rescue operation;
- (d) serving as the point of contact between those involved in a marine salvage operation undertaken by private facilities at the request of parties having a legitimate interest in the ship and the coastal State, if the coastal State concerned decides that it should monitor all phases of the operation,

2. URGES Governments to issue national instructions advising their MAS of the authority or organization:

- (a) to which it should transmit information obtained from a ship;
- (b) from which it should receive instructions concerning its own actions and the particulars to be transmitted to the ship,

3. INVITES Governments of coastal States that have established a MAS to forward to the Organization the details (i.e., call numbers, call signs, etc.) of their MAS to enable the Organization to circulate such particulars, so that shipmasters and other persons or organizations concerned can contact it as necessary;

4. RECOMMENDS that Governments of coastal States, when establishing a MAS, take into account the guidelines set out in Annex 2 to the present resolution;

5. REQUESTS the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee to keep this resolution under review and amend it as appropriate.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF IMO INSTRUMENTS CONCERNED WITH MANDATORY REPORTING IN THE EVENT OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING SHIPS

- 1 *International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, as amended*

Regulation V/31 (danger messages);
Regulation VII/6 and V11/7-4 (reporting of incidents involving dangerous goods);
Regulation VIII/12 (accidents to nuclear ships).
- 2 *International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto, as amended*

Article 8 (reports on incidents involving the discharge or possible discharge of harmful substances);

Protocol I (provisions concerning reports on incidents involving the discharge or possible discharge of harmful substances (in application of article 8)).
- 3 *International Convention relating to Intervention on the High Seas in Cases of Oil Pollution Casualties, 1969 (Intervention Convention)*

Article III(a) and (f) (consultations; notifications).
- 4 *International Convention on Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response and Co-operation, 1990 (OPRC Convention)*

Articles 4 and 5.
- 5 *International Code for the Safe Carriage of Packaged Irradiated Nuclear Fuel, Plutonium and High-Level Radioactive Wastes on Board Ships (INF Code)*

Paragraphs 29 and 30.
- 6 *Resolution A.851(20): General principles for ship reporting systems and ship reporting requirements, including guidelines for reporting incidents involving dangerous goods, harmful substances and/or marine pollutants*

ANNEX 2

GUIDELINES ON MARITIME ASSISTANCE SERVICE (MAS)

Introduction

The circumstances of a ship's operation that involve a MAS are not those requiring rescue of persons

Three situations can arise:

- the ship is involved in an incident (e.g., loss of cargo, accidental discharge of oil, etc.) that does not impair its seakeeping ability but nevertheless has to be reported;
- the ship, according to its master's assessment, is in need of assistance but not in a distress situation (about to sink, fire developing, etc.) that requires the rescue of those on board; and
- the ship is found to be in a distress situation and those on board have already been rescued, with the possible exception of those who have remained aboard or have been placed on board to attempt to deal with the ship's situation.

If, however, in an evolving situation, the persons on board find themselves in distress, the involvement of the MRCC and not the MAS will have priority

1 Establishment of MASs

1.1 The establishment of a **MAS** should not necessarily entail the setting up of a new organization. In so far as the present guidelines are observed, the functions of the MAS could, at the discretion of the Administration, be discharged by an existing organization, preferably an MRCC, or alternatively a harbour master's office, a coast guard operations centre (if one exists) or another body.

1.2 The allocation of **MAS** functions to an MRCC could from a practical viewpoint be an advantageous and effective solution but would require the personnel to be well trained in distinguishing between circumstances causing a ship to find itself in a distress situation and circumstances placing a ship in a difficult situation but not in distress as defined in the SAR Convention and procedures arising therefrom. It should be recalled that the MRCC concept entails co-ordination of search and rescue operations. By contrast, a **MAS**, within the scope of the above resolution, is responsible only for receiving and transmitting communications and monitoring the situation.

1.3 The fact that the resolution recommends every coastal State to establish a **MAS** should not prevent neighbouring coastal States from combining their resources under suitable arrangements to operate a joint **MAS**.

1.4 Conversely, a coastal State should be able to establish more than one **MAS** if necessity so warrants.

2 Publicizing the establishment and existence of a MAS

2.1 Governments of coastal States are requested to notify IMO of the existence and details (call numbers, call signs, etc.) of their **MAS**, in accordance with the format contained in the appendix hereto.

2.2 The IMO Secretariat will periodically publish the collected particulars in a circular.

2.3 National organizations that disseminate nautical information are invited to publish such particulars.

3 Duties of MASs

3.1 In accordance with the above resolution, the functions of a **MAS** are the following:

- .1 to receive the reports, consultations and notifications provided for by the relevant IMO instruments in the event of an incident involving a ship;
- .2 to monitor the ship's situation if a report as referred to in .1 discloses an incident that may give rise to a situation where the ship is in need of assistance;
- .3 to serve as the point of contact between the master and the coastal State if the ship's situation requires exchanges of information between the ship and the coastal State other than a distress situation that could lead to a search and rescue operation;
- .4 to serve as the point of contact between those involved in a marine salvage operation undertaken by private facilities at the request of the company and the coastal State if the coastal State considers that it should monitor the conduct of the operation.

3.2 The establishment of a **MAS** does not entail any reorganization of governmental or administrative responsibilities or duties since, in accordance with the above resolution, the **MAS** is only a contact point. It does, however, entail the implementation of procedures and instructions enabling the **MAS** to forward any given information to the competent organization and requiring the organizations concerned to go through the MAS in order to make contact with the ship.

National instructions should therefore indicate to the organization discharging the MAS functions at a minimum:

- the authority or organization to which it transmits the information obtained from a ship; and
- the authority or organization from which it receives instructions concerning its action and the particulars to be transmitted to the ship.

Nevertheless, as soon as information indicates that the ship's situation might subsequently require a rescue operation, the MRCC if the MAS function is not discharged by it, must be informed so that it can make preparations to respond if necessary.

3.3 The above resolution and the present guidelines would not prevent a government from allocating to its **MAS** duties other than those referred to above with regard to a ship in need of assistance.

4 Operation of a MAS

4.1 A **MAS** should be operational on a 24-hour basis.

4.2 It should be possible for the English language to be used in exchanges between a ship in need of assistance and a **MAS**.

4.3 **MASs** should be authorized by their respective Governments to exchange with each other information concerning reports received and situations involving ships which may be in need of assistance.

5 Communication facilities

With regard to provisions of communication facilities to **MASs**, circular COMSAR/Circ.18, entitled "Guidance on minimum communication needs of maritime rescue co-ordination centres (MRCCs)", could be used as a basis.

APPENDIX TO ANNEX 2

NOTIFICATION OF A MAS TO IMO

MAS (*name of country and any supplementary details*)

Telephone: +

Fax: +

Telex:

Inmarsat C:

MMSI:

E-mail:

AFTN:

Watch on VHF channels:

Postal address:

Notification made on behalf of the Government of by (name, telephone number, fax number, e-mail and postal address)
