

Maritime Safety Committee - 108th session (MSC 108), 15-24 May 2024

Action Required: IR Commission members are invited to note the relevant outcomes of MSC 108.

MSC 108 highlights:

1. Resolution adopted on maritime security in the Red Sea area
2. Roadmap revised for the development of a code to regulate autonomous ships (Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships - MASS)
3. Revised Guidelines approved on maritime cyber risk management
4. Development of a safety regulatory framework to support the reduction of GHG emissions from ships using new technologies and alternative fuels
5. New training requirements on prevention and responding to violence and harassment in the maritime sector, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault – amendments to the STCW Code adopted
6. Amendments to the 1974 SOLAS Convention and associated instruments adopted
7. Piracy and armed robbery updates
8. Reports from the Sub-Committees – various sets of provisions approved

1. Resolution on maritime security in the Red Sea

The Committee adopted a Resolution on the security situation in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden resulting from Houthi attacks on commercial ships and seafarers.

Since the hijacking of the **MV Galaxy Leader** in November 2023, which remains detained along with its crew, around 50 dangerous and destabilizing maritime attacks have been carried out in the area. Several seafarers have lost their lives while others have suffered life-changing injuries.

The resolution deplores and condemns in the strongest possible terms the illegal and unjustifiable attacks, which threaten the safety and welfare of seafarers and the marine environment. It demands that the Houthis immediately cease attacking commercial ships and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the **Galaxy Leader** and its crew.

The resolution emphasizes that all Member States should adhere to their obligations under the targeted UN arms embargo and take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply of arms and related materiel of all types to the Houthis, as called for in United Nations Security Council resolution 2216.

The resolution encouraged ship operators and vessels to carefully assess the nature and unpredictability of recent events, as well as potential for continued attacks in the area, when considering transit plans, based on vessel profile, business need and risk tolerance.

Relevance to World Sailing: to be aware of the high incidence of threats to life in the southern Red Sea/Gulf of Aden region.

2. Revised roadmap for the development of a code for autonomous ships

The Committee continued to advance its work to develop a Code to regulate Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS) to ensure these autonomous ships operate safely and in coexistence with conventional ships.

The Committee noted the significant progress made to date to develop the draft MASS Code, including the restructuring of chapters and refining the draft provisions.

It was clear that more work would be required to finalize the Code and the Committee therefore agreed to revise the Road Map for the development of a MASS Code, as follows:

- May 2025 - finalize and adopt non-mandatory MASS Code
- First half of 2026 - develop framework for an experience-building phase (EPB)
- 2028 - commence development of the mandatory MASS Code, based on the non-mandatory Code, and consider amendments to SOLAS (new chapter) for the Code's adoption
- By 1 July 2030 - adoption of the mandatory Code, for entry into force on 1 Jan 2032

Relevance to World Sailing: to ensure that the MASS Code takes account of the potential risk to small and low-conspicuity vessels from unmanned or lean-manned autonomous ships.

3. Revision of the Guidelines on maritime cyber risk management

The Committee approved the revised *Guidelines on maritime cyber risk management* (MSC-FAL.1/Circ.3/Rev.3) and forwarded them to the Facilitation Committee for its concurrent approval.

The guidelines cover standards and best practices for cyber risk management. The revision includes updates related to key definitions, background information and application, functional elements of cyber-risk management (including how to establish a risk management strategy; identify risks; protect computer-based systems; detect, respond to and recover from incidents) and other relevant international and industry standards and best practices.

Relevance to World Sailing: to be aware of general cyber risks to vessels, and their management.

4. Development of a safety regulatory framework to support the reduction of GHG emissions from ships using new technologies and alternative fuels

IMO's goal of achieving net zero shipping will require the uptake of zero or near-zero GHG emission technologies, fuels and/or energy sources. Suitable provisions will be needed to ensure the safe operation of these new technologies and alternative fuels on ships.

The Committee noted the report of the Correspondence Group on 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.

Relevance to World Sailing: while sailing vessels currently remain well below the threshold for applying GHG emissions management, this will likely change in the foreseeable future.

5. Addressing violence and harassment in the maritime sector – amendments to the STCW Code adopted

The Committee adopted amendments to the Seafarers' Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Code (STCW Code), which aim to prevent and respond to violence and harassment in the maritime sector, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault.

The amendments are included in table A-VI/1-4 (Specification of minimum standard of competence in personal safety and social responsibilities) of the STCW Code. They outline new mandatory minimum requirements for basic training and instruction for all seafarers. These aim to equip seafarers with knowledge and understanding of violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault, and information on how to prevent and respond to incidents. The amendments to the STCW Code are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2026.

The Committee approved other recommendations from the JTWG, including the launch of awareness campaigns and other further measures to address violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault, applicable to Administrations, shipping companies, social partners and UN agencies.

Relevance to World Sailing: those who fill positions requiring STCW qualifications will need to undergo the associated new training regime. This will also likely lead to a gradual change in behavioural culture across the whole seafaring community globally.

8. Amendments to the 1974 SOLAS Convention and associated instruments on safety adopted

LSA Code

Amendments to the International Life-Saving Appliance (LSA) Code, regarding the in-water performance of lifejackets; single fall and hook systems; and lowering speed of survival craft and rescue boats. These amendments are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2026.

Relevance to World Sailing: sailing vessels under 500GT are not yet captured under these changes.

9. Piracy and armed robbery

The Committee heard an update from the Secretariat on piracy reports for 2023.

According to information received and made available in IMO's GISIS module, 150 incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships were reported to IMO as having occurred or been attempted in 2023. In 2022, 131 incidents were reported, indicating a 15% increase from 2022 to 2023.

The areas most affected by acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships in 2023 were the Straits of Malacca and Singapore (85), West Africa (22), South China Sea (14) and South America (Pacific) (14), followed by Indian Ocean (5), South America (Caribbean) (4), Arabian Sea (2), East Africa (2), South America (Atlantic) (1) and Mediterranean Sea (1).

Further details will be provided in the Secretariat's Reports on acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships (including Annual Report for 2023).

The Committee noted IMO's work to address piracy and armed robbery at the regional level. This includes initiatives such as the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP-ISC), the Djibouti Code of Conduct (with Jeddah Amendment), covering the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden, and the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, covering the Gulf of Guinea.

It encouraged Member States to continue to support the Djibouti Code of Conduct Trust Fund, assist Yaoundé Code of Conduct implementation efforts in the Gulf of Guinea, and consider making financial contributions to the West and Central Africa Trust Fund.

Relevance to World Sailing: highly relevant to the safety of sailing vessels transiting the areas mentioned.

10. Reports from Sub-Committees and other issues

The Committee approved these reports in general and took the following actions:

Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR)

- approved the *Recognition of ship reporting system in the Pentland Firth (PENTREP)* (SN.1/Circ.343) to be implemented on 1 December 2024
- adopted resolution MSC.530(106)/Rev.1 on *Performance standards for electronic chart display and information systems (ECDIS)*
- approved the Joint IMO/IHO/WMO Manual on Maritime Safety Information (MSC.1/Circ.1310/Rev.2) to be implemented as from 1 January 2025

Relevance to World Sailing: to be aware of the developments listed.

There no other issues raised of relevance to World Sailing.