

RESOLUTION MSC.153(78)
(adopted on 20 May 2004)

**ADOPTION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION
FOR THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA, 1974, AS AMENDED**

THE MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE,

RECALLING Article 28(b) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization concerning the functions of the Committee,

RECALLING FURTHER article VIII(b) of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974 (hereinafter referred to as "the Convention") concerning the amendment procedure applicable to the Annex to the Convention, other than the provisions of chapter I thereof,

NOTING resolution A.920(22) entitled "Review of safety measures and procedures for the treatment of persons rescued at sea",

RECALLING ALSO the provisions of the Convention relating to the obligation of:

- shipmasters to proceed with all speed to the assistance of persons in distress at sea; and
- Contracting Governments to ensure arrangements for coast watching and for the rescue of persons in distress at sea round their coasts,

NOTING ALSO article 98 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982, regarding the duty to render assistance,

NOTING FURTHER the initiative taken by the Secretary-General to involve competent United Nations specialized agencies and programmes in the consideration of the issues addressed in this resolution, for the purpose of agreeing on a common approach which will resolve them in an efficient and consistent manner,

REALIZING the need for clarification of existing procedures to guarantee that persons rescued at sea will be provided a place of safety regardless of their nationality, status or the circumstances in which they are found,

REALIZING FURTHER that the intent of the new paragraph 1-1 of SOLAS regulation V/33, as adopted by this resolution, is to ensure that in every case a place of safety is provided within a reasonable time. It is further intended that the responsibility to provide a place of safety, or to ensure that a place of safety is provided, falls on the Contracting Government responsible for the search and rescue region in which the survivors were recovered,

HAVING CONSIDERED, at its seventy-eighth session, amendments to the Convention, proposed and circulated in accordance with article VIII(b)(i) thereof,

1. ADOPTS, in accordance with article VIII(b)(iv) of the Convention, amendments to the Convention, the text of which is set out in the Annex to the present resolution;
2. DETERMINES, in accordance with article VIII(b)(vi)(2)(bb) of the Convention, that the said amendments shall be deemed to have been accepted on 1 January 2006, unless, prior to that date, more than one third of the Contracting Governments to the Convention or Contracting Governments the combined merchant fleets of which constitute not less than 50% of the gross tonnage of the world's merchant fleet, have notified their objections to the amendments;
3. INVITES SOLAS Contracting Governments to note that, in accordance with article VIII(b)(vii)(2) of the Convention, the amendments shall enter into force on 1 July 2006 upon their acceptance in accordance with paragraph 2 above;
4. REQUESTS the Secretary-General, in conformity with article VIII(b)(v) of the Convention, to transmit certified copies of the present resolution and the text of the amendments contained in the Annex to all Contracting Governments to the Convention;
5. FURTHER REQUESTS the Secretary-General to transmit copies of this resolution and its Annex to Members of the Organization, which are not Contracting Governments to the Convention;
6. ALSO REQUESTS the Secretary General to take appropriate action in further pursuing his inter-agency initiative, informing the Maritime Safety Committee of developments, in particular with respect to procedures to assist in the provision of places of safety for persons in distress at sea, for action as the Committee may deem appropriate.

ANNEX

AMENDMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION FOR THE SAFETY OF LIFE AT SEA, 1974, AS AMENDED

CHAPTER V SAFETY OF NAVIGATION

Regulation 2 – Definitions

1 The following new paragraph 5 is added after the existing paragraph 4:

“5 *Search and rescue service.* The performance of distress monitoring, communication, co-ordination and search and rescue functions, including provision of medical advice, initial medical assistance, or medical evacuation, through the use of public and private resources including co-operating aircraft, ships, vessels and other craft and installations.”

Regulation 33 – Distress messages: obligations and procedure

2 The title of the regulation is replaced by the following:

“Distress situations: obligations and procedures”

3 In paragraph 1, the words “a signal” in the first sentence are replaced by the word “information”, and the following sentence is added after the first sentence of the paragraph:

“This obligation to provide assistance applies regardless of the nationality or status of such persons or the circumstances in which they are found.”

4 The following new paragraph 1-1 is inserted after the existing paragraph 1:

“1-1 Contracting Governments shall co-ordinate and co-operate to ensure that masters of ships providing assistance by embarking persons in distress at sea are released from their obligations with minimum further deviation from the ships’ intended voyage, provided that releasing the master of the ship from the obligations under the current regulation does not further endanger the safety of life at sea. The Contracting Government responsible for the search and rescue region in which such assistance is rendered shall exercise primary responsibility for ensuring such co-ordination and co-operation occurs, so that survivors assisted are disembarked from the assisting ship and delivered to a place of safety, taking into account the particular circumstances of the case and guidelines developed by the Organization. In these cases the relevant Contracting Governments shall arrange for such disembarkation to be effected as soon as reasonably practicable.”

5 The following new paragraph 6 is added after the existing paragraph 5:

“6 Masters of ships who have embarked persons in distress at sea shall treat them with humanity, within the capabilities and limitations of the ship.”

Regulation 34 – Safe navigation and avoidance of dangerous situations

6 The existing paragraph 3 is deleted.

7 The following new regulation 34-1 is added after the existing regulation 34:

**“Regulation 34-1
Master’s discretion**

The owner, the charterer, the company operating the ship as defined in regulation IX/1, or any other person shall not prevent or restrict the master of the ship from taking or executing any decision which, in the master’s professional judgement, is necessary for safety of life at sea and protection of the marine environment.”