

**ANNEX 21**

**RESOLUTION MSC.77(69)  
(adopted on 13 May 1998)**

**MAINTENANCE OF A CONTINUOUS LISTENING WATCH ON VHF CHANNEL 16 BY  
SOLAS SHIPS WHILST AT SEA AFTER 1 FEBRUARY 1999 AND INSTALLATION  
OF VHF DSC FACILITIES ON NON-SOLAS SHIPS**

THE MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE,

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

RECALLING ALSO that regulation 12.3, chapter IV of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, as amended in 1988, requires that until 1 February 1999 or until such other date as may be determined by the Maritime Safety Committee, every ship while at sea shall maintain, when practicable, a continuous listening watch on VHF channel 16,

RECALLING FURTHER MSC/Circ.803 on participation of non-SOLAS ships in the Global Maritime Safety and Distress System (GMDSS),

NOTING that a large number of vessels to which the SOLAS Convention does not apply may not have fitted GMDSS equipment by 1 February 1999 and, if watchkeeping was discontinued on VHF channel 16 by SOLAS Convention ships, such non-Convention vessels would, if in distress, be unable to alert Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS)-fitted ships,

NOTING ALSO the time needed for the large number of non-Convention ships being required to carry a radio installation under national legislation, to be fitted with a VHF installation which includes DSC facilities, and to provide adequate GMDSS training for the large number of personnel required to operate the radio equipment of non-Convention ships,

NOTING FURTHER the many parts of the world, not covered by VHF coast stations, where distress alerts can only be received by ships in the vicinity of those in distress,

RECOGNIZING the capability of GMDSS-fitted ships to simultaneously maintain continuous listening watch on VHF channel 16 and for digital selective calling (DSC) on VHF channel 70,

BEING OF THE OPINION that, for the time being, safety of life at sea would best be served by retaining watchkeeping for GMDSS-fitted ships on VHF channel 16 so that all ships can establish and conduct communications with each other for distress and safety purposes,

HAVING CONSIDERED, at its sixty-ninth session, the recommendation made by the Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR), at its third session, with respect to the continuation of listening watch by GMDSS-fitted ships,

1. DETERMINES, in accordance with regulation IV/12.3 of the SOLAS Convention, that all GMDSS ships, while at sea, shall continue to maintain, when practicable, continuous listening watch on VHF channel 16 until 1 February 2005;

2. URGES Governments:

- .1 to require all new VHF radio equipment manufactured for, or installed on or after 1 February 1999 on, seagoing vessels to which the 1974 SOLAS Convention does not apply to be fitted with facilities capable of transmitting and receiving distress alerts by DSC on VHF channel 70;
- .2 to require all seagoing vessels to which the 1974 SOLAS Convention does not apply, but which are required to carry a radio installation under national legislation, to be fitted with a radio installation which includes facilities for transmitting and receiving distress alerts by DSC on VHF channel 70 no later than 1 February 2005;
- .3 to encourage seagoing vessels being voluntarily fitted with VHF radio equipment to be fitted also with facilities for transmitting and receiving distress alerts by DSC on VHF channel 70 no later than 1 February 2005; and
- .4 to require all vessels being fitted with facilities in accordance with sub-paragraph .1 to .3 above, to maintain, when practicable, a continuous listening watch on VHF channel 16 until 1 February 2005, and to require personnel operating such equipment to be adequately trained, taking into account ITU Resolution 343 (WRC-97);

3. INVITES Governments to bring this decision to the attention of all seafarers, fishing vessel personnel, shipowners, ship operators, the off-shore industries, radio equipment manufacturers, coast stations and all others involved or who may be involved in search and rescue operations at sea;

4. INVITES FURTHER the Secretary-General to bring this resolution to the attention of the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union.

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