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SUB-COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
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Agenda item 8

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MEASURES TO PREVENT ACCIDENTS WITH LIFEBOATS

Submitted by Hong Kong, China

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This paper proposes amendments to the STCW Code to give more emphasis on the safe operation of lifeboat on-load release devices.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 6

Related documents: MSC/Circ.1049 and DE 46/32

1 The shipping industry is already very much alerted by a large number of lifeboat accidents in recent years, many of which involved inadvertent release or mishandling of on-load release mechanisms. DE 46 supported the proposal of Japan to prepare an operation and maintenance manual for lifeboat on-load release mechanisms. It also agreed to add to its work plan a short-term item on the development of guidelines for safe practices during lifeboat drills in co-operation with the STW Sub-Committee. However, a recent lifeboat accident on a Hong Kong registered ship in a real emergency situation, which resulted in two fatalities, has shown that further remedial actions are required to address this issue. The investigation into this accident has identified that the accident was attributed mainly to the lack of understanding of the danger associated with the lifeboat on-load release mechanism on the part of the crew. It appears that there is an urgent need to strengthen the relevant contents in shore-based lifeboat training so that crewmembers would have sufficient knowledge to operate the on-load release mechanism safely in lifeboat drills as well as in real emergency situations.

2 Hong Kong, China considers that while the operation and maintenance manual and guidelines would be useful as safety guidance and maintenance information on-board a ship, the awareness of seafarers on the appropriate use and danger associated with lifeboat on-load release mechanism should be drawn at an earlier stage during their training, i.e., when they are trained for the issue of the Certificate of Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boats other than Fast Rescue Boats.

3 Knowledge and competence on the use of lifeboat on-load release mechanisms are not specifically mentioned in Table A-VI/2-1 of the STCW Code. The proficiency requirements in Column 2 of Table A-VI/2-1 broadly cover “*various types of device used for launching survival craft and rescue boats*”. The methods for demonstrating competency in Column 3 of the same table include only the ability to “*prepare and safely launch survival craft and clear the ship’s side quickly*”.

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4 According to the requirements of Table A-VI/2-1, candidates for a Certificate of Proficiency in Survival Craft and Rescue Boats other than Fast Rescue Boats may not be fully aware of the danger associated with or having practical training in the use of lifeboat on-load release mechanisms. Further, if various types of device used for launching survival craft and rescue boats are introduced to the trainees without practical hands-on experience during training, confusion in the appropriate use of the different types of device may lead to serious accident.

5 In order to enhance competence in the safe operation of the lifeboat on-load release mechanisms and to avoid recurrence of lifeboat accidents involving such devices, Hong Kong, China proposes following amendments to Table A-VI/2-1 of the STCW Code:

- (a) Column 2, the third paragraph should read:

*“Various types of device used for launching survival craft and rescue boats **and their appropriate use, and in particular, the danger associated with the use of on-load release mechanism**”*

- (b) Column 3, subparagraphs .4 and .5 should read:

*“.4 **prepare and safely launch survival craft and clear the ship’s side quickly, including the use of both off-load and on-load release devices***

*.5 **safely recover survival craft and rescue boats, including the proper resetting of both off-load and on-load release devices**”*

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

6 The Sub-Committee is invited to consider the proposal in paragraph 5 and decide accordingly.
