

IMO SUB COMMITTEE ON NAVIGATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND SEARCH AND RESCUE (NCSR)

13th Session, 22nd – 26th June 2026

Session Outcome



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IMO Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR)– 13th Session

The 13th Session of IMO's Subcommittee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR 13) was held from 22nd to 26th June 2026 at IMO Headquarters, London.

Concise Summary of Important Decisions made

NCSR 13 finalised the following to be submitted to MSC 112 for adoption/approval as indicated:

- ✓ Draft MSC circular on the transition scheme for digital Very High Frequency (VHF) voice communications, retaining some existing analogue VHF channels to ensure the continuity of vital GMDSS distress: for approval
- ✓ Draft MSC circulars on global IP-based data exchange and secure connectivity for S-100 ECDIS products, as well as operational guidance for route exchange: for approval
- ✓ Draft amendments to introduce the Galileo Return Link Service two-way communication capability as an optional feature for 406 MHz float-free EPIRBs and the draft revision of resolution MSC.471(101): for adoption
- ✓ Draft amendments for both the European ship reporting systems and the United States routing measures: for adoption

NCSR 13 also agreed to submit the following to MSC 112:

- ✓ the updated road map regarding the introduction of the NAVDAT service and keeping it updated based on future developments
- ✓ draft performance standards for shipborne R-mode receiver equipment
- ✓ draft revision of the Guidance for the dissemination of search and rescue related information through the international enhanced group call service (MSC.1/Circ.1659)
- ✓ draft IMO position on relevant WRC-27 agenda items concerning matters relating to maritime services
- ✓ the draft terms of reference for the 22nd meeting of the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group on Maritime Radiocommunication Matters
- ✓ draft SAR.7/Circ.17 on List of documents and publications which should be held by a maritime or joint rescue coordination centre

Summary of relevant topics which were discussed at NCSR 13

1. Routeing measures and ship reporting systems – Agenda Item 3

NCSR 13 agreed on the following with a view for **adoption at MSC 112 and entry into force 6 months after adoption**:

- a) draft amended mandatory ship reporting system in Strait of Bonifacio (BONIFREP), Western European Tanker Reporting System (WETREP), "In the Dover Strait/Pas De Calais" (CALDOVREP).
- b) draft amended traffic separation schemes and associated measures, the text of which is set out in a draft COLREG.2 circular.

2. Developments in GMDSS services, including guidelines on maritime safety information (MSI)– Agenda Item 5

NCSR 13 agreed to modifications to the road map on the issues to be considered regarding the introduction of the NAVDAT service. The changes clarify the latest technical information related to NAVDAT emanating from the 21st meeting of the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group on maritime radiocommunication matters.

Nine priority action items were identified for deployment readiness:

- approval of the IEC test and certification standards for NAVDAT shipborne equipment
- manufacturing of the NAVDAT shipborne equipment
- conducting field trials and testing to obtain practical experience with the implementation of the NAVDAT service
- establishment of NAVDAT coast stations
- revision of the GMDSS Master Plan module of GISIS to accommodate NAVDAT services
- approval of the MSC circular on IMO Terrestrial Broadcast Services
- Coordinating panel and consequential revision of the NAVTEX Manual
- approval of the NAVDAT Manual; and
- revision of MSC.1/Circ.1645 on Guidance for the reception of maritime safety information and search and rescue related information as required in the (GMDSS)

3. Response to matters related to the ITU-R Study Groups and ITU World Radiocommunication Conference – Agenda Item 6

NCSR 13 considered matters related to the International Telecommunication Union ITU-R Study Groups and ITU World Radiocommunication Conference (WRC) and the draft position on ITU WRC-27 agenda items. After its approval by MSC 112 and its subsequent submission to the ITU's CPM 27-2, the final IMO position will be prepared by NCSR 14 and submitted to MSC 113 for approval and subsequent submission to WRC-27.

Draft revision to MSC.1/Circ.1659

The Sub-Committee agreed to the draft revision of the "Guidance for the dissemination of search and rescue related information through the international enhanced group call service" (MSC.1/Circ.1659), with a view to approval by MSC 112.

4. Development of global maritime SAR services, including harmonization of maritime and aeronautical procedures and amendments to the IAMSAR Manual – Agenda Item 7

NCSR 13 supported a proposal to update IAMSAR Manual Volumes II and III to include guidance on deep-water submersible craft rescue.

NCSR 13 reviewed and finalized the updated list of minimum IMO/SAR documentations which a maritime or joint rescue coordination centre should hold or access digitally, for approval and circulation as SAR.7/Circ.17, revoking SAR.7/Circ.16.

5. Development of guidelines for EPIRB which implement the two-way communication service via the SAR/Galileo Return Link service as a complement to EPIRB performance standards (Resolution MSC.471(101)) – Agenda Item 8

NCSR 13 finalized amendments to Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) performance standards (Resolution MSC.471(101)) to incorporate optional two-way communication (TWC) functionality via the Galileo Return Link Service.

The amendments introduce an updated Section 2.7 to MSC.471(101) specifying that TWC-implementing EPIRBs must be capable of receiving Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) radiolocation service (RLS) signals. EPIRB must also comply with Cospas-Sarsat TWC requirements (established in documents C/S R.025 - operational concept and high-level requirements- and C/S T.018 -second-generation beacon specifications. The amendments are to be submitted to MSC 112 for adoption.

6. Development of guidance to establish a framework for data distribution and global IP-based connectivity between shore-based facilities and ships for ECDIS S-100 products (2.12) and operational guidance for route exchange – Agenda Item 9

NCSR 13 considered the report of the Correspondence Group on Establishment of an S-100 Framework and finalised the draft MSC circulars on the following:

- ✓ guidance to establish a framework for data distribution and global IP-based connectivity for shore-based facilities and ships supporting ECDIS S-100 products;
- ✓ operational guidance for route exchange.

It also finalized the list of identified elements associated with the implementation of S-100 capable ECDIS and the associated high-level summary of elements, including recommended next steps for the Organization. The latter contains proposals relating to the need for the development of future amendments to existing IMO instruments following approval of the draft MSC circular on operational guidance for digital route exchange.

7. Development of performance standards for dual frequency Multi constellation satellite-based augmentation systems (DFMC SBAS) and advanced receiver autonomous integrity monitoring (ARAIM) in shipborne radionavigation receivers – Agenda Item 10

NCSR 13 re-established a correspondence group on DFMC SBAS and ARAIM, to progress work intersessionally, and further develop and finalize the draft

performance ensuring that such standards remain goal-based and technology-neutral; and submit a report to NCSR 14.

8. Development of a transition scheme for the introduction of digital technology for Very High Frequency (VHF) voice communications – Agenda Item 11

NCSR 13 considered the development of a transition scheme for the introduction of digital technology for Very High Frequency (VHF) voice communications, considering the preliminary considerations of the Joint IMO/ITU Experts Group on Maritime Radiocommunication Matters, at its twenty-first meeting. A draft IMO circular outlining a coordinated transition plan from analogue to digital technology for VHF voice communications in maritime operations, addressing spectrum congestion in busy shipping areas was also finalised.

9. Revision of the Performance standards for gyro-compasses (resolution A.424(XI)) and Guidance for navigation and communication equipment intended for use on ships operating in polar waters (MSC.1/Circ.1612) – Agenda Item 12

NCSR 13 agreed that amending Resolution A.424(XI) "Revision of the Performance Standards for Gyro-compasses" was not necessary as there was no report of significant problems or incidents in high latitude waters caused by conventional gyro-compasses compliant with the resolution. However, regulatory gaps associated with newer technologies, particularly fibre-optic gyro-compasses and high-latitude operations, were recognized. It was agreed that development of a new set of performance standards is an appropriate way to address the gaps identified and interested parties were invited to submit proposals for a new output to a future MSC session.

10. Development of performance standards for Ranging mode (R-mode) in radionavigation receivers – Agenda Item 13

Performance Standards

NCSR 13 finalised performance standards for R-mode receivers, including position, timing, Course over ground/Speed Over Ground, integrity checking, failure warnings and interface requirements. The performance standards specify minimum requirements for shipboard receivers that provide positioning independent of the Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), i.e. a backup system intended to ensure that ships can still navigate safely using terrestrial signals if satellite systems are disrupted.

The proposed receiver standards would require the equipment to:

- ✓ receive and process MF and/or VHF R-mode signals;
- ✓ provide position in WGS 84 latitude/longitude;
- ✓ provide time referenced to coordinated universal time (UTC);
- ✓ output position, UTC, COG, SOG and alerts to ECDIS and other equipment;
- ✓ achieve static horizontal accuracy within 100 m at 95% within the declared R-mode service area;
- ✓ achieve equivalent dynamic accuracy;
- ✓ acquire position within 5 minutes from cold start;
- ✓ reacquire position within 30 seconds after temporary signal loss;

- ✓ output position at least once per second;
- ✓ provide integrity checking, failure warnings and status indications.

The draft performance standards will be submitted to MSC 112 for approval.

Amendments to Resolution A.1046(27) on Worldwide radionavigation system

NCSR 13 agreed that amendments to Resolution A.1046(27) and MSC.599(111) were necessary to accommodate the inclusion of R-mode as a terrestrial radionavigation system intended to support resilience of position, navigation and timing services. However, it also agreed that the scope of these amendments should not be limited exclusively to R mode but should also include other potential back-up or alternative systems, including terrestrial radionavigation systems.

11. Unified interpretation of provisions of IMO safety, security, environment, facilitation, liability and compensation-related conventions – Agenda Item 14

NCSR 13 agreed that no new interpretation regarding requirements of carriage of compass for ships of 500 gross tonnage and upwards was necessary as SOLAS Regulation V/19.2 is self-explanatory and that it was clear that gyro-compasses used for the spare or independent compass requirements must be additional to the non-magnetic compass equipment. However, recognizing current practice differed among Administrations, NCSR 13 invited interested parties to submit a proposal for a new output to address the issue at a future session of the Committee.

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