



## SHIP DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

### Comments on document MSC 111/12

#### Submitted by IACS

#### SUMMARY

*Executive summary:* This document comments on document MSC 111/12 and proposes, in lieu of revocation of MSC.1/Circ.1689, as proposed in paragraph 2.23 of document MSC 111/12, its revision to assist in the implementation of SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1.1 and 13.4.2.1.1 in a consistent and uniform manner.

*Strategic direction, if applicable:* 7

*Output:* 7.33

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 10

*Related documents:* SDC 12/18 and MSC 111/12

#### Introduction

1 This document is submitted in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 6.12.5 of the document on *Organization and method of work of the Maritime Safety Committee and the Marine Environment Protection Committee and their subsidiary bodies* (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.5/Rev.6) and comments on paragraph 2.23 of document MSC 111/12 (Secretariat) containing the actions requested of the Committee by SDC 12.

#### Background

2 MSC 110 agreed to work on a possible revision of SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1.1 and 13.4.2.1.1 through a new output included in its 2026-2027 biennial agenda, with a target completion year of 2027. The Committee agreed that under this output, the SDC Sub-Committee would consider submissions addressing any safety concerns with the regulations and how they had been applied, on the understanding that with respect to the scope of the output (MSC 110/21, paragraph 11.28):

- .1 should the SDC Sub-Committee manage to provide a solution without amending these regulations, the Sub-Committee would report to MSC 111 accordingly; and
- .2 should the SDC Sub-Committee conclude that the SOLAS regulations would require revision, it should prepare amendments to the regulations, including the applicability of such amendments to new ships or new and existing ships.

3 Further, MSC 110 approved the MSC circular on *Escape arrangements from the lower part of machinery spaces (SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1 and 13.4.2)* (MSC.1/Circ.1689), which invites port State control (PSC) authorities to take a pragmatic approach during inspections until any amendments enter into force, or until the work under the current output has been concluded, as appropriate.

4 Following consideration of the subject matter, SDC 12 agreed that no safety issues resulting from the application of existing SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1 had been demonstrated; no further discussion was needed; and invited MSC 111 to consider the output concluded.

5 SDC 12 also considered the implications for the status of MSC.1/Circ.1689, noting that it had been adopted to address immediate concerns as an initial measure and required further consideration, with a view to providing MSC 111 with an appropriate recommendation.

6 Notwithstanding the continued relevance of calling for a pragmatic approach by port State control in recognition of approvals by the flag State, SDC 12 agreed to invite MSC 111 to revoke MSC.1/Circ.1689, as the work is expected to be concluded at this session and the circular would no longer be needed.

### **Discussion**

7 With regard to the invitation by SDC 12 to MSC 111 to revoke MSC.1/Circ.1689, IACS is of the view that, should the Committee agree to revoke the circular on the grounds that the work has been concluded, some elements of the circular which remain valid would be lost. These elements include the function of providing relevant maritime stakeholders with the information on the Committee's deliberations and decisions on this subject, the consistent understanding of the safety confirmation and the approach of PSC authorities towards decisions made by flag States.

8 In respect to the latter, IACS is aware that, notwithstanding the regulations, the acceptance by flag States and conclusions of SDC 11 and SDC 12, there have been instances where concerns have been raised during PSC inspections in cases where the escape trunk is not extended to the lowest deck level. Furthermore, it is understood that certain findings raised during PSC inspections prior to the approval of MSC.1/Circ.1689 may not yet have been fully addressed or resolved in all cases. In order to provide all parties with an unambiguous decision by the Committee, IACS considers that the decision by the Committee should be appropriately disseminated through a revised MSC.1/Circ.1689.

### **Proposal**

9 Based on the above, IACS proposes that the Committee confirm the decision of SDC 11 (SDC 11/17, paragraph 10.18) and, instead of the revoking requested by SDC 12, consider a revision of MSC.1/Circ.1689 to provide clarity to administrations and port State control authorities on interpretations of SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1.1 and 13.4.2.1.1 and practical application to different designs of machinery spaces, as set out in the annexes (with changes and a clean revised text).

### **Action requested of the Committee**

10 The Committee is invited to consider the information provided on the two proposals in paragraph 9 and take action, as appropriate.

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## ANNEX 1

### MSC.1/CIRC.1689/REV.1 ESCAPE ARRANGEMENTS FROM THE LOWER PART OF MACHINERY SPACES (SOLAS REGULATIONS II-2/13.4.1 AND 13.4.2)

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 110th session (18 to 27 June 2025), following consideration of experiences reported by some SOLAS Contracting Governments and international organizations, noted the existence and impact of divergence in the interpretations of SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1 and 13.4.2, in particular, in the context of port State control (PSC) inspections, regarding the term "lower part" used in connection with the means of escape from spaces below the bulkhead deck for passenger ships, and from machinery spaces of category A for cargo ships.

2 In light of the relevance of the aforementioned SOLAS regulations to emergency response on board, requiring important design features for escape routes from spaces below the bulkhead deck for passenger ships and from machinery spaces of category A for cargo ships, with a view to clarifying escape arrangements from machinery spaces, MSC 110the Committee considered the report of SDC 11 which had confirmed that the terms "lower part of the space", therein, should be regarded as either the lowest deck level or a platform or passageway (SDC 11/17, paragraph 10.18).

3 In this context, MSC 110the Committee agreed to a new output on "Review and amend, if necessary, SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1 to clarify the requirements on escape arrangements from the lower part of machinery spaces" and to be included it in the biennial agenda of the SDC Sub-Committee for the 2026-2027 biennium and the provisional agenda for SDC 12.

4 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 111th session (13 to 22 May 2026), noted the agreement of SDC 12 that no safety issues were demonstrated resulting from application of existing SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1, and that no further discussion was needed.

45 Further, on that basis, the Committee confirmed that the terms "lower part of the space" in SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1 should be regarded as either the lowest deck level or a platform or passageway, and that this interpretation is not intended to be understood as "whichever is lowest" among them (SDC 11/17, paragraph 10.18).

6 Having recalled the responsibility of flag States to approve the relevant arrangements in compliance with SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1 and 13.4.2, as implemented by their authorized recognized organizations, as appropriate, the Committee urged that invited PSC Authorities to adopt a pragmatic approach in the inspection of such arrangements, while the Committee works on a long-term clarification on this issue. t

5 The PSC officer should in principle accept the design arrangement approved by the flag State and when appropriate consult with the flag Administrations (*Procedures for port State control, 20253* (resolution A.11851206(3433)), paragraph 1.2.5, as may be revised); until any relevant amendments to SOLAS regulation II-2/13 have entered into force, or the conclusion of the work under the output mentioned in paragraph 3 above, as appropriate.

67 This circular will remain effective until any relevant amendments to SOLAS regulation II-2/13 have entered into force, or the conclusion of the work under the output mentioned in paragraph 3 above, as appropriate. SOLAS Contracting Governments are invited to bring this circular to the attention of all parties concerned.

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## ANNEX 2

### MSC.1/CIRC.1689/REV.1 ESCAPE ARRANGEMENTS FROM THE LOWER PART OF MACHINERY SPACES (SOLAS REGULATIONS II-2/13.4.1 AND 13.4.2)

- 1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 110th session (18 to 27 June 2025), following consideration of experiences reported by some SOLAS Contracting Governments and international organizations, noted the existence and impact of divergence in the interpretations of SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1 and 13.4.2, in particular, in the context of port State control (PSC) inspections, regarding the term "lower part" used in connection with the means of escape from spaces below the bulkhead deck for passenger ships, and from machinery spaces of category A for cargo ships.
- 2 In light of the relevance of the aforementioned SOLAS regulations to emergency response on board, requiring important design features for escape routes from spaces below the bulkhead deck for passenger ships and from machinery spaces of category A for cargo ships, with a view to clarifying escape arrangements from machinery spaces, MSC 110 considered the report of SDC 11 which had confirmed that the terms "lower part of the space", therein, should be regarded as either the lowest deck level or a platform or passageway (SDC 11/17, paragraph 10.18).
- 3 In this context, MSC 110 agreed a new output on "Review and amend, if necessary, SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1 to clarify the requirements on escape arrangements from the lower part of machinery spaces" and included it in the provisional agenda for SDC 12.
- 4 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its 111th session (13 to 22 May 2026), noted the agreement of SDC 12 that no safety issues were demonstrated resulting from application of existing SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1, and that no further discussion was needed.
- 5 Further, on that basis, the Committee confirmed that the terms "lower part of the space" in SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1.1 and 13.4.2.1 should be regarded as either the lowest deck level or a platform or passageway, and that this interpretation is not intended to be understood as "whichever is lowest" among them (SDC 11/17, paragraph 10.18).
- 6 Having recalled the responsibility of flag States to approve the relevant arrangements in compliance with SOLAS regulations II-2/13.4.1 and 13.4.2, as implemented by their authorized recognized organizations, as appropriate, the Committee urged that the PSC officer should accept the design arrangement approved by the flag State and when appropriate consult with the flag Administrations (*Procedures for port State control, 2025* (resolution A.1206(34)), paragraph 1.2.5, as may be revised).
- 7 SOLAS Contracting Governments are invited to bring this circular to the attention of all parties concerned.