INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION

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SUB-COMMITTEE ON SHIP DESIGN AND EQUIPMENT
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DEVELOPMENT OF A MANDATORY CODE FOR SHIPS OPERATING IN POLAR WATERS

Proposed framework for the Code for ships operating in polar waters

Submitted by New Zealand

SUMMARY

Executive summary:	This document comments on the approach to the development of the Code proposed by the United Kingdom and the framework of the draft Code submitted by Canada. It stresses the importance of the code ensuring the ability to quickly identify vessels potentially able to assist in search and rescue in the region.
Strategic direction:	5.2
High-level action:	5.2.1
Planned output:	5.2.1.2
Action to be taken:	Paragraph 6
Related documents:	DE 53/18/2 and DE 53/18/6

1 This document is submitted in accordance with paragraph 4.10.5 of the Guidelines on the organisation and method of work of the Committees and their subsidiary bodies (MSC-MEPC.1/Circ.2) and provides comments on documents DE 53/18/2 and DE 53/18/6.

2 New Zealand has reviewed the documents submitted by the United Kingdom (DE 53/18/6) and Canada (DE 53/18/2) on the development of the proposed mandatory Polar Code and offers the following observations.

3 The document from Canada provides an immediate sense of the scope and content of what may be covered in a Polar Code, drawing extensively on the IMO *Guidelines for Operating in Polar Ice-covered Waters*. As such, it should prove a useful reference document when considering the technical content of the Code. The United Kingdom document, on the other hand, proposes that the Code should be developed in a systematic manner. Under this approach consideration will need to be given to the fundamental design of the Code including its scope, application and structure, including differentiation of requirements, as may be appropriate, between the Arctic and Antarctic environments, and between passenger and cargo ships.

4 New Zealand considers that there is considerable merit in the approach proposed by the United Kingdom and that more emphasis on the design of the Code at this stage will achieve a result that is more durable and which is more appropriate to polar shipping operations in both the Antarctic and Arctic.

5 New Zealand is particularly supportive of ensuring provisions in the Code will improve the ability to coordinate mutual assistance between ships in the event of an incident within the Antarctic portion of the New Zealand search and rescue region. Such assistance is well recognized as the most effective SAR response as the remoteness of the area effectively rules out any shore-based rescue response within the IMO's five-day "time to recover" parameter. Thus, the ability of rescue coordination centres to quickly identify vessels in the area and communicate with them is crucial. While vessel location information is available from a variety of sources, ranging from industry-based and voluntary reporting schemes to LRIT, all such arrangements have limitations due to the types of vessels covered or the incompleteness of the data. New Zealand would, therefore, propose that when radiocommunication requirements under the code are considered, the need to fill this information gap is taken into account and that all cost effective options to fill it, including possible extension of vessel tracking requirements to a wider range of ships, are fully explored.

Action requested of the Sub-Committee

6 The Sub-Committee is invited to take this submission into account when commencing work on the development of a mandatory code for ships operating in polar waters.