

SAR Convention, 1979

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON
MARITIME SEARCH AND RESCUE, 1979

as amended by resolution MSC. 70(69)



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Foreword

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The International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue (SAR) was adopted by an international conference held in Hamburg, Germany, in April 1979. As its title implies, this Convention is designed to improve existing arrangements and provide a framework for carrying out search and rescue operations following accidents at sea. Although many countries have their own established plans for such emergencies, this was the first time international procedures had been adopted. The Convention entered into force in 1985.

Because the Convention imposes considerable obligations on Parties, such as setting up the required shore installations, the ratification process of the Convention has been slow. It was generally agreed that one of the reasons for the slow pace of implementation was problems with some provisions of the SAR Convention itself and that these could best be overcome by amending the Convention.

The Sub-Committee on Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR) was therefore requested to revise the annex to the Convention. A draft text was prepared and was approved by the sixty-eighth session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) in May 1997, and was then adopted by resolution MSC.70(69) at the sixty-ninth session in May 1998. The revised Convention entered into force on 1 January 2000. It clarifies the responsibilities of Governments and puts greater emphasis on the regional approach and co-ordination between maritime and aeronautical SAR operations.

The revision applies to the annex of the Convention only. The terms and definitions contained in chapter 1 have been updated and chapter 2, which deals with organization and co-ordination, has been re-drafted to make the responsibilities of Governments clearer. Other chapters in the revised SAR Convention address co-operation between States (chapter 3) and operating procedures (chapter 4, which incorporates the previous chapters 4 (Preparatory measures) and 5 (Operating procedures)). The original chapter 6 (Ship reporting systems) has been updated and renumbered as chapter 5.

The current publication contains the text of the revised SAR Convention.

The 1979 SAR Conference resolutions are included without changes because they are part of the Final Act of the Conference itself, although most of them are either implemented or out of date.

NOTE: The name of the Organization as it appears in this publication was changed to "INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION" by virtue of amendments to the Organization's Convention which entered into force on 22 May 1982.

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International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979

THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION,

NOTING the great importance attached in several conventions to the rendering of assistance to persons in distress at sea and to the establishment by every coastal State of adequate and effective arrangements for coast watching and for search and rescue services,

HAVING CONSIDERED Recommendation 40 adopted by the International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea, 1960, which recognizes the desirability of co-ordinating activities regarding safety on and over the sea among a number of intergovernmental organizations,

DESIRING to develop and promote these activities by establishing an international maritime search and rescue plan responsible to the needs of maritime traffic for the rescue of persons in distress at sea,

WISHING to promote co-operation among search and rescue organizations around the world and among those participating in search and rescue operations at sea,

HAVE AGREED as follows:

Article I

General obligations under the Convention

The Parties undertake to adopt all legislative or other appropriate measures necessary to give full effect to the Convention and its annex, which is an integral part of the Convention. Unless expressly provided otherwise, a reference to the Convention constitutes at the same time a reference to its annex .•

Article II

Other treaties and interpretation

(1) Nothing in the Convention shall prejudice the codification and development of the law of the sea by the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea convened pursuant to resolution 2750(XXV) of the General Assembly of the United Nations nor the present or future claims and legal views of any State concerning the law of the sea and the nature and extent of coastal and flag State jurisdiction.

(2) No provision of the Convention shall be construed as prejudicing obligations or rights of vessels provided for in other international instruments .

Article III

Amendments

(1) The Convention may be amended by either of the procedures specified in paragraphs (2) and (3) hereinafter.

(2) Amendment after consideration within the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (hereinafter referred to as the Organization):

- (a) Any amendment proposed by a Party and transmitted to the Secretary-General of the Organization (hereinafter referred to as the Secretary-General), or any amendment deemed necessary by the Secretary-General as a result of an amendment to a corresponding provision of annex 12 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, shall be circulated to all Members of the Organization and all Parties at least six months prior to its consideration by the Maritime Safety Committee of the Organization.
- (b) Parties, whether or not Members of the Organization, shall be entitled to participate in the proceedings of the Maritime Safety Committee for the consideration and adoption of amendments.
- (c) Amendments shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting in the Maritime Safety Committee on condition that at least one third of the Parties shall be present at the time of adoption of the amendment.
- (d) Amendments adopted in accordance with subparagraph (c) shall be communicated by the Secretary-General to all Parties for acceptance .
- (e) An amendment to an article or to paragraphs 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.10, 3.1.2 or 3.1.3 of the annex shall be deemed to have been accepted on the date on which the Secretary-General has received an instrument of acceptance from two thirds of the Parties.
- (f) An amendment to the annex other than to paragraphs 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.10, 3.1.2 or 3.1.3 shall be deemed to have been accepted at the end of one year from the date on which it is communicated to the Parties for acceptance. However, if within such period of one year more than one third of the Parties notify the Secretary-General that they object to the amendment, it shall be deemed not to have been accepted.

- (g) An amendment to an article or to paragraphs 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.10, 3.1.2 or 3.1.3 of the annex shall enter into force:
 - (i) with respect to those Parties which have accepted it, six months after the date on which it is deemed to have been accepted;
 - (ii) with respect to those Parties which accept it after the condition mentioned in subparagraph (e) has been met and before the amendment enters into force, on the date of entry into force of the amendment;
 - (ii) with respect to those Parties which accept it after to date on which the amendment enters into force, 30 days after the deposit of an instrument of acceptance.
 - (h) An amendment to the annex other than to paragraphs 2.1.4, 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.10, 3.1.2 or 3.1.3 shall enter into force with respect to all Parties, except those which have objected to the amendment under subparagraph (f) and which have not withdrawn such objections, six months after the date on which it is deemed to have been accepted. However, before the date set for entry into force, any Party may give notice to the Secretary-General that it exempts itself from giving effect to that amendment for a period not longer than one year from the date of its entry into force, or for such longer period as may be determined by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting in the Maritime Safety Committee at the time of the adoption of the amendment.
- (3) Amendment by a conference:
- (a) Upon the request of a Party concurred in by at least one third of the Parties, the Organization shall convene a conference of Parties to consider amendments to the Convention. Proposed amendments shall be circulated by the Secretary-General to all Parties at least six months prior to their consideration by the conference.
 - (b) Amendments shall be adopted by such a conference by a two-thirds majority of the Parties present and voting, on condition that at least one third of the Parties shall be present at the time of adoption of the amendment. Amendments so adopted shall be communicated by the Secretary-General to all Parties for acceptance.
 - (c) Unless the conference decides otherwise, the amendment shall be deemed to have been accepted and shall enter into force in accordance with the procedures specified in subparagraphs (2)(e), (2)(f), (2)(g), and 2(h) respectively, provided that reference in subparagraph (2)(h) to the Maritime Safety Committee expanded in accordance with subparagraph (2)(b) shall be taken to mean reference to the conference.

(4) Any declaration of acceptance of, or objection to, an amendment or any notice given under subparagraph (2)(h) shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary-General who shall inform all Parties of any such submission and the date of its receipt.

(5) The Secretary-General shall inform States of any amendments which enter into force, together with the date on which each such amendment enters into force.

Article IV

Signature, ratification, acceptance, approval and accession

(1) The Convention shall remain open for signature at the Headquarters of the Organization from 1 November 1979 until 31 October 1980 and shall thereafter remain open for accession. States may become Parties to the Convention by:

- (a) signature without reservation as to ratification, acceptance or approval; or
- (b) signature subject to ratification, acceptance or approval, followed by ratification, acceptance or approval; or
- (c) accession.

(2) Ratification, acceptance, approval or accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument to that effect with the Secretary-General.

(3) The Secretary-General shall inform States of any signature or of the deposit of any instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession and the date of its deposit.

Article V

Entry into force

(1) The Convention shall enter into force 12 months after the date on which 15 States have become Parties to it in accordance with article IV.

(2) Entry into force for States which ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Convention in accordance with article IV after the condition prescribed in paragraph (1) has been met and before the Convention enters into force, shall be on the date of entry into force of the Convention .

(3) Entry into force for States which ratify, accept, approve or accede to the Convention after the date on which the Convention enters into force shall be 30 days after the date of deposit of an instrument in accordance with article IV.

(4) Any instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession deposited after the date of entry into force of an amendment to the Convention in accordance with article III shall apply to the Convention, as

amended, and the Convention, as amended, shall enter into force for a State depositing such an instrument 30 days after the date of its deposit.

(5) The Secretary-General shall inform States of the date of entry into force of the Convention.

Article VI

Denunciation

(1) The Convention may be denounced by any Party at any time after the expiry of five years from the date on which the Convention enters into force for that Party.

(2) Denunciation shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of denunciation with the Secretary-General who shall notify States of any instrument of denunciation received and of the date of its receipt as well as the date on which such denunciation takes effect.

(3) A denunciation shall take effect one year, or such longer period as may be specified in the instrument of denunciation, after its receipt by the Secretary-General.

Article VII

Deposit and registration

(1) The Convention shall be deposited with the Secretary-General who shall transmit certified true copies thereof to States.

(2) As soon as the Convention enters into force, the Secretary-General shall transmit the text thereof to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for registration and publication, in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations.

Article VIII

Languages

The Convention is established in a single copy in the Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish languages, each text being equally authentic. Official translations in the Arabic, German and Italian languages shall be prepared and deposited with the signed original.

DONE AT HAMBURG this twenty-seventh day of April one thousand nine hundred and seventy-nine.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the undersigned*, being duly authorized by their respective Governments for that purpose, have signed the Convention.

* Signature omitted.

Annex

Chapter 1

Tenus and definitions

1.1 "Shall" is used in the annex to indicate a provision, the uniform application of which by all Parties is required in the interest of safety of life at sea.

1.2 "Should" is used in the annex to indicate a provision, the uniform application of which by all Parties is recommended in the interest of safety of life at sea.

1.3 The terms listed below are used in the annex with the following meanings:

- .1 *Search*. An operation, normally co-ordinated by a rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre, using available personnel and facilities to locate persons in distress;
- .2 *Rescue*. An operation to retrieve persons in distress, provide for their initial medical or other needs, and deliver them to a place of safety;
- .3 *Search and rescue service*. The performance of distress monitoring, communication, co-ordination and search and rescue functions, including provision of medical advice, initial medical assistance, or medical evacuation, through the use of public and private resources~ including co-operating aircraft, vessels and other craft and installations;
- .4 *Search and rescue region*. An area of defined dimensions associated with a rescue co-ordination centre within which search and rescue services are provided;
- .5 *Rescue co-ordination centre*. A unit responsible for promoting efficient organization of search and rescue services and for co-ordinating the conduct of search and rescue operations within a search and rescue region;
- .6 *Rescue sub-centre*. A unit subordinate to a rescue co-ordination centre established to complement the latter according to particular provisions of the responsible authorities;
- .7 *Search and rescue facility*. Any mobile resource, including designated search and rescue units, used to conduct search and rescue operations;
- .8 *Search and rescue unit*. A unit composed of trained personnel and provided with equipment suitable for the expeditious conduct of search and rescue operations;

- .9 *Alerting post.* Any facility intended to serve as an intermediary between a person reporting an emergency and a rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre;
- .10 *Emergency phase.* A generic term meaning, as the case may be, uncertainty phase, alert phase or distress phase;
- .11 *Uncertainty phase.* A situation wherein uncertainty exists as to the safety of a person, a vessel or other craft;
- .12 *Alert phase.* A situation wherein apprehension exists as to the safety of a person, a vessel or other craft;
- .13 *Distress phase.* A situation wherein there is a reasonable certainty that a person, a vessel or other craft is threatened by grave and imminent danger and requires immediate assistance;
- .14 *On-scene co-ordinator.* A person designated to co-ordinate search and rescue operations within a specified area;
- .15 *Secretary-General.* The Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization .

Chapter 2

Organization and co-ordination

2.1 Arrangements for provision and co-ordination of search and rescue services

2.1.1 Parties shall, as they are able to do so individually or in co-operation with other States and, as appropriate, with the Organization, participate in the development of search and rescue services to ensure that assistance is rendered to any person in distress at sea. On receiving information that any person is, or appears to be, in distress at sea, the responsible authorities of a Party shall take urgent steps to ensure that the necessary assistance is provided.

2.1.2 Parties shall, either individually or, if appropriate, in co-operation with other States, establish the following basic elements of a search and rescue service:

- .1 legal framework;
- .2 assignment of a responsible authority;
- .3 organization of available resources;
- .4 communication facilities;

- .5 co-ordination and operational functions; and
- .6 processes to improve the service, including planning, domestic and international co-operative relationships and training.

Parties shall, as far as practicable, follow relevant minimum standards and guidelines developed by the Organization .

2.1.3 To help ensure the provision of adequate shore-based communication infrastructure, efficient distress alert routing, and proper operational co-ordination to effectively support search and rescue services, Parties shall, individually or in co-operation with other States, ensure that sufficient search and rescue regions are established within each sea area in accordance with paragraphs 2.1.4 and 2.1.5. Such regions should be contiguous and, as far as practicable, not overlap.

2.1.4 Each search and rescue region shall be established by agreement among Parties concerned. The Secretary-General shall be notified of such agreements.

2.1.5 In case agreement on the exact dimensions of a search and rescue region is not reached by the Parties concerned, those Parties shall use their best endeavours to reach agreement upon appropriate arrangements under which the equivalent overall co-ordination of search and rescue services is provided in the area. The Secretary-General shall be notified of such arrangements.

2.1.6 Agreement on the regions or arrangements referred to in paragraphs 2.1.4 and 2.1.5 shall be recorded by the Parties concerned, or in written plans accepted by the Parties.

2.1.7 The delimitation of search and rescue regions is not related to and shall not prejudice the delimitation of any boundary between States.

2.1.8 Parties should seek to promote consistency, where applicable, between their maritime and aeronautical search and rescue services while considering the establishment of maritime search and rescue regions which shall be established by agreement in accordance with paragraph 2.1.4 or the reaching of agreement upon appropriate arrangements in accordance with paragraph 2.1.5.

2.1.9 Parties having accepted responsibility to provide search and rescue services for a specified area shall use search and rescue units and other available facilities for providing assistance to a person who is, or appears to be, in distress at sea.

2.1.10 Parties shall ensure that assistance be provided to any person in distress at sea. They shall do so regardless of the nationality or status of such a person or the circumstances in which that person is found.

2.1.11 Parties shall forward to the Secretary-General information on their search and rescue service, including the:

- .1 national authority responsible for the maritime search and rescue services;
- .2 location of the established rescue co-ordination centres or other centres providing search and rescue co-ordination, for the search and rescue region or regions and communications therein;
- .3 limits of their search and rescue region or regions and the coverage provided by their shore-based distress and safety communication facilities; and
- .4 principal types of available search and rescue units.

Parties shall, with priority, update the information provided with respect to any alterations of importance. The Secretary-General shall transmit to all Parties the information received.

2.1.12 The Secretary-General shall notify all Parties of the agreements or arrangements referred to in paragraphs 2.1.4 and 2.1.5.

2.2 Development of national search and rescue services

2.2.1 Parties shall establish appropriate national procedures for overall development, co-ordination, and improvement of search and rescue services.

2.2.2 To support efficient search and rescue operations, Parties shall:

- .1 ensure the co-ordinated use of available facilities; and
- .2 establish close co-operation between services and organizations which may contribute to improve the search and rescue service in areas such as operations, planning, training, exercises and research and development.

2.3 Establishment of rescue co-ordination centres and rescue sub-centres

2.3.1 To meet the requirements of paragraph 2.2, Parties shall individually or in co-operation with other States establish rescue co-ordination centres for their search and rescue services and such rescue sub-centres as they consider appropriate.

2.3.2 Each rescue co-ordination centre and rescue sub-centre, established in accordance with paragraph 2.3.1, shall arrange for the receipt of distress alerts originating from within its search and rescue region. Every such centre shall also arrange for communications with persons in distress, with search and rescue facilities, and with other rescue co-ordination centres or rescue sub-centres.

2.3.3 Each rescue co-ordination centre shall be operational on a 24-hour basis and be constantly staffed by trained personnel having a working knowledge of the English language.'

2.4 Co-ordination with aeronautical services

2.4.1 Parties shall ensure the closest practicable co-ordination between maritime and aeronautical services so as to provide for the most effective and efficient search and rescue services in and over their search and rescue regions.

2.4.2 Whenever practicable, each Party should establish joint rescue co-ordination centres and rescue sub-centres to serve both maritime and aeronautical purposes.

2.4.3 Whenever separate maritime and aeronautical rescue co-ordination centres or rescue sub-centres are established to serve the same area, the Party concerned shall ensure the closest practicable co-ordination between the centres or sub-centres.

2.4.4 Parties shall ensure as far as is possible the use of common procedures by search and rescue units established for maritime purposes and those established for aeronautical purposes.

2.5 Designation of search and rescue facilities

Parties shall identify all facilities able to participate in search and rescue operations, and may designate suitable facilities as search and rescue units.

2.6 Equipment of search and rescue units

2.6.1 Each search and rescue unit shall be provided with equipment appropriate to its task.

2.6.2 Containers and packages containing survival equipment for dropping to survivors should have the general nature of their contents indicated by markings in accordance with standards adopted by the Organization.

Chapter 3

Co-operation between States

3.1 Co-operation between States

3.1.1 Parties shall co-ordinate their search and rescue organizations and should, whenever necessary, co-ordinate search and rescue operations with those of neighbouring States.

• Refer to the Search and Rescue section of the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases (MSCjCirc.794).

3.1.2 Unless otherwise agreed between the States concerned, a Party should authorize, subject to applicable national laws, rules and regulations, immediate entry into or over its territorial sea or territory of rescue units of other Parties solely for the purpose of searching for the position of maritime casualties and rescuing the survivors of such casualties. In such cases, search and rescue operations shall, as far as practicable, be co-ordinated by the appropriate rescue co-ordination centre of the Party which has authorized entry, or such other authority as has been designated by that Party.

3.1.3 Unless otherwise agreed between the States concerned, the authorities of a Party which wishes its rescue units to enter into or over the territorial sea or territory of another Party solely for the purpose of searching for the position of maritime casualties and rescuing the survivors of such casualties, shall transmit a request, giving full details of the projected mission and the need for it, to the rescue co-ordination centre of that other Party, or to such other authority as has been designated by that Party.

3.1.4 The responsible authorities of Parties shall:

- .1 immediately acknowledge the receipt of such a request; and
- .2 as soon as possible, indicate the conditions, if any, under which the projected mission may be undertaken.

3.1.5 Parties should enter into agreements with neighbouring States setting forth the conditions for entry of each other's search and rescue units into or over their respective territorial sea or territory. These agreements should also provide for expediting entry of such units with the least possible formalities.

3.1.6 Each Party should authorize its rescue co-ordination centres:

- .1 to request from other rescue co-ordination centres such assistance, including vessels, aircraft, personnel or equipment, as may be needed;
- .2 to grant any necessary permission for the entry of such vessels, aircraft, personnel or equipment into or over its territorial sea or territory; and
- .3 to make the necessary arrangements with the appropriate customs, immigration, health or other authorities with a view to expediting such entry.

3.1.7 Each Party shall ensure that its rescue co-ordination centres provide, when requested, assistance to other rescue co-ordination centres, including assistance in the form of vessels, aircraft, personnel or equipment.

3.1.8 Parties should enter into agreements with other States, where appropriate, to strengthen search and rescue co-operation and co-ordination. Parties shall authorize their responsible authority to make operational plans and arrangements for search and rescue co-operation and co-ordination with responsible authorities of other States.

Chapter 4

Operating procedures

4.1 Preparatory measures

4.1.1 Each rescue co-ordination centre and rescue sub-centre shall have available up-to-date information especially concerning search and rescue facilities and available communications relevant to search and rescue operations in its area.

4.1.2 Each rescue co-ordination centre and rescue sub-centre should have ready access to information regarding the position, course, and speed of vessels within its area which may be able to provide assistance to persons, vessels or other craft in distress at sea, and regarding how to contact them. This information should either be kept in the rescue co-ordination centre, or be readily obtainable when necessary.

4.1.3 Each rescue co-ordination centre and rescue sub-centre shall have detailed plans of operation for the conduct of search and rescue operations. Where appropriate, these plans shall be developed jointly with the representatives of those who may assist in providing, or who may benefit from, the search and rescue services.

4.1.4 Rescue co-ordination centres or sub-centres shall be kept informed of the state of preparedness of search and rescue units.

4.2 Information concerning emergencies

4.2.1 Parties, either individually or in co-operation with other States, shall ensure that they are capable on a 24-hour basis of promptly and reliably receiving distress alerts from equipment used for this purpose within their search and rescue regions. Any alerting post receiving a distress alert shall:

- .1 immediately relay the alert to the appropriate rescue co-ordination centre or sub-centre, and then assist with search and rescue communications as appropriate; and
- .2 if practicable, acknowledge the alert.

4.2.2 Parties shall, where appropriate, ensure that effective arrangements are in place for the registration of communication equipment and for responding to emergencies, to enable any rescue co-ordination centre or sub-centre to access pertinent registration information quickly.

4.2.3 Any authority or element of the search and rescue service having reason to believe that a person, a vessel or other craft is in a state of emergency shall forward as soon as possible all available information to the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre concerned.

4.2.4 Rescue co-ordination centres and rescue sub-centres shall, immediately upon receipt of information concerning a person, a vessel, or

other craft in a state of emergency, evaluate such information and determine the phase of emergency in accordance with paragraph 4.4, and the extent of operations required.

4.3 Initial action

Any search and rescue unit receiving information of a distress incident shall initially take immediate action if in the position to assist and shall, in any case without delay, notify the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre in whose area the incident has occurred.

4.4 Emergency phases

To assist in determining the appropriate operating procedures, the following emergency phases shall be distinguished by the rescue co-ordination centre or sub-centre concerned:

.1 *Uncertainty phase:*

- .1.1 when a person has been reported as missing, or a vessel or other craft is overdue; or
- .1.2 when a person, a vessel or other craft has failed to make an expected position or safety report.

.2 *Alert phase:*

- .2.1 when, following the uncertainty phase, attempts to establish contact with a person, a vessel or other craft have failed and enquiries addressed to other appropriate sources have been unsuccessful; or
- .2.2 when information has been received indicating that the operating efficiency of a vessel or other craft is impaired, but not to the extent that a distress situation is likely.

.3 *Distress phase:*

- .3.1 when positive information is received that a person, a vessel or other craft is in danger and in need of immediate assistance; or
- .3.2 when, following the alert phase, further unsuccessful attempts to establish contact with a person, a vessel or other craft and more widespread unsuccessful enquiries point to the probability that a distress situation exists; or
- .3.3 when information is received which indicates that the operating efficiency of a vessel or other craft has been impaired to the extent that a distress situation is likely.

4.5 Procedures to be followed by rescue co-ordination centres and rescue sub-centres during emergency phases

4.5.1 Upon the declaration of the uncertainty phase, the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre, as appropriate, shall initiate enquiries to determine the safety of a person, a vessel or other craft, and shall declare the alert phase.

4.5.2 Upon the declaration of the alert phase, the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre, as appropriate, shall extend the enquiries for the missing person, vessel or other craft, alert appropriate search and rescue services and initiate such action as is necessary in the light of the circumstances of the particular case.

4.5.3 Upon the declaration of the distress phase, the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre, as appropriate, shall proceed as prescribed in its plans of operation, as required by paragraph 4.1.

4.5.4 *Initiation of search and rescue operations when the position of the search object is unknown*

In the event of an emergency phase being declared for a search object whose position is unknown, the following shall apply:

- .1 when an emergency phase exists, a rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre shall, unless it is aware that other centres are taking action, assume responsibility for initiating suitable action and confer with other centres with the objective of designating one centre to assume responsibility;
- .2 unless otherwise decided by agreement between the centres concerned, the centre to be designated shall be the centre responsible for the area in which the search object was, according to its last reported position; and
- .3 after the declaration of the distress phase, the centre co-ordinating the search and rescue operations shall, as appropriate, inform other centres of all the circumstances of the emergency and of all subsequent developments.

4.5.5 *Passing information to persons, vessels, or other craft for which an emergency phase has been declared*

Whenever possible, the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre responsible for search and rescue operations shall forward to the person, a vessel or other craft for which an emergency phase has been declared, information on the search and rescue operations it has initiated.

4.6 Co-ordination when two or more Parties are involved

For search and rescue operations involving more than one Party, each Party shall take appropriate action in accordance with the plans of operation referred to in paragraph 4.1 when so requested by the rescue co-ordination centre of the region.

4.7 On-scene co-ordination of search and rescue activities

4.7.1 The activities of search and rescue units and other facilities engaged in search and rescue operations shall be co-ordinated on-scene to ensure the most effective results.

4.7.2 When multiple facilities are about to engage in search and rescue operations, and the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre considers it necessary, the most capable person should be designated as on-scene co-ordinator as early as practicable and preferably before the facilities arrive within the specified area of operation. Specific responsibilities shall be assigned to the on-scene co-ordinator, taking into account the apparent capabilities of the on-scene co-ordinator and operational requirements.

4.7.3 If there is no responsible rescue co-ordination centre or, for any reason, the responsible rescue co-ordination centre is unable to co-ordinate the search and rescue mission, the facilities involved should designate an on-scene co-ordinator by mutual agreement.

4.8 Termination and suspension of search and rescue operations

4.8.1 Search and rescue operations shall continue, when practicable, until all reasonable hope of rescuing survivors has passed.

4.8.2 The responsible rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre concerned shall normally decide when to discontinue search and rescue operations. If no such centre is involved in co-ordinating the operations, the on-scene co-ordinator may take this decision.

4.8.3 When a rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre considers, on the basis of reliable information, that a search and rescue operation has been successful, or that the emergency no longer exists, it shall terminate the search and rescue operation and promptly so inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified.

4.8.4 If a search and rescue operation on-scene becomes impracticable and the rescue co-ordination centre or rescue sub-centre concludes that survivors might still be alive, the centre may temporarily suspend the on-scene activities pending further developments, and shall promptly so inform any authority, facility or service which has been activated or notified. Information subsequently received shall be evaluated and search and rescue operations resumed when justified on the basis of such information.

Chapter 5

Ship reporting systems

5.1 General

5.1.1 Ship reporting systems may be established either individually by Parties or in co-operation with other States, where this is considered necessary, to facilitate search and rescue operations.

5.1.2 Parties contemplating the institution of a ship reporting system should take account of the relevant recommendations of the Organization. Parties should also consider whether existing reporting systems or other sources of ship position data can provide adequate information for the region, and seek to minimize unnecessary additional reports by ships, or the need for rescue co-ordination centres to check with multiple reporting systems to determine availability of ships to assist with search and rescue operations.

5.1.3 The ship reporting system should provide up-to-date information on the movements of vessels in order, in the event of a distress incident, to:

- .1 reduce the interval between the loss of contact with a vessel and the initiation of search and rescue operations in cases where no distress signal has been received;
- .2 permit rapid identification of vessels which may be called upon to provide assistance;
- .3 permit delineation of a search area of limited size in case the position of a person, a vessel or other craft in distress is unknown or uncertain; and
- .4 facilitate the provision of urgent medical assistance or advice.

5.2 Operational requirements

5.2.1 Ship reporting systems should satisfy the following requirements:

- .1 provision of information, including sailing plans and position reports, which would make it possible to determine the current and future positions of participating vessels;
- .2 maintenance of a shipping plot;
- .3 receipt of reports at appropriate intervals from participating vessels;

- .4 simplicity in system design and operation; and
- .5 use of internationally agreed standard ship reporting format and procedures.

5.3 Types of reports'

5.3.1 A ship reporting system should incorporate the following types of ship reports in accordance with the recommendations of the Organization:

- .1 Sailing plan;
- .2 Position report; and
- .3 Final report .

5.4 Use of systems

5.4.1 Parties should encourage all vessels to report their position when travelling in areas where arrangements have been made to collect information on positions for search and rescue purposes.

5.4.2 Parties recording information on the position of vessels should disseminate, so far as practicable, such information to other States when so requested for search and rescue purposes .

• Reference is made to resolution A.851 (20), General principles for ship reporting systems and ship reporting requirements, including guidelines for reporting incidents involving dangerous goods, harmful substances and/or marine pollutants.

Resolutions of the 1979 SAR Conference

Resolution 1

Arrangements for provision and co-ordination of search and rescue services

THE CONFERENCE,

NOTING the provisions of the annex to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, concerning arrangements for the provision and co-ordination of search and rescue services,

NOTING FURTHER that the annex provides that maritime search and rescue regions shall be established by agreement among the Parties,

RECOGNIZING that aeronautical search and rescue services have been established by Contracting States to the Convention on International Civil Aviation,

BEARING IN MIND that close co-operation between maritime and aeronautical search and rescue services is essential,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER the need to provide and co-ordinate maritime search and rescue services on a world-wide basis,

NOTING ALSO the need for further action,

RESOLVES

- (a) to urge States to provide, to the extent that it may be necessary and feasible, co-ordination of search and rescue services in all sea areas regardless of whether or not they provide those services for aeronautical purposes;
- (b) to urge States to forward to the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization information on their national search and rescue services and to invite the Secretary-General of that Organization to circulate the information received to all its Member Governments;
- (c) to invite the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization:
 - (1) to continue to work closely with the International Civil Aviation Organization in order to harmonize aeronautical and maritime search and rescue plans and procedures;

- (2) to publish all available information concerning agreements on maritime search and rescue regions or arrangements for equivalent overall co-ordination of maritime search and rescue services; and
- (3) to advise and assist States in the establishment of their search and rescue services.

Resolution 2

Cost to ships of participation in ship reporting systems

THE CONFERENCE,

NOTING Recommendation 47 of the International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea, 1960,

RECOGNIZING that, with the growing importance of national, and possibly in the future, of international ship reporting systems, Recommendation 47 has probably more significance today when it was originally adopted,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the absence of any charge for participation could provide, as has already been demonstrated, a powerful incentive for ships to co-operate in voluntary ship reporting systems,

RECOGNIZING IN ADDITION that ships' participation in voluntary ship reporting systems has demonstrated that it has safety advantages,

RECOMMENDS that States should arrange that participation in such systems shall be free of message cost to the ships concerned.

Resolution 3

Need for an internationally agreed format and procedures for ship reporting systems

THE CONFERENCE,

CONSIDERING the provisions of chapter 6* of the annex to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, relating to ship reporting systems,

CONSIDERING FURTHER that several national ship reporting systems are in force at present, using differing procedures and reporting formats,

RECOGNIZING that masters of international trading vessels moving from an area covered by one ship reporting system to another could become confused by these differing procedures and reporting formats,

- This is chapter 5 of the revised annex that has been adopted by MSC.70(69).

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the possibility of such confusion could be much reduced by the adoption of an internationally agreed standard ship reporting format and internationally agreed standard procedures,

INVITES the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization to develop, using the annexed format as a basis, an internationally agreed format for ship reporting systems established for the purpose of search and rescue in accordance with the provisions of chapter 6* of the annex to the Convention,

REQUESTS that Organization to ensure that all reporting systems, established for purposes other than search and rescue, are as far as possible compatible in reporting format and procedures with those to be developed for the purpose of search and rescue.

Annex

Ship reporting format and procedures

FORMAT (see note 1)

..

Message identifier:	SHIPREP (area or system designator)
Type of report:	A - A 2-letter group: "SP" (sailing plan) "PR" (position report) "FR" (final report)
Ship:	B - Name and call sign or ship station identity
Date/time (G.M.T.):	C - A 6-digit group giving date of month (first 2 digits), hours and minutes (last 4 digits)
Position:	D - Departure port (SP) or arrival port (FR) E - A 4-digit group giving latitude in degrees and minutes suffixed with "N" or "S" and a 5-digit group giving longitude in degrees and minutes suffixed with "E" or "W"
True course:	F - A 3-digit group
Speed in knots:	G - A 2-digit group
Route information:	H - Intended track (see note 2)

* This is chapter 5 of the revised annex that has been adopted by MSC.70(69).

ETA. I - Date/time group expressed by a 6-digit group, as in C above, followed by destination

Coast radio station guarded: K - Name of station

Time of next report: J Name of station

Miscellaneous: L - Any other information

PROCEDURES

The report should be sent as follows:

- Sailing report - At, or immediately after, departure from a port or when entering into the area covered by a system (see note 3).
- Position report - When the ship's position varies more than 25 miles from the position that would have been predicted from previous reports, after a course alteration, when required by the system or as decided by the master.
- Final report - Shortly before or on arrival at destination or when leaving the area covered by a system (see note 3).

Note 1: Sections of the ship reporting format which are inappropriate should be omitted from the report. See the following examples.

Examples of messages produced by using this format:

Sailing plan	Position report	Final report
SHIPREP	SHIPREP	SHIPREP
ASP	A PR	A FR
B NONSUCH/ MBCH	B NONSUCH/ MBCH	B NONSUCH/ MBCH
C 021030	C 041200	C 110500
D NEW YORK	E 4604N 05123W	D LONDON
F 060	F 089	
G 16	G 15	
H GC	J PORTISHEAD	
I 102145 LONDON	K 061200	
J PORTISHEAD		
K 041200		

Note 2: In a reporting system, intended track may be reported by:

- (a) latitude and longitude for each turn point, expressed as in E above, together with type of intended track between these points, for example "RL" (rhumb line) "GC" (great circle) or "coastal", or
- (b) in the case of coastal sailing, the forecast date and time, expressed by a 6-digit group as in C above, of passing significant off-shore points.

Note 3: Sailing plan and final report should be transmitted rapidly, using a system other than radiocommunications where practicable.

Resolution 4

Search and rescue manuals

THE CONFERENCE,

NOTING that the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization has prepared a Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual (MERSAR) and an IMCO Search and Rescue Manual (IMCOSAR),

RECOGNIZING that the Merchant Ship Search and Rescue Manual provides valuable guidance for seafarers during emergencies at sea,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that the IMCO Search and Rescue Manual contains guidelines for Governments wishing to establish or develop their search and rescue organizations and for personnel who may be involved in the provision of search and rescue services,

BEING OF THE OPINION that the manuals constitute a valuable supplement to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, and its annex and will greatly contribute towards the objectives of the Convention,

RESOLVES:

- (a) to urge States to use the guidelines provided in the manuals and to bring them to the attention of all concerned; and
- (b) to endorse the action already taken by the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization for amending and keeping the manuals up to date.

Resolution 5

Frequencies for maritime search and rescue

THE CONFERENCE,

NOTING that the World Administrative Radio Conference, 1979, \\Till decide on measures which could have a far-reaching effect on the frequency spectrum,

BEARING IN MIND that the frequencies used in the present maritime distress system do not make adequate provision for ships in distress at a distance of more than approximately 150 miles from the coast,

RECOGNIZING that all maritime radiocommunications, whether making use of distress or public correspondence frequencies, can have distress and safety implications,

URGES the World Administrative Radio Conference, 1979:

- (a) to allocate one frequency, to be reserved exclusively for distress and safety purposes, in each of the 4, 6, 8, 12 and 16 MHz maritime mobile bands using A3J class of emission for use in all ITU Regions and to include guard bands on each side of these frequencies; the use of digital selective calling should be permitted on these frequencies; and
- (b) to recognize that all telecommunications to and from ships at sea may comprise elements of importance to search and rescue, and to support proposals for adequate frequency allocations to the maritime mobile service.

Resolution 6

Development of a global maritime distress and safety system

THE CONFERENCE,

HAVING concluded the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, which establishes an international plan for the co-ordination of search and rescue operations,

RECOGNIZING that the existence of an effective distress and safety communications network is important for the efficient operation of the search and rescue plan,

BEING AWARE that the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization has under continuous review the maritime distress and safety system and has adopted resolutions dealing with the communications aspects of the system,

CONSIDERING that a global maritime distress and safety system should provide, among other things, the essential radio elements of the international search and rescue plan,

INVITES the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization to develop a global maritime distress and safety system that includes telecommunications provisions for the effective operation of the search and rescue plan prescribed by the annex to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979.

Resolution 7

Harmonization of search and rescue services with maritime meteorological services

THE CONFERENCE,

BEARING IN MIND the importance of meteorological and oceanographical information in search and rescue operations,

CONSIDERING the desirability of meteorological information covering the same areas as search and rescue regions,

CONSIDERING FURTHER that routing weather reports from ships normally include the ship's position,

BEING OF THE OPINION that the practice of ships transmitting weather reports and position reports through the same coast radio station would facilitate the transmission of such reports and encourage ship participation in both systems,

INVITES the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization:

- (a) to work closely with the World Meteorological Organization to explore the practicability of harmonizing the areas of maritime meteorological forecasts and warnings with maritime search and rescue regions;
- (b) to request the World Meteorological Organization to take steps to ensure that up-to-date meteorological and oceanographical information is immediately available to the search and rescue services for the whole of the regions they serve; and
- (c) to investigate the feasibility of ships making weather and position reports to the same coast radio station.

Resolution 8

Promotion of technical co-operation

THE CONFERENCE,

RECOGNIZING that prompt and effective maritime search and rescue requires broad international co-operation and substantial technical and scientific resources,

RECOGNIZING FURTHER that Parties to the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, will be called upon to make arrangements to achieve the objectives of that Convention and to assume full responsibility for such arrangements,

BEING CONVINCED that the promotion of technical co-operation at inter-governmental level will expedite the implementation of the Convention by States that do not as yet possess the necessary technical and scientific resources,

URGES States to promote, in consultation with, and with the assistance of, the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization, support for States requesting technical assistance for:

- (a) the training of personnel necessary for search and rescue; and
- (b) the provision of the equipment and facilities necessary for search and rescue,

FURTHER URGES States to implement the above-mentioned measures without awaiting the entry into force of the Convention.