

GUIDELINES FOR THE CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF SHIPS' BALLAST WATER TO MINIMIZE THE TRANSFER OF HARMFUL AQUATIC ORGANISMS AND PATHOGENS

1998 Edition

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Foreword

The Marine Environment Protection Committee of IMO (MEPC), at its thirty-first session (1–5 July 1991), adopted voluntary guidance in the form of the International guidelines for preventing the introduction of unwanted aquatic organisms and pathogens from ships' ballast water and sediment discharges (resolution MEPC.50(31)). This activity had been initiated by a number of States in the light of problems they encountered concerning marine organisms introduced into their waters with ballast water and associated sediments. In 1993 the IMO Assembly adopted these Guidelines by resolution A.774(18), in response to requests from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). This resolution further addressed the MEPC and the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC), requesting them to keep the ballast water issue and the application of the Guidelines under review with a view to developing the Guidelines as a basis for a new Annex to MARPOL 73/78.

Accordingly, since 1993 the MEPC has been working towards the development of legally binding provisions on ballast water management, together with guidelines for their effective implementation. The MSC has, as requested by resolution A.774(18), developed guidance on safety aspects of ballast water exchange at sea, which has been distributed as MEPC/Circ.329 and MSC/Circ.806, both of 30 June 1997. The MSC further undertook to consider relevant issues concerning ballast water management, as well as design objectives for new ships.

The IMO Assembly in 1997, by resolution A.868(20), adopted the Guidelines for the control and management of ships' ballast water to minimize the transfer of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens, as set out herewith. The resolution further requests Governments to take urgent action in applying these new Guidelines, including their dissemination to the shipping industry, and to use them as a basis for any measures they adopt with a view to minimizing the risks mentioned above. Governments are requested to report to the MEPC on any experience gained in implementing these Guidelines, taking into account the Committee's ongoing work in developing legally binding provisions on ballast water management.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Studies carried out in several countries have shown that many species of bacteria, plants, and animals can survive in a viable form in the ballast water and sediment carried in ships, even after journeys of several months' duration. Subsequent discharge of ballast water or sediment into the waters of port States may result in the establishment of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens which may pose threats to indigenous human, animal and plant life, and the marine environment. Although other media have been identified as being responsible for transferring organisms between geographically separated water bodies, ballast water discharge from ships appears to have been among the most prominent.

1.2 The potential for ballast water discharge to cause harm has been recognized not only by the International Maritime Organization but also by the World Health Organization which is concerned about the role of ballast water as a medium for the spreading of epidemic disease bacteria.

1.3 These Guidelines are not to be regarded as a certain solution to the problem. Rather, each part of them should be viewed as a tool which, if correctly applied, will help to minimize the risks associated with ballast water discharge. As scientific and technological advances are made, the Guidelines will be refined to enable the risk to be more adequately addressed. In the interim, port States, flag States and other parties that can assist in mitigating this problem should exercise due care and diligence in an effort to conform to the maximum extent possible with the Guidelines.

1.4 The selection of appropriate methods of risk minimization will depend upon several factors, including the type or types of organisms being targeted, the level of risk involved, its environmental acceptability, the economic and ecological costs involved and the safety of ships.

2 Definitions

For the purposes of these Guidelines, the following definitions apply:

Administration means the Government of the State under whose authority the ship is operating.

Convention means MARPOL 73/78 (International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto).

Member States means States that are Members of the International Maritime Organization.

Organization means the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

Note: The Guidelines for the control and management of ships' ballast water to minimize the transfer of harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens comprise the annex to resolution A.868 (20), the text of which is reproduced at the end of the present publication.

Port State authority means any official or organization authorized by the Government of a port State to administer guidelines or enforce standards and regulations relevant to the implementation of national and international shipping control measures.

Treatment means a process or mechanical, physical, chemical or biological method to kill, remove or render infertile, harmful or potentially harmful organisms within ballast water.

3 Application

The Guidelines are directed to Member States and can apply to all ships; however, a port State authority shall determine the extent to which they do apply.

4 Guideline objectives and background

4.1 The objectives of these Guidelines, developed under technical and scientific guidance, are intended to assist Governments and appropriate authorities, ship masters, operators and owners, and port authorities, as well as other interested parties in minimizing the risk of introducing harmful aquatic organisms and pathogens from ships' ballast water and associated sediments while protecting ships' safety.

4.2 The Guidelines allow port States to exempt ships within the area under their jurisdiction from part, or all of the relevant provisions. Notwithstanding, any Administration wishing to apply restrictions to ballast water operations should still follow these Guidelines, when developing legislation or procedures.

4.3 In order that the Guidelines may be implemented in a standard and uniform manner, all Member State Governments, ship operators, other appropriate authorities and interested parties are requested to apply these Guidelines.

5 Dissemination of information

5.1 Administrations are encouraged to maintain and exchange information relevant to these Guidelines through the Organization. Accordingly, Administrations are encouraged to provide the Organization with the following:

- .1 information on severe outbreaks or infestations of harmful aquatic organisms which may pose a risk;
- .2 copies of current domestic laws and regulations;
- .3 technical and research information;
- .4 education materials (such as audio and video tapes) and printed materials; and
- .5 location and terms of use of alternative exchange zones, contingency strategies, availability of shore reception facilities, fees, etc.