

Preamble

- 1 Carriage of dangerous goods by sea is regulated in order to reasonably prevent injury to persons or damage to ships and their cargoes. Carriage of marine pollutants is primarily regulated to prevent harm to the marine environment. The objective of the IMDG Code is to enhance the safe carriage of dangerous goods while facilitating the free unrestricted movement of such goods and prevent pollution to the environment.
- 2 Over the years, many maritime countries have taken measures to regulate the transport of dangerous goods by sea. The various regulations, codes and practices, however, differed in their framework and, in particular, in the identification and labelling of such goods. Both the terminology used and the provisions for packaging and stowage varied from country to country and created difficulties for all directly or indirectly concerned with the transport of dangerous goods by sea.
- 3 The need for international regulation of the transport of dangerous goods by sea was recognized by the 1929 International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), which recommended that rules on the subject have international effect. The classification of dangerous goods and certain general provisions concerning their transport in ships were adopted by the 1948 SOLAS Conference. This Conference also recommended further study with the object of developing international regulations.
- 4 Meanwhile, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations had appointed an ad hoc Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (UN Committee of Experts), which had been actively considering the international aspect of the transport of dangerous goods by all modes of transport. This committee completed a report in 1956 dealing with classification, listing and labelling of dangerous goods and with the transport documents required for such goods. This report, with subsequent modifications, offered a general framework to which existing regulations could be harmonized and within which they could be further developed. The primary goal being world-wide uniformity for regulations concerning the transport of dangerous goods by sea as well as other modes of transport.
- 5 As a further step towards meeting the need for international rules governing the transport of dangerous goods in ships, the 1960 SOLAS Conference, in addition to laying down a general framework of provisions in chapter VII of the SOLAS Convention, invited IMO (Recommendation 56) to undertake a study with a view to establishing a unified international code for the transport of dangerous goods by sea. This study would be pursued in cooperation with the UN Committee of Experts and should take account of existing maritime practices and procedures. The Conference further recommended that the unified code be prepared by IMO and that it be adopted by the Governments that were Parties to the 1960 Convention.
- 6 To implement Recommendation 56, IMO's Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) appointed a working group drawn from those countries having considerable experience in the transport of dangerous goods by sea. Preliminary drafts for each class of substances, materials and articles were subsequently brought under close scrutiny by the working group to take into account throughout the practices and procedures of a number of maritime countries in order to make the Code as widely acceptable as possible. This new *International Maritime Dangerous Goods Code* (IMDG Code) was approved by the MSC and recommended to Governments by the Assembly of IMO in 1965.
- 7 During another SOLAS Conference held in 1974, chapter VII of the Convention remained essentially unchanged. Since that date, several amendments to chapter VII adopted by the MSC have entered into force. Although invoked by a footnote reference in regulation 1 of chapter VII, the IMDG Code itself had only recommendatory status until 31 December 2003.
- 8 At the International Conference on Marine Pollution, 1973, the need was recognized to preserve the marine environment. It was further recognized that negligent or accidental release of marine pollutants transported by sea in packaged form should be minimized. Consequently, provisions were established and adopted by the Conference, and are contained in Annex III of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 relating thereto (MARPOL). The Marine Environment Protection Committee (MEPC) decided in 1985 that Annex III should be implemented through the IMDG Code. This decision was also endorsed by the MSC in 1985. Since that date, several amendments to Annex III to MARPOL have entered into force.

- 9 The UN Committee of Experts has continued to meet until the present day and its published *Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods* are updated biennially. In 1996, the MSC agreed that the IMDG Code should be reformatted consistent with the format of the UN *Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods*. The consistency in format of the UN Recommendations, the IMDG Code and other dangerous goods transport regulations is intended to enhance user-friendliness, compliance with the regulations, and the safe transport of dangerous goods.
- 10 In 2002, the MSC adopted amendments to SOLAS chapter VII to make the IMDG Code mandatory, which came into force on 1 January 2004. Since then, further amendments were adopted to facilitate user friendliness and promote uniform implementation of the Code. In addition, at its one hundred and second session in November 2020, the MSC adopted Amendment 40-20 to the mandatory IMDG Code, which will enter into force on 1 June 2022 without any transitional period. However, in accordance with resolution MSC.477(102), Governments were encouraged to apply this amendment in whole or in part on a voluntary basis from 1 January 2021.
- 11 In order to keep the Code up to date from the maritime transport operational aspect, the MSC will continue to take into account technological developments, as well as changes to chemical classifications and the related consignment provisions that primarily concern the shipper/consignor. The two-year periodicity of amendments to the UN Recommendations on Transport of Dangerous Goods will also provide the source of most future updating of the IMDG Code.
- 12 The MSC will also have regard to future implications for the carriage of dangerous goods by sea, in particular, arising from any acceptance by the UN Conference on Environmental Development (UNCED) of common criteria for the classification of chemicals on the basis of a Global Harmonization System (GHS).
- △ 13 Attention is drawn to IMO document FAL.6/Circ.14/Rev.1, a list of existing publications relevant to areas and topics relating to ship/port interface matters.
- △ 14 Advice on emergency procedures and for initial management of chemical poisoning and diagnosis that may be used in conjunction with the IMDG Code is published separately in The EmS Guide^{*}: Revised Emergency Response Procedures for Ships Carrying Dangerous Goods (MSC.1/Circ.1588/Rev.1) and in the Medical First Aid Guide for Use in Accidents Involving Dangerous Goods (MFAG^{*}) (see MSC/Circ.857 and DSC 3/15/Add.2), respectively.
- △ 15 In addition, referring to part D of chapter VII of the SOLAS Convention, a ship transporting INF cargo, as defined in regulation VII/14.2, shall comply with the requirements of the International Code for the Safe Carriage of Packaged Irradiated Nuclear Fuel, Plutonium and High-Level Radioactive Wastes on board Ships (INF Code^{*}).

* The EmS Guide, MFAG and the INF Code are reproduced in the Supplement to the IMDG Code.