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**GUIDELINES ON HARMONIZED AERONAUTICAL AND MARITIME SEARCH AND  
RESCUE PROCEDURES, INCLUDING SAR TRAINING MATTERS**

**Report on the 15th Black Sea Conference on Maritime search and rescue  
(Black Sea SAR Conference)**

**Submitted by Georgia**

**SUMMARY**

*Executive summary:* This document provides information on harmonization of maritime search and rescue procedures, including SAR training matters carried out in the Black Sea area and the summary of outcome of the 15th Black Sea Conference on Maritime search and rescue (Black Sea SAR Conference), which was held in Batumi, Georgia, on 11 and 12 September 2019

*Strategic direction, if applicable:* Other work

*Output:* OW 28 and OW 29

*Action to be taken:* Paragraph 36

*Related documents:* COMSAR 16/INF.6; COMSAR 13/INF.3 and COMSAR 10/6/7

**Introduction**

1 In pursuance of its obligations under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, the International Convention on Maritime Search and Rescue, 1979, and the Agreement on Cooperation regarding Maritime Search and Rescue Services among Black Sea Coastal States, 1998, LEPL Maritime Transport Agency of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia organized the Regional Conference on Maritime search and rescue (hereinafter referred to as the 15th Black Sea SAR Conference) in Batumi, Georgia, on 11 and 12 September 2019.

**National SAR system – Facilities and capabilities; SAR statistics – Real and false alerts; Country status reports**

2 All delegations presented the actual situation in the search and rescue area within their States. Each presentation consisted of information about national SAR systems and its structures, SAR facilities and capabilities, statistics, country status reports and GMDSS and LRIT issues. The delegations of Georgia and Ukraine presented video materials which showed how the main functions by their respective search and rescue services were fulfilled in action. The Georgian delegation presented information concerning its new maritime radio communication and vessel monitoring systems, which consist of VHF/MF/HF, satellite radio communication and AIS base station systems.

3 During the Conference, the delegation of Ukraine expressed its resolute protest against the ongoing unlawful actions of the Russian Federation in relation to search and rescue operations in maritime areas adjacent to the Crimean Peninsula of Ukraine. The delegation of Ukraine stated that Ukraine, as a coastal State, extends its sovereignty to, and has sovereign rights and jurisdiction in, internal waters, territorial sea, exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and over the continental shelf of Ukraine in the water area of the Black Sea appertaining to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine.

4 It was furthermore stressed that Maritime sub-centres and coastal GMDSS radio stations in Kerch and Sevastopol belong to Ukraine and are defined as temporarily suspended, which is supported in the related modules of the Global Integrated Shipping Information System (GISIS), namely the "Global SAR Plan" and "GMDSS Master Plan".

5 Ukraine called upon delegates to refrain from any actions aimed at the partial or total disruption of Ukraine's sovereignty and jurisdiction in the water area of the Black Sea around the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine, and to refrain from any actions that might be interpreted as recognizing any such internationally wrongful activities.

**SAR offshore operations in the Black Sea (legal provisions including safety, security and SAR aspects)**

6 The delegation of Bulgaria informed that they did not possess offshore installations and they did not provide such SAR offshore operations. The same situation happens to be in Georgia, and some legal remedies and risk assessment are planned to be carried out in the future for offshore installations.

7 The delegation of Romania delivered a short presentation which highlighted the provisions of *Romanian law no. 165/2016* concerning the safety of offshore oil operations that is fully based on the relevant European Directive 2013/30/EC, known as *Directive on safety of offshore oil and gas prospection, exploration and production activities*.

8 The Turkish delegation delivered a detailed presentation regarding SAR offshore operations and legal provisions including safety, security and SAR aspects. The presentation highlighted that Article 2 of the Turkish search and rescue Regulation covers the offshore areas within the borders of the Turkish search and rescue region and presented information concerning an offshore operation of a real incident which was conducted by MSRCC-Ankara and Turkish Coast Guard within the scope of the Turkish search and rescue Regulation (Article 2 and Article 9). Moreover, a video clip of the mentioned SAR operation was shown.

9 The delegation of Ukraine stressed again that all Ukrainian offshore installations were illegally seized by the Russian Federation and continue to be controlled by the "aggressor" as of today. It was emphasized that, in 2015, the Russian Federation carried out inflammatory

removal of two jack-up oil rigs and one oil platform located off the coast of Odesa. As per the Ukrainian delegation, another provocation was carried out by the Russian Federation, which took place in 2017, when a Ukrainian Navy transport aircraft had been fired upon while conducting a training flight over an Odesa gas field in the EEZ of Ukraine. Ukraine duly informed IMO and other international forums concerning these unlawful actions. Thus, the delegation of Ukraine assured that in case of a request from any Party to the Ankara Agreement to participate in SAR activities related to an emergency alert from any offshore installation in the region, MRCC Odesa will render assistance to the offshore company's personnel in distress with involvement of appropriate available resources.

### **SAR cooperation plans between SAR services and passenger ships (according to SOLAS regulation V/7.3 and MSC.1/Circ.1079) – Country passengers exercises – Plans list**

10 The delegations of Georgia, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine delivered detailed presentations and information concerning SAR cooperation plans between SAR services and passenger ships, country passenger exercises – Plans list (according to SOLAS regulation V/7.3 and MSC.1/Circ.1079). The delegation of Bulgaria pointed out that it did not have regular passenger ship visits and thus, did not provide that information.

### **Performances of the Black Sea MRCC web portal**

11 The delegation of Georgia informed about the development of the Web portal dedicated to Black Sea SAR, which was developed and is being maintained by Georgia. The main links on this Web portal, namely documents, SAR projects, SAR exercises, news, galleries, useful links and contacts were shown. The Romanian delegation suggested to increase the importance of the website, by converting this into a useful tool for sharing information.

### **Training for SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC), in the Black Sea region**

12 All delegations from the Black Sea States discussed the opportunity of organizing an SMC training course, which could be attended by officers from the Black Sea MRCCs, and agreed that the above-mentioned training would be really useful and effective for the conduct of search and rescue operations in the Black Sea region. The delegation of Bulgaria indicated that it would be beneficial if each country could organize training of the new IMO Model Course 3.14, in their respective training simulator centres.

13 Regarding this proposal, the Georgian delegation noted that for this initiative to be carried out, the training simulator centres in question needed at least specialized trained personnel and related software support, which are not known to be available in the Black Sea region. Taking this into account, the Georgian delegation stressed that it would be better if Black Sea countries turned to IMO, as it was done before, to request a regional SMC training on the New edition of Model course 3.14.

14 The delegation of Romania emphasized that, considering the need to organize a new training on IMO Model Course 3.14 in the Black Sea region, such a request should be incorporated and mentioned in the final report of the 15th SAR Conference of the Black Sea States to be submitted to IMO. The Romanian delegation expressed their desire that the above-mentioned request be submitted to the seventh session of the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR 7), to be held in London, in January 2020.

15 The Turkish delegation commented that a correspondence group should be established in order to determine the requirements for the content of the training, location, time period, number of participants, costs, etc. and to find out more details and possibilities for organizing this training.

16 The delegation of Ukraine fully supported the organization of an SMC training course and pointed out that the above-mentioned training would be really useful and effective for the conduct of search and rescue operations in the Black Sea region. Taking into account the absence of an IMO representative at the meeting as an observer, the delegation of Ukraine proposed Georgia as the host State of the Conference or that all Black Sea countries should submit a relevant or joint document to NCSR 7 as a result of these discussions.

### **Regional common risk assessment on SAR activities – SAR software used by Black Sea MRCCs**

17 The delegation of Bulgaria informed that they use other types of SAR software. According to the delegation of Georgia, the staff of MRCC Georgia use the new Vessel monitoring system, which includes SAR modules, and the SAR-PC software is also in use. The delegation of Romania delivered a short presentation concerning the regional common risk assessment on SAR activities and SAR software and noted that for a proper assessment of the risks on SAR activities, Romania was planning to conduct a common exercise with MRCC Varna and MRCC Odesa.

18 Related to the software used for SAR operations, Romania was in contact with several providers to improve the existing software, namely to have hydrographic and meteorological data in real time into the software without being necessary for such data input to be manually entered. The delegation of Turkey uploads the information into their SAR software which is operated manually and also receives daily weather forecast automatically.

19 The delegation of Ukraine informed about the SAR software used by MRCC Odesa, and that the SAR-PC software consisted of several modules. Also, MRCC Odesa used the SAR module, which is a new Pelagus system that helps the duty coordinators to efficiently identify search areas, estimate the required resources and calculate search patterns.

### **Elaboration of a plan for future Black Sea regional SAR exercises**

20 According to the Black Sea Maritime search and rescue plan presented by Turkey, all Black Sea countries were invited to fill a form. However, due to technical issues, some delegations faced difficulties editing the form. To that extent, it was proposed that Turkey sends the form in a relevant editable format.

21 Once all countries complete the plan submitted by the Turkish delegation, Black Sea countries will agree to hold bilateral or multilateral joint SAR exercises before the next conference. Given that the next conference will be held by Turkey, Georgia proposed that Turkey be the coordinator of the plans. All delegations agreed that the most favourable period for conducting such practical exercises in the Black Sea is from May to September.

22 It was noted as well, that it is necessary to agree and approve the plan for exercises in accordance with the local legislative requirements prior to the beginning of its practical phase. The delegation of Turkey informed that according to the agreement between Black Sea Littoral States Border/Coast Guard Agencies Forum (BSCF) Black Sea Hawk, exercises have been organized by the Member States since 2006 in order to improve and enhance operational and tactical interoperability between the coastguard/border units from different countries and commands.

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**Maritime assistance services (MASs): countries' experience**

23 Bulgaria and Georgia do not possess experience for Maritime assistance services (MASs). The delegation of Romania delivered a short presentation concerning MASs and informed that in Romania there was no recorded cases involving MASs. However, Romania was theoretically prepared for such an event in case of its possible arising.

24 The delegation of Turkey informed that MSRCC is the MAS point of contact of Turkey. On 26 October 2018, the contact point details were updated by Turkey in the IMO website.

**Establishment of Search and rescue regions (SRRs) in the Black Sea region – AIS data exchange on vessel traffic in the Black Sea region**

25 The Georgian delegation represented by the Chair reminded all Black Sea countries that according to SAR.6/Circ.24 of 25 April 2005 and SAR.6/Circ.25 of 25 April 2005 regarding *Area search and rescue plans*, the IMO Secretary General circulated two treaties: *Agreement on maritime search and rescue* concluded between Bulgaria and Turkey and *Agreement on maritime search and rescue* concluded between the Russian Federation and Turkey. It was underlined that there are still some bilateral agreements in force between Black Sea countries which were not notified to the IMO Secretary General. Georgia also called upon all Black Sea countries who have not done so yet, to conclude relevant bilateral agreements on cooperation in SAR field, in order to create a unique legal framework in the Black Sea region where the fundamental multilateral Ankara agreement is to be supplemented by basic bilateral arrangements.

26 The Georgian delegation informed that at the end of September in Ankara, Turkey, another round of negotiations between Georgia and Turkey will take place to agree on a draft agreement on search and rescue operations at sea between Georgia and Turkey.

27 The delegation of Georgia also called on the countries to intensify their action on the exchange of AIS data between Black Sea countries. The Romanian delegation informed that Romania has a clear delimitation of its EEZ with Ukraine, based on the Hague Decision from February 2009, while with Bulgaria, there was no clear delimitation yet, but steps were taken through the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

28 As for AIS data exchange, Romania paid attention to the provisions of the EU 2002/59 Directive. In accordance with this Directive, MRCC Constanta was verifying daily by trial, the AIS data of 2-3 ships and a log was kept in this respect. Whenever Romania may be asked by other MRCCs/authorities from the Black Sea areas about AIS data of a particular vessel, and if the vessel is still in its SRR zone, it can provide such data.

29 The delegation of Turkey agreed that AIS data exchange would be beneficial for countries, and as MSRCC, Turkey was open to exchanging AIS data about ship traffic, but unfortunately this was not a decision that the delegation could make on its own. Details of AIS data exchange would need to be discussed with the participation of other relevant state organizations of Turkey. If an official letter was sent through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, the issue would be included in the agenda of Turkey.

30 The delegation of Ukraine emphasized that during the intersessional period between Conferences in Odesa, Ukraine, in 2017 and Batumi, Georgia, in 2019, the following progress had been made:

- Two rounds of Ukrainian-Turkish consultations regarding cooperation in respect of maritime search and rescue took place in Odesa on 20 April 2018 and in Istanbul on 14 January 2019, where both parties finalized an intergovernmental agreement on Cooperation in respect of search and rescue in the Black Sea and identified further directions for improving cooperation concerning the mutual exchange of information from the stations of automatic identification systems of Ukraine and Turkey, on a parity basis, by concluding the relevant agreement in the nearest future.
- Ukraine sent, via diplomatic channels, two draft agreements on Cooperation in the field of marine search and rescue to Bulgaria and Romania. The delegation of Ukraine expressed its readiness to sign those agreements at the 16th Black Sea SAR Conference.
- Delegations of Bulgaria and Romania expressed their readiness to conclude in the nearest future bilateral Agreements on Cooperation in the field of maritime search and rescue with Ukraine.
- Ukraine also sent corresponding notifications to Bulgaria, Georgia and Romania concerning the possibility of signing bilateral agreements in order to improve the maritime traffic awareness and maritime safety in search and rescue regions of entire Black Sea area.

31 The delegation of Ukraine called upon all Black Sea States that have not done so yet to conclude relevant bilateral agreements on cooperation in SAR field in order to create a unique legal framework in the Black Sea region, so the fundamental multilateral Ankara agreement will be supplemented by basic bilateral arrangements. In this regard, the delegation of Ukraine declared about the unacceptability of the cases when one of the Black Sea countries continued to flagrantly violate well-established order and universally recognized international principles and norms in SAR area.

#### **The new six-year schedule conduct of Black Sea SAR Conferences (2020-2025)**

32 The next new six-year schedule conduct of Black Sea SAR Conferences (2020-2025) was presented by Georgia.

No	Black Sea SAR CONFERENCES IN 2020-2025	YEAR	HOST COUNTRY
1	16 <sup>TH</sup>	2020	BULGARYA
2	17 <sup>TH</sup>	2021	TURKEY
3	18 <sup>TH</sup>	2022	ROMANIA
4	19 <sup>TH</sup>	2023	UKRAINE
5	20 <sup>TH</sup>	2024	RUSSIAN FEDERATION
6	21 <sup>ST</sup>	2025	GEORGIA

33 The delegation of Ukraine drew the attention to the fact that due to the absence of one delegation, the Conference had no authority to take a decision regarding the venue of the Conference in that country according to the rotation principle. It has been pointed out that the new schedule of conducting Black Sea SAR Conferences must be decided among the five present Black Sea countries.

34 Bearing in mind the request of the delegation of Bulgaria to postpone the hosting of Black Sea SAR Conference from 2020 to 2024, Ukraine proposed to conduct the 16th Conference in 2021 in Turkey and for this reason, introduced a new six-year schedule conduct of Black Sea SAR Conferences starting from 2021, which all the Black Sea countries agreed to. Regarding the new six-year schedule conduct of Black Sea SAR Conferences, the Russian Federation will be the host country in 2026 pending confirmation of this date by the Russian Federation.

#### **Place and Provisional Agenda for the 16th SAR Conference**

35 According to the new six-year schedule conduct of Black Sea SAR Conferences (2021-2026), the 16th BS SAR Conference will be hosted by Turkey, in Istanbul in September 2021. All Black Sea countries delegations confirmed the place, date and provisional agenda for the 16th SAR Conference. The full version of the report of the 15th Black Sea SAR Conference is available on the following links: [http://www.mta.gov.ge/uploads/The\\_15th\\_Black\\_Sea\\_SAR\\_Conference\\_Final\\_Report.pdf](http://www.mta.gov.ge/uploads/The_15th_Black_Sea_SAR_Conference_Final_Report.pdf) or on the Black Sea MRCC Web portal <http://bsmrcc.com/bs-sar-conference/>

#### **Action requested of the Sub-Committee**

36 The Sub-Committee is invited to note the information provided.

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