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PROPOSAL

From:	Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director
date of receipt:	23 October 2026
To:	Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union
No. Cion doc.:	COM(2026) 578 final
Subject:	Proposal for a COUNCIL DECISION on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the International Maritime Organization during the 112th session of the Maritime Safety Committee on the adoption of amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, a draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality and a draft MSC resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment.

Delegations will find attached document COM(2026) 578 final.

Encl.: COM(2026) 578 final

EUROPEAN
COMMISSION

Brussels, 23.10.2026
COM(2026) 578 final

2026/0328 (NLE)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the International Maritime Organization during the 112th session of the Maritime Safety Committee on the adoption of amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, a draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality and a draft MSC resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment.

EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

1. SUBJECT MATTER OF THE PROPOSAL

This proposal concerns the decision establishing the position to be taken on the Union's behalf in the International Maritime Organization's 112th session of the Maritime Safety Committee, scheduled to take place from 14 to 18 December 2026.

During its 112th session, MSC is to adopt:

(a) amendments to chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, expected to enter into force on 1 January 2032.

(b) a draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality.

(c) a draft MSC resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment.

2. CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL

2.1. The Convention on the International Maritime Organization and the SOLAS Convention

The Convention on the International Maritime Organization (IMO) establishes the IMO. The IMO's purpose is to provide a forum for co-operation in the field of regulation and practices relating to technical matters of all kinds affecting shipping engaged in international trade. It furthermore aims to encourage the general adoption of the highest practicable standards in matters concerning maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of marine pollution from ships, promoting a level playing field. It also deals with related administrative and legal matters.

The Convention entered into force on 17 March 1958.

All Member States are parties to the Convention. The Union is not a party to the Convention.

All Member States are parties to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea ('SOLAS'), 1974, which entered into force on 25 May 1980. The Union is not a party to SOLAS.

2.2. The International Maritime Organization and its Maritime Safety Committee

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is the United Nations' specialised agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships. It is the global standard-setting authority for the safety, security, and environmental performance of international shipping. Its main role is to create a regulatory framework for the shipping industry that is fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented.

Membership in the IMO is only open to States. All EU Member States are members of the IMO. While the EU is not a member, the European Commission's relations with IMO are based today on the IMO Resolution A.1168(32) which prescribes the procedures and terms for the cooperation between IMO and intergovernmental organisations. Based on this IMO Resolution and further arrangements since 1974, the European Commission is participating as an observer in all the IMO Committee and Sub-Committee meetings.

IMO's Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) consists of all the IMO Members and meets at least once a year. It considers any matter within the scope of the Organization concerned with aids to navigation, construction and equipment of vessels, manning from a safety standpoint, rules for the prevention of collisions, handling of dangerous cargoes, maritime safety procedures and requirements, hydrographic information, log-books and navigational records, marine casualty investigation, salvage and rescue, and any other matters directly affecting maritime safety.

Pursuant to Article 28(b) of the IMO Convention, IMO's Maritime Safety Committee provides machinery for performing any duties assigned to them by the IMO Convention, the IMO Assembly or the IMO Council, or any duty within the above scope which may be assigned to them by or under any other international instrument and accepted by the IMO. Decisions of the Maritime Safety Committee, and of their subsidiary bodies, are adopted by a majority of their Members.

2.3. The envisaged acts of the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee

During its 112th session, MSC is envisaged to adopt:

(a) amendments to chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, expected to enter into force on 1 January 2032.

Such amendments are to be adopted in accordance with article VIII(b)(iv) of the SOLAS Convention. Amendments to SOLAS Chapter V, once they have entered into force in accordance with Article VIII of the Convention, are legally binding on the Contracting Governments to which they apply.

The purpose of the envisaged amendments is to introduce the free-of-charge policy for the provision of the regular six-hourly Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) system position reports to entitled coastal States.

(b) a draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality.

The purpose of the envisaged revision of the draft resolution is that the two-way communication service via the SAR/Galileo Return Link service will provide a means for basic communication between maritime personnel in a distress situation and the rescue coordination authorities, enhancing the maritime distress alerting system.

(c) a draft MSC resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment.

The purpose of the envisaged draft resolution is that it will improve maritime safety by addressing Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) failure through a GNSS contingency system, such as VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) R-mode.

3. POSITION TO BE TAKEN ON THE UNION'S BEHALF

3.1. Amendments to SOLAS regulation V/19-1

MSC during its 110th session agreed to include in the agenda of the Committee for the 2026-2027 biennium and in the provisional agenda for the 111 session an output on "Review of the financial architecture of the LRIT system". MSC 110 agreed that MSC 111 would establish a technical group to consider the review of the financial architecture of the LRIT system and subject to the outcome of the discussions at MSC 111, MSC would decide how to proceed with the development of amendments to SOLAS regulation V/19-1.

The Union's position at MSC 110 was to support the introduction of the new output.

MSC during its 111th session considered several submissions by IMO Parties and decided to set up the Working Group on Financial Architecture of the LRIT System. MSC 111 instructed the Working Group among others to advise on how to proceed with the development of amendments to SOLAS regulation V/19-1. Having considered the report of the Working Group on Financial Architecture of the LRIT System, MSC 111 approved the draft amendments to SOLAS regulation V/19-1 regarding the introduction of the free-of-charge policy for the provision of standard periodic position LRIT reports to entitled coastal States, with a view to adoption at MSC 112 and entry into force at the latest on 1 January 2032. These amendments have been circulated by the IMO Secretariat through IMO Circular Letter No.5222 of 11 June 2026.

The Union's position at MSC 111 was to support in principle that MSC 111 takes a policy decision in favour of making available the regular six-hourly LRIT position reports free of charge to coastal States entitled to receive such information and that a working group is established at MSC 111 to consider the submissions submitted under this agenda item.

It should also be recalled that MSC 111 invited the European Commission to consider requesting the IDE operator (European Maritime Safety Agency) to conduct, under the coordination of the Operational LRIT Governance Body, performance testing of the IDE to verify its operational capacity and performance in handling the expected increase in messages to be exchanged between LRIT Data Centres as a result of the implementation of the new cost model. The Commission notes that such testing is underway and its results would be reported to MSC 112.

The Union should support these amendments because a more effective global maritime awareness will be achieved. Each coastal State will be able to monitor its waters to some extent, enabling quicker responses to incidents and better support for investigations and analysis.

Directive 2002/59/EC establishing a Community vessel traffic monitoring and information system, as amended (VTMIS Directive)[1], in its Article 6b obliges EU Member States and the Commission to cooperate to determine the requirements concerning the fitting of equipment for transmitting LRIT information on board ships sailing in waters within the coverage of Automatic Identification System (AIS) fixed based stations of Member States, and to submit to the IMO any appropriate measures, as well as to establish a European LRIT Data Centre (EU LRIT DC). In addition, SafeSeaNet, established by the same Directive, allows for the distribution amongst Member States of the LRIT information received in accordance with Article 6b of that Directive.

The subject matter of the envisaged amendments concerns an area for which the Union has exclusive external competence by virtue of the last limb of Article 3(2) TFEU, as the envisaged acts are liable to 'affect common rules or alter their scope'. Therefore, amendments to SOLAS regulation V/19-1 concerning LRIT are capable of decisively affecting the requirements applicable under Directive 2002/59/EC.

[1] Directive 2002/59/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 June 2002 establishing a Community vessel traffic monitoring and information system and repealing Council Directive 93/75/EEC. OJ L 208, 5.8.2002, pp. 10.

3.2. Draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality

MSC during its 107th session agreed to include in its post-biennial agenda an output on "Development of guidelines for EPIRBs which implement the two-way communication service via the SAR/Galileo Return Link service as a complement to EPIRB performance standards (resolution MSC.471(101))", with two sessions needed to complete the item, assigning the Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue (NCSR) as the associated organ. The Union had submitted the request for this new output and therefore its position at MSC 107 was to support the introduction of the new output.

NCSR during its 13th session considered a number of documents including a submission by the Union (document NCSR 13/8 by Austria et al.), presenting the two-way communication service offered by the Galileo Return Link and proposing draft amendments to resolution MSC.471(101) on Performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz to introduce the two-way communication service as an optional EPIRB feature. NCSR 13 instructed its Working Group to consider among others the draft amendments to resolution MSC.471(101) introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality. Having considered the report of the Working Group, NCSR 13 agreed to the draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality, with a view to adoption by MSC 112. The draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 has been circulated by the IMO Secretariat through documents MSC 112/10 and NCSR 13/18/Add.1.

The Union position at NCSR 13 was to actively support the draft amendments to the Performance standards for float-free emergency position-indicating radio beacons (EPIRBs) (Resolution MSC. 471(101)) to include the two-way communication service offered by the return link of Galileo on Cospas-Sarsat beacons.

The Union should support the draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 because this new service is expected to improve the operations of the SAR services resulting in more efficient and timely rescue answers. The two-way communication service via the SAR/Galileo Return Link service will provide a means for basic communication between maritime personnel in a distress situation and the rescue coordination authorities, enhancing the maritime distress alerting system.

Regulation (EU) 2021/696[2] establishes the Union Space Programme and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme (Article 1). The programme includes the European satellite navigation policy that provides the Union with two satellite navigation systems: The system established under the Galileo programme (Article 3(1)(a) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/696) and the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) system (Article 3(1)(b) thereof).

According to Art. 28(1) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/696, the Commission has overall responsibility for implementing the Union Space Programme, including Galileo and EGNOS. The aim of the Galileo programme is to establish and operate the global satellite navigation and positioning infrastructure specifically designed for civilian purposes, which can be used by a variety of public and private actors in Europe and worldwide.

[2] Regulation (EU) 2021/696 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 28 April 2021 establishing the Union Space Programme and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme and repealing Regulations (EU) No 912/2010, (EU) No 1285/2013 and (EU) No 377/2014 and Decision No 541/2014/EU; OJ L 170, 12.5.2021, p. 69.

In addition, the type approval requirements, carriage and performance standards of EPIRBs are regulated by entry MED/5.6 of the Annex to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1434[3], which includes Resolution MSC. 471(101). The Implementing Regulation contains design, construction and performance requirements and testing standards for marine equipment. It is based on the empowerment of the Commission to indicate, through implementing acts, the design, construction and performance requirements as well as the testing standards for marine equipment falling within the scope of Directive 2014/90/EU on marine equipment[4], in accordance with Article 35(2) thereof.

The subject matter of the envisaged amendments concerns an area for which the Union has exclusive external competence by virtue of the last limb of Article 3(2) TFEU, as the envisaged acts are liable to 'alter the scope of common rules'. Therefore, the draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality is capable of decisively affecting the requirements applicable under Regulation ((EU) 2021/696, Directive 2014/90/EU and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1434.

3.3. Draft MSC Resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment

MSC during its 110th session considered the Union submission (document MSC 109/19/2 by Austria et al.), proposing a new output to develop performance standards for Ranging mode (R-mode) in radionavigation receivers and agreed to include this item in the agenda of the NCSR Sub-Committee, assigning the NCSR Sub-Committee as the associated organ.

NCSR during its 13th session considered a number of documents including a submission by the Union (document NCSR 13/13/1 by Austria et al.), proposing draft performance standards for shipborne R-mode receiver equipment, intended for navigation purposes on ships, providing positioning, navigation and time data, either as an alternative or complementary system to Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS). NCSR 13 instructed its Working Group to prepare draft performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-mode) receiver equipment. Having considered the Working Group's report, NCSR 13 agreed to the draft MSC resolution on performance standards for shipborne R-mode receiver equipment, with a view to adoption by MSC 112. The draft resolution has been circulated by the IMO Secretariat through documents MSC 112/10 and NCSR 13/18/Add.1.

The Union position at NCSR 13 was to actively support the draft performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-mode) receiver equipment.

The Union should support the draft resolution because it will improve maritime safety by addressing GNSS failure through a GNSS contingency system, such as VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) R-mode. The combined use of GNSS and R-Mode will result in improved resilience in terms of accuracy, availability, and integrity, and provide resilience of the Position, Velocity and Timing (PVT) solution compared to using a standalone GNSS based navigation system.

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[3] Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1434 of 30 June 2026 laying down rules for the application of Directive 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, as regards design, construction and performance requirements and testing standards for marine equipment, and repealing Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2025/1533. OJ L, 2026/1434, http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg_impl/2026/1434/oj

[4] Directive 2014/90/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 July 2014 on marine equipment and repealing Council Directive 96/98/EC. OJ L 257, 28.8.2014, p. 146. http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2014/90/oj

Navigation equipment, including marine Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) receivers, is listed in Section 4 of the Annex to Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1434. The Implementing Regulation contains design, construction and performance requirements and testing standards for marine equipment. It is based on the empowerment of the Commission to indicate, through implementing acts, the design, construction and performance requirements as well as the testing standards for marine equipment falling within the scope of Directive 2014/90/EU on marine equipment, in accordance with Article 35(2) thereof.

The subject matter of the envisaged amendments concerns an area for which the Union has exclusive external competence by virtue of the last limb of Article 3(2) TFEU, as the envisaged acts are liable to 'alter the scope of common rules'. Therefore, the draft resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment is capable of decisively affecting the requirements applicable under Directive 2014/90/EU and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1434.

4. LEGAL BASIS

4.1. Procedural legal basis

The IMO's Maritime Safety Committee is a body set up by an agreement, the Convention on the International Maritime Organization.

The envisaged acts which IMO's MSC 112 is called upon to adopt will produce legal effects under the SOLAS Convention for the Member States. The envisaged acts are capable of decisively influencing the content of EU legislation, namely:

– Directive 2002/59/EC establishing a Community vessel traffic monitoring and information system. This is because Directive 2002/59/EC in its Article 6b obliges EU Member States and the Commission to cooperate to determine the requirements concerning the fitting of equipment for transmitting LRIT information on board ships sailing in waters within the coverage of Automatic Identification System (AIS) fixed based stations of Member States, and to submit to the IMO any appropriate measures, as well as to establish a European LRIT Data Centre (EU LRIT DC). In addition, SafeSeaNet, established by the same Directive, allows for the distribution amongst Member States of the LRIT information received in accordance with Article 6b of that Directive.

– Regulation (EU) 2021/696 establishing the Union Space Programme and the European Union Agency for the Space Programme. This is because the programme includes the European satellite navigation policy that provides the Union with two satellite navigation systems: The system established under the Galileo programme (Article 3(1)(a) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/696) and the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) system (Article 3(1)(b) thereof). According to Art. 28(1) of the Regulation (EU) 2021/696, the Commission has overall responsibility for implementing the European Space Programme, including Galileo and EGNOS. The aim of the Galileo programme is to establish and operate the global satellite navigation and positioning infrastructure specifically designed for civilian purposes, which can be used by a variety of public and private actors in Europe and worldwide.

– Directive 2014/90/EU on marine equipment and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1434. This is because the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1434 includes in Section 4 of its Annex navigation equipment

including marine Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) receivers and will incorporate the draft resolution on performance standards for R-Mode receiver equipment. In addition, the Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2026/1434 includes in Section 5 of its Annex the type approval requirements, carriage and performance standards of EPIRBs and will incorporate the revised Resolution MSC. 471(101) on performance standards for EPIRBs.

The envisaged acts do not supplement or amend the institutional framework of the Convention.

Therefore, the procedural legal basis for the proposed decision is Article 218(9) TFEU.

4.2. Substantive legal basis

The main objective and content of the envisaged act relate to maritime transport.

Therefore, the substantive legal basis of the proposed decision is Article 100(2) TFEU.

4.3. Conclusion

The legal basis of the proposed decision should be Article 100(2) TFEU in conjunction with Article 218(9) TFEU.

2026/0328 (NLE)

Proposal for a

COUNCIL DECISION

on the position to be taken on behalf of the European Union in the International Maritime Organization during the 112th session of the Maritime Safety Committee on the adoption of amendments to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, a draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality and a draft MSC resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment.

THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular Article 100(2), in conjunction with Article 218(9) thereof,

Having regard to the proposal from the European Commission,

Whereas:

(1) The Convention on the International Maritime Organization entered into force on 17 March 1958.

(2) The International Maritime Organization ('IMO') is a specialised agency of the United Nations with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships. All Union Member States are members of the IMO. The Union is not a member of the IMO.

(3) Pursuant to Article 28(b) of the Convention on the IMO, the Maritime Safety Committee provides machinery for the performance of any duties assigned to it in accordance with that Convention, by the IMO Assembly or by the IMO Council, or any duty within the scope of that Article which may be assigned to the Maritime Safety Committee under any other international instrument and accepted by the IMO. MSC during its 112th session will adopt amendments in accordance with article VIII(b)(iv) of the SOLAS Convention and article VI(2)(d) of the 1988 Load Lines Protocol.

(4) The IMO's Maritime Safety Committee, in its 112th session from 14 to 18 December 2026 is to adopt amendments to chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, a draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality and a draft MSC Resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment. The envisaged acts of the MSC will, if adopted, produce legal effects for the Member States that are parties to the IMO and are capable of decisively influencing the content of Union rules.

(5) It is therefore necessary to establish the position to be taken on the Union's behalf during MSC 112.

(6) The Union should support the amendments to SOLAS Chapter V because a more effective global maritime awareness will be achieved. Each coastal State will be able to monitor its waters to some extent, enabling quicker responses to incidents and better support for investigations and analysis.

(7) The Union should support the draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for EPIRBs because this new service is expected to improve the operations of the SAR services resulting in more efficient and timely rescue answers. The two-way communication service via the SAR/Galileo Return Link service will provide a means for basic communication between maritime personnel in a distress situation and the rescue coordination authorities, enhancing the maritime distress alerting system.

(8) The Union should support the draft resolution on performance standards for R-Mode because it will improve maritime safety by addressing Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) failure through a GNSS contingency system, such as VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) R-mode. The combined use of GNSS and R-Mode will result in improved resilience in terms of accuracy, availability, and integrity, and provide resilience of the Position, Velocity and Timing (PVT) solution compared to using a standalone GNSS based navigation system.

(9) The Union's position is to be expressed by the Member States of the Union that are represented in the IMO's MSC, acting jointly, in the interest of the European Union.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The position to be taken on the Union's behalf in the 112th session of the International Maritime Organization's ('IMO') Maritime Safety Committee, shall be to agree to the adoption of the amendments to chapter V of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), 1974, the draft resolution MSC.471(101)/Rev.1 on performance standards for float-free Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs) operating on 406 MHz, introducing the two-way communication service as an optional functionality and the draft MSC Resolution on performance standards for shipborne ranging mode (R-Mode) receiver equipment.

Article 2

The position set out in Article 1 shall be expressed by the Member States of the Union that are represented in the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee, acting jointly in the interest of the Union.

Article 3

This Decision is addressed to the Member States.

Done at Brussels,

For the Council
The President