

## IMO EGC Coordinating Panel Report

Submitted by the Chair of the IMO Enhanced Group Call Coordinating Panel

### SUMMARY

Executive Summary: This document provides a summary of the report of the IMO Enhanced Group Call (EGC) Coordinating Panel to the 9<sup>th</sup> session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Navigation, Communication and Search and Rescue (NCSR) (NCSR 9/10/6). Furthermore, this document provides attention to ongoing activities in the Panel.

Action to be taken: Paragraph 10

Related documents: MSC.1/Circ.1635, NCSR 8/9/8, NCSR 8/14/1 and NCSR 9/10/6.

### 1. Introduction:

The IMO EGC Coordinating Panel was invited by NCSR 8 (NCSR 8/14/1, paragraphs 9.29, 9.35, 9.43.1 and 9.43.2) to consider the following matters and advise NCSR 9, as appropriate:

- .1 technical solutions for dissemination of MSI and SAR-related information over multiple recognized mobile satellite services, including any necessary actions concerning broadcast monitoring requirements;
- .2 setting a date for the cessation of rectangular area addressed broadcasts in the Arctic NAVAREA/METAREAs and to work with the Arctic NAVAREA and METAREA Coordinators to formalize a communication plan informing the mariners and the industry;
- .3 setting an expiry date for existing SafetyNET certificates, as and when a suitable alternative means of certification for broadcast of SAR-related information was established; and
- .4 whether further authorizations should be granted to NAVAREA and/or METAREA Coordinators for the purpose of broadcasting information other than navigational warnings and meteorological warnings and forecasts.

This document reports on the outcome of the above considerations made at the Panel meetings held remotely on 7 July and 10 November 2021. Furthermore, this document provides attention to the registration of EGC information providers, the Iridium SafetyCast implementation and the ongoing process of revoking SafetyNET certificates.

## **2. Technical solutions for dissemination of MSI and SAR-related information:**

Regarding considerations on technical solutions for dissemination of MSI and SAR-related information, Panel members argued against the development of solutions for the dissemination of MSI and SAR-related information using a single point of distribution. It was argued that:

- .1 a single point of distribution would represent a single point of failure in the need of around the clock support;
- .2 such solutions would require a host administration entailing responsibilities and costs; and
- .3 such solutions would call for mandatory requirements for information providers and RMSS providers to use the solutions.

The Panel agreed that any promotion of solutions for the dissemination of information involving mandatory requirements for RMSS providers was excluded by the following:

- .1 resolution A.1001(25) did not contain descriptions of information interfaces; and
- .2 any future revision of the resolution would not apply to the current RMSS providers nor to the provider currently under assessment.

The Panel further agreed that the developed and available EGC-API was a cost effective and fully integrated solution for the shore-to-ship dissemination of MSI and SAR-related information and invited IMO NCSR 9 to note and agree.

## **3. Broadcast monitoring requirements:**

Regarding considerations on broadcast monitoring requirements the Panel agreed that the technical solutions developed and available for broadcast monitoring sufficiently supply information providers with multiple options to comply with current monitoring requirements. The Panel invited IMO NCSR 9 to note and agree.

The Panel thus agreed that there was no present need to amend the broadcast monitoring requirements in resolutions A.706(17), as amended, A.1051(27), as amended, and COMSAR/Circ.37.

Noting that any future revision of resolution A.1001(25) would not apply to the current RMSS providers nor to the provider currently under assessment, the Panel further agreed that technical solutions for broadcast monitoring were best described within the respective RMSS manuals. The Panel invited IMO NCSR 9 to note and agree.

#### **4. Use of rectangular area addressed broadcasts in the Arctic:**

The Panel considered the matter of setting a date for the cessation of rectangular area addressed broadcasts in the Arctic in cooperation with the Arctic NAVAREA/ METAREAs, including the formalization of a communication plan informing the mariners and the industry.

The Arctic NAVAREA/METAREAs proposed 31 December 2023 as the date for the cessation of rectangular area addressing in the Arctic, highlighting that the date was set to allow broadcast of information on the cessation to mariners through the full Arctic 2023 summer sailing season. This as part of a communication plan including issuing information letters to relevant shipping organizations, followed by a one-year joint information campaign involving Notice to Mariners and broadcast of MSI.

The Panel agreed to both the proposed date for the cessation of rectangular area addressing in the Arctic and the proposed communication plan and invited IMO NCSR 9 to note and agree.

#### **5. Expiry date for existing SafetyNET certificates:**

Regarding considerations on setting an expiry date for existing SafetyNET certificates, the Panel noted the intention of the Chair to replace and revoke all existing SafetyNET certificates by issuing additional generic EGC certificates, as appropriate.

The Panel noted further that this task would be done in close cooperation with relevant authorities and organizations and performed carefully to ensure that existing broadcasts through SafetyNET services were not disrupted.

With the understanding that new replacement generic EGC certificates were being issued on request, the Panel agreed to set a revocation date for all SafetyNET certificates issued for SAR-related information as of six months from the concurrent decision of the revocation by IMO NCSR. The Panel invited IMO NCSR 9 to note and agree.

#### **6. NAVAREA and/or METAREA Coordinators authorizations:**

Regarding NAVAREA and/or METAREA Coordinators authorizations, the Panel considered whether further authorizations should be granted for the purpose of broadcasting information other than navigational warnings and meteorological warnings and forecasts, such as SAR-related information.

The Panel agreed that each SAR authority was responsible for establishing appropriate broadcast and contingency arrangements with authorized information providers, as deemed necessary. Furthermore, the Panel agreed that such arrangements would not require further authorization or certification of NAVAREA and/or METAREA Coordinators. The Panel invited IMO NCSR 9 to note and agree.

## **7. Registration of MSI and SAR-related information providers:**

The processes of authorization, certification and registration of information providers are set out in annex 2 to MSC.1/Circ.1635 and have been established to protect the integrity of the International EGC information service. According to paragraph 3.1, an information provider should, after receiving a Certificate of Authorization, conclude an agreement with the RMSS provider(s) concerned, serving the required sea area(s), to obtain access to the system.

The criteria and means for the approval and registration of information providers have been developed and established to ensure worldwide coverage of the International EGC service. The importance of the need for MSI and SAR-related information providers to conclude agreements with RMSS providers was thus emphasized in the Panel report to NCSR 8 (NCSR 8/9/8, paragraph 5.1).

EGC Certificates of Authorization were issued to all MSI providers (NAVAREA and METAREA Coordinators) in January 2020. By 22 August 2022, several MSI providers had yet to conclude agreements with all RMSS providers serving their NAVAREA/ METAREAs.

Recognizing that MSI and SAR-related information is of vital concern to all ships, regardless of the type of EGC receiver they have installed on board, information providers are again encouraged to conclude agreements with RMSS providers serving their NAVAREA, METAREA or SAR region and progress their implementation of the Iridium SafetyCast service.

The Panel invited NCSR 9 to note this information and to urge MSI and SAR-related information providers to conclude agreements with all RMSS providers serving their NAVAREA, METAREA or SAR region and progress their implementation of the Iridium SafetyCast service.

## **8. Iridium SafetyCast implementation:**

The IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) agreed at its 105<sup>th</sup> session, that the dissemination of MSI and SAR-related information was an integral service of the GMDSS and critical to preserving the safety of life at sea and, therefore, once a mobile satellite service was recognized by the Organization, it must then be used by all information providers covering its service area.<sup>1</sup>

In this context, it had been noted during the MSC's consideration that the conclusion was not calling for immediate implementation, but the Committee urged MSI providers to make the necessary efforts to provide MSI on all RMSS providers covering their service area and recognized their efforts for safety of navigation and safety of life at sea, which were of paramount importance.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2018, the IMO MSC, at its 99<sup>th</sup> session, adopted resolution MSC.451(99) on Statement of recognition of the maritime mobile satellite services provided by Iridium Satellite LLC, including Iridium's enhanced group calling service.

Effective 11 December 2020, Iridium declared the Iridium SafetyCast Service operational for broadcasting navigational warnings, meteorological warnings and forecasts, and Search and Rescue (SAR) related information. As mentioned in paragraph 7 above, by 22 August 2022, several MSI providers had yet to conclude agreements with all RMSS providers, thus not providing MSI, critical to preserving the safety of life at sea, on all RMSS covering their service area.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) of the IMO EGC Coordinating Panel are set out in annex 1 to MSC.1/Circ.1635. The Panel is established to coordinate the development and use of the International EGC service, including in particular to:

*“develop criteria and establish means for the approval and registration of potential information providers to ensure worldwide coverage is achieved and maintained, and ensure agreements are conducted with all recognized mobile satellite service provider(s) serving the required sea area”<sup>2</sup>*

The task of ensuring that worldwide coverage of EGC services is achieved and maintained, is an outmost priority to the Panel. If required, for the interest of preserving the safety of life at sea, the Panel will seek to establish arrangements to ensure the dissemination of MSI to all service areas. This could include establishing arrangements with those MSI providers that have concluded agreements with Iridium, to disseminate information to service areas presently not covered.

## **9. Revocation of SafetyNET certificates:**

On January 9, 2020, the Panel Chair issued new EGC certificates for all NAVAREAs and METAREAs. The EGC certificate applies to all RMSS providers.

The new replacement EGC certificate eliminated the need for the legacy corresponding Inmarsat SafetyNET certificate.

The establishment of an expiry date for the old SafetyNET certificates is only a formality and a necessary administrative task. After consultation between the Panel Chair, the Chair of the World Wide Navigational Warning Service and the Chair of the Worldwide Met-Ocean Information Warning Service, the expiry date of 30 September 2022 was agreed. Again, this is purely an administrative task and will have no negative impact on the WWNWS or WWMIWS.

## **10. Action requested:**

The Sub-Committee is invited to note the report.

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<sup>2</sup> MSC.1/Circ.1635, Annex 1, paragraph 1.4