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To: All IMO Member States  
Contracting Governments to the International Convention for the Safety of  
Life at Sea, 1974  
United Nations and Specialized Agencies  
Intergovernmental Organizations  
Non-governmental Organizations in consultative status

Subject: **IMO Ship Identification Number Format Extension Impact Assessment  
Survey**

1 The IMO Ship Identification Number Scheme was introduced on 19 November 1987 through the adoption of resolution A.600(15) on *IMO ship identification number scheme (scheme)*, as a measure to enhance maritime safety and pollution prevention and the prevention of maritime fraud. The scheme established by resolution A.600(15) was subsequently amended by resolutions A.1078(28) and A.1117(30), in particular, to extend its scope of application to small ships, including fishing vessels.

2 The IMO Ship Identification Number (IMO number) is made up of the three letters "IMO" in front of seven digits (e.g. IMO8712345), allocated by S&P Global Market Intelligence (formerly known as IHS Markit, Maritime & Trade (IHS M&T) or IHS Fairplay (IHS F)) on behalf of IMO at the time of build or when a ship is first included in a register. The IMO number is inserted in the ship's certificates and is permanently marked on the hull structure of the ship when and where appropriate. As per the provisions of MSC/Circ.1142 - MEPC/Circ.425, all plans, manuals and other documents required by the various IMO conventions to be carried on board ships constructed on or after 1 July 2005 should also be marked with the IMO number in a clearly legible and unambiguous manner.

3 The individual IMO number of a ship remains unchanged during the entire life of the ship, even in case of change of flag, name, ownership or type. Therefore, numbers allocated to ships which are no longer in service or existence cannot be used. Following adoption of resolutions A.1078(28) and A.1117(30) with the scope of application to fishing vessels, the issue of possible exhaustion of numbers was raised.

4 In fact, there is a sufficient range of available numbers to cover the needs of the maritime community for approximately two more decades. This is an estimate only, based on trends to date but this forecast may be exceeded if the request for fishing boats and small vessels soars. Nevertheless, S&P Global as managers of the Ship Identification IMO Number Scheme on behalf of the IMO, are exploring the matter of increasing the format of the number from seven digits. One important principle in increasing the format of the number is that the potential format extension will have no impact on the existing IMO numbers already issued and in circulation.

5 To enable further discussions and to provide decision makers with the necessary information, S&P Global, in consultation with IMO Secretariat, has recently launched an impact assessment survey on IMO ship identification number format extension that will be opened until 30 June 2023.

6 The Secretariat is pleased to invite all interested parties to participate in the survey. Those interested in participating in the survey please visit <https://forms.office.com/r/5b8JJBfjnm>. Your participation would be highly appreciated as it will help to determine any possible implications to stakeholders and sectors across the maritime community of an extension on the number of digits to the IMO ship identification number format.

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