HKFOAC Paper No. 2/2026

Hong Kong Fleet Operation Advisory Committee
Proposal for the issuance of a Hong Kong Edition of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to seek members' views on the proposed content and relevant arrangements relating to the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seafarers that is to be issued by the Director of Marine[1] ("the HKCOSWP"), for the adaptation of the Code of Safe Working Practices for Merchant Seamen issued by the Department of Transport of the United Kingdom ("the UKCOSWP").

Background

2. The UKCOSWP was first issued in 1978 by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, an executive agency of the United Kingdom's Department for Transport. It covers relevant UK regulatory framework and provides best practice guidance on shipboard personnel's health and safety. The UKCOSWP is referred to in Cap.369AH, Cap.478B, Cap.478G, Cap.478M and Cap.478R. It has been a requirement for all Hong Kong registered ships to carry on board copies of it at all time.

3. Members have been consulted on the proposed amendments to the definition of the UKCOSWP in relation to the adaptation of laws exercise through HKFOAC Paper No.4/2024 in September 2024.

[1] Under the Merchant Shipping (Seafarers) Ordinance (Cap.478), the Director of Marine shall be the Authority.

The Proposal

4. To align with the proposed adaptation, it is proposed that the HKCOSWP is to be developed by adopting the main content and maintaining the chapter numbering of the latest version of the UKCOSWP [2] with the following amendments: -

(a) Replacement of relevant UK law references with Hong Kong laws;
(b) Replacement of references to UK government departments and UK local organisations with references to Hong Kong Marine Department and/or international organisations;
(c) Deletion of UK references and content where no alternative references are identified.

5. Subject to members' comment, if any, approval will be sought from the Director of Marine[3] and the HKCOSWP will be published in the Gazette in accordance with the requirements of section 134(2) of Cap. 478 and section 112A(2) of Cap.369.

6. The HKCOSWP will substitute the UKCOSWP to be carried by Hong Kong registered ships for providing guidance on safe working practices for situations that commonly arise on the ships. The basic principles of the HKCOSWP can be applied to other applicable work situations that are not specifically covered. Its English and Chinese versions will be made available on MD's website for free download. No printed copy of HKCOSWP will be published.

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[2] *Consultation document - code of safe working practices for merchant seafarers (COSWP) review project*. (13 February 2024). Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Department for Transport, United Kingdom. https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/code-of-safe-working-practices-for-merchant-seafarers-review-project/consultation-document-code-of-safe-working-practices-for-merchant-seafarers-coswp-review-project

[3] Cap.369: 112A (3) - For the purposes of subsection (1)(c) the term Director (處長) in that subsection includes the Deputy Director of Marine.

7. The HKCOSWP may be revised in consultation with members to ensure that it remains relevant and reflects changes in standards and in working practices. Revision will also be published in the Gazette. Key situations leading to such revision may include:

(a) Safety Incidents & Recommendations: Changes are driven mainly by findings from the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB);

(b) Regulatory Changes: Updates occur to reflect latest legislation; and

(c) New Hazards: Revisions related to new development including technologies, working practices, or equipment onboard

Consultation

8. Members' comments on, if any, and endorsement of the proposal are hereby sought.

Marine Department
Multi-lateral Policy Division
8 May 2026

Enclosure: Appendix 1. The UKCOSWP (English version only)
Appendix 2. The HKCOSWP, draft for consultation
Appendix 3. HKFOAC paper No. 4/2024