

MARINE DEPARTMENT NOTICE NO. 87 OF 2016

(Shipping Requirement)

International Shipment of Packed Containers **on or after 1 July 2016 by Sea**

The Merchant Shipping (Safety) (Carriage of Cargoes) Regulation, Cap. 369AV, (Revision 2016) (hereunder called “the Regulation”) will be in force on 1 July 2016. Section 3A of the Regulation incorporated the latest requirements of the SOLAS Chapter VI Regulation 2 to require shippers to verify and declare the verified gross mass of packed containers to carriers before loading them on vessels.

On 23 May 2016, after considered the concerns of member States, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) issued circular MSC.1/Circ.1548 (as enclosed) advising members to take practical and pragmatic measures to enforce the above-mentioned requirement in the initial 3-month period provided that the stability and safe operation of vessels are not affected. Considering the similar concerns of operators in the industry and the practical arrangement of other countries, Marine Department adopts the advice of IMO and will enforce the requirements in a practical and pragmatic manner from 1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016.

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MSC.1/Circ.1548
23 May 2016

**ADVICE TO ADMINISTRATIONS, PORT STATE CONTROL AUTHORITIES, COMPANIES,
PORT TERMINALS AND MASTERS REGARDING THE SOLAS REQUIREMENTS
FOR VERIFIED GROSS MASS OF PACKED CONTAINERS**

1 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its ninety-sixth session (11 to 20 May 2016), recalled that the amendments to SOLAS regulation VI/2, adopted by resolution MSC.380(94) and which will enter into force on 1 July 2016, introduce new paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 relating to the verification of the gross mass (VGM) of packed containers.

2 In this context, the Committee noted the concerns of Member States regarding practical aspects of compliance with the aforementioned SOLAS amendments, in particular, relating to transhipped containers and communication of VGM information, in an initial period following their entry into force.

3 The Committee agreed that Administrations and port State control authorities should adopt a practical and pragmatic approach when verifying compliance with the requirements of SOLAS regulations VI/2.4 to VI/2.6, for a period of three months after 1 July 2016, with a view to:

- .1 permitting packed containers that are loaded on a ship before 1 July 2016 and are transhipped on or after 1 July 2016 to be shipped to their final port of discharge without the VGM specified in SOLAS regulations VI/2.4 to VI/2.6; and
- .2 providing flexibility to all the stakeholders in containerized transport to refine, if necessary, procedures for documenting, communicating and sharing VGM information.

4 Notwithstanding the above, the Committee emphasized that the stability and safe operation of ships, including the safe packing, handling and transport of containers, is not limited to the provision and use of VGM information and is also covered by a number of SOLAS regulations, including SOLAS regulations VI/2.1, VI/2.2 and VI/2.3, and other IMO instruments, amongst others.

5 Member States are invited to be guided accordingly and to bring the contents of this circular to the attention of all concerned, especially port State control officers.

6 This circular will remain effective until 1 October 2016.