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INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR USE OF PRINTED VERSIONS OF ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATES

1 The Facilitation Committee, at its thirty-eighth session (8 to 12 April 2013), approved the attached interim guidelines for the use of printed versions of electronic certificates.

2 Member Governments are invited to bring the guidelines to the attention of all parties concerned.

3 Member Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations with consultative status are also invited to bring to the attention of the Committee, at the earliest opportunity, the results of the experience gained from the use of the guidelines for consideration of action to be taken.

ANNEX

INTERIM GUIDELINES FOR USE OF PRINTED VERSIONS OF ELECTRONIC CERTIFICATES

1 Introduction

1.1 The Organization aims to reduce the administrative burden on Administrations, Port State Control officials, ships' crews and other stakeholders caused, amongst other reasons, by reliance on traditional paper certificates.

1.2 Signed paper certificates issued by Governments and recognized organizations authorized to act on their behalf have been the traditional means of documenting compliance with IMO requirements.

1.3 Contracting Governments using printed versions of electronic certificates have experienced instances of Port State Control authorities denying the validity of these certificates, resulting in a burden to the master and crew, shipowner or operator, Port State Control authorities, Administration, and other stakeholders.

1.4 In addition, ships have experienced instances of Port State Control actions because a traditional paper certificate has been issued but has not arrived on the ship, or the traditional paper certificate has been damaged or lost.

1.5 Establishing a recognized set of features for using electronic versions of certificates should help alleviate problems inherent in reliance on paper.

2 Purpose

The purpose of these interim guidelines is to facilitate the use and acceptance of printed versions of electronic certificates. These interim guidelines are limited to the use of printed versions of electronic certificates.

3 Definitions

For the purpose of these Guidelines:

- .1 *Certificate* means a document issued by an Administration that is used to show compliance with IMO requirements. The term "certificate" does not include publications, manuals, instructions, or ships' logs used to record ongoing operations;
- .2 *Electronic certificate* means a certificate in an electronic format accessible through a website, a computer, or other digital media and used to create a printed version;
- .3 *Printed version of electronic certificate* means a paper certificate produced from the electronic certificate;
- .4 *Unique tracking number* means a string of numbers, letters, or symbols used as an identifier to distinguish a certificate issued by an Administration or its representative from any other certificate issued by the same Administration or its representative; and

- .5 *Validating* means a reliable, secure, and continuously available process to compare a printed version of an electronic certificate with the source issued by the Administration or its representative.

4 Features

Administrations that use electronic certificates as the source for printed versions should ensure that these electronic certificates include the following features:

- .1 validity and consistency with the format and content required by the relevant international convention or instrument, as applicable; and
- .2 a unique tracking number as defined in paragraph 3.4.

5 Validation

Instructions for validating (see paragraph 3.5) the information contained in the certificate, including confirmation of periodic endorsements, when necessary, should be available on board the ship.

6 Notifications

Administrations deciding to issue or authorize issuance of electronic certificates are invited to inform the Committee on their experience and provide the list of those certificates that will be issued as electronic versions.

7 Acceptance

Port State Control officials should accept printed versions of electronic certificates containing the features identified in paragraph 4. These printed versions should be validated, when necessary, following the instructions available on board the ship (see paragraph 3.5).
