

**Resolution A.856(20)**

*Adopted on 27 November 1997  
(Agenda item 9)*

**GUIDANCE TO ADMINISTRATIONS ON DEVELOPMENT OF A SHORE-BASED SAR  
TELECOMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE**

THE ASSEMBLY,

RECALLING Article 15(j) of the Convention on the International Maritime Organization concerning the functions of the Assembly in relation to regulations and guidelines concerning maritime safety,

RECALLING ALSO that, in order to reduce time delays and make possible more efficient search and rescue (SAR) operations, it is necessary to improve the efficiency of the SAR telecommunication infrastructure on an end-to-end basis, including the preservation of priority handling of SAR traffic in the landline systems,

RECOGNIZING that emerging technologies, such as display of caller identification, automatic decoding of certain message parameters and retrieval of emergency data from associated databases, would enhance the SAR communications system, thereby improving the life-saving capabilities of SAR operations,

HAVING CONSIDERED the recommendation made by the Maritime Safety Committee at its sixty-sixth session,

RECOMMENDS that, where practicable, in order to enhance the processing of distress alerts and the effectiveness of SAR co-ordination and operations, Administrations consider implementing some or all of the following options:

- (a) the use of switching and software arrangements for land connections from shore facilities such as coast earth stations, DSC coast stations and mission control centres to rescue co-ordination centres (RCCs), so as to preserve the message priority;
- (b) equipping RCCs with ship earth stations in areas of unreliable landline operations, so as to facilitate emergency communications between RCCs and coast earth stations and to enable direct communications to be made with ships when required;
- (c) arranging for distribution of alerts in accordance with the IMO SAR Plan where they apply, or otherwise to associated RCCs or search and rescue points of contact (SPOCs), and studying the possibility for:
  - (i) appropriate software to automatically decode any message parameters not in plain language prior to or upon delivery of distress alerts to RCCs; and
  - (ii) appropriate software to automatically retrieve supporting emergency data on ships in distress from available databases prior to or upon delivery of distress alerts to RCCs.