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Interpretation of the “Notice on Strengthening the Prevention of Collisions between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in Coastal Waters of China” and Guidance on Safe Navigation

Dear Sir or Madam,

Recently, the Maritime Safety Administration of the People's Republic of China (China MSA) distributed the *Notice on Strengthening the Prevention of Collisions between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in Coastal Waters of China* (hereinafter referred to as the *Notice*) to all its affiliated Maritime Safety Administrations (MSAs), issuing special supplementary provisions addressing navigation safety for merchant ships and fishing vessels in coastal waters of China during the spring fishing season. At the request of the MSA, we hereby forward the Notice as an attachment to this Circular. In conjunction with Huatai Circular [2025]07 (*Collision Risks between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in China's Coastal Waters: Analysis and Prevention Recommendations*), we have collated and interpreted the key contents of the Notice and formulated relevant operational suggestions for the reference of Clubs and their Members.

Key Contents of the Notice

In addition to the risk analysis and preventive recommendations concerning collisions between merchant ships and fishing vessels outlined in Huatai Circular [2025]07, the Notice, in alignment with the relevant requirements of the *Guideline for the Prevention of Collision between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels In*

Coastal Waters of China (attached to Huatai Circular [2025]07), further supplements the following key provisions:

1. Emphasizing Shore-based Monitoring and Guidance

- The Notice explicitly requires shipowners/managers to implement a 24-hour shore-based watch-keeping system. Shore-based personnel shall fulfill the obligation of dynamic monitoring of ships and receive real-time warning information issued by competent authorities regarding waters with dense fishing vessels, high-risk areas, and concentrated port entry and exit of fishing vessels. Meanwhile, they shall guide ships to conduct pre-voyage risk assessments, verify voyage plans, collision avoidance protocols, and watch-keeping arrangements in fishing areas, and establish a coordinated "shore-based and shipboard" collision prevention mechanism.
- While the aforesaid requirements apply primarily to Chinese shipowners and Chinese flag ships, we recommend that all shipowners and ships adopt these measures as industry best practices for reference and implementation.

2. Refine Navigation Requirements

- The Notice emphasizes the "collision avoidance first" principle for navigation watch handover, stipulating that handover shall only be conducted after the completion of collision prevention operations and the safe passing and clearance of the other vessel, so as to avoid collision risks arising from information interruption or disturbance during the handover process.
- The Notice prescribes that ships navigating in dense fishing vessel waters along the coast of China shall strengthen bridge watch-keeping manpower, with a minimum of two qualified watch-keepers on duty at the bridge. The master shall issue specific night orders specifying safe navigation requirements when navigating in fishing areas during nighttime.
- The Notice sets forth more detailed guidance on collision prevention between

merchant ships and fishing vessels, such as: Merchant ships shall exercise good seamanship to take early and positive collision avoidance actions on the premise of ensuring their own navigation safety, so as to avoid close-quarters situations. The minimum closest point of approach (CPA) shall be maintained at no less than 1 nautical mile (0.5 nautical mile in dense fishing vessel waters where practicable). When passing trawlers, merchant ships shall keep a distance of no less than 1 nautical mile from the stern of the trawler and are prohibited from crossing between pair trawlers. When passing fishing vessels engaged in seining operations, merchant ships shall maintain a safe distance and pass to the windward and upstream side of such vessels.

- The Notice also suggests merchant ships keep clear of low-speed fishing vessels, noting that such vessels may be conducting fishing operations, at anchor or adrift, with potential irregular bridge watch-keeping and inoperable VHF and AIS equipment, and thus require extreme caution in collision avoidance.

3. Equipment Operation and Emergency Response Measures

- The Notice specifies that fishing nets of fishing vessels engaged in drift netting, stow netting, and cage fishing are displayed as triangular markers on electronic charts, and alerts that AIS fishing net position locators may impair bridge watch-keepers' judgment of AIS, ECDIS, and Radar data.
- For foreign flag ships, the Notice stresses the need to fully take language barriers into account when communicating with fishing vessels via VHF.
- The Notice also sets forth emergency maneuvering measures for merchant ships in close-quarters situations, such as taking decisive actions including slowing down, stopping/reversing the engine, and altering course to avoid bow-on collision with the side of fishing vessels, so as to minimize collision consequences.
- The merchant ship must stop immediately in the event of a collision and give

top priority to the rescue of human life. Provided that its own safety is not endangered, the merchant ship shall make every effort to carry out search and rescue operations. Unauthorized departure from the scene is strictly prohibited until all persons in distress have been rescued. Meanwhile, the ship shall immediately report full accident details, including location of the incident, name of the vessel in distress, casualties, ship damage, weather and sea conditions, and rescue needs to the nearest MSA via effective means such as VHF and satellite telephones, and notify surrounding ships to request rescue support.

Our Suggestions

1. Organize specialized training sessions for crew members on the "Notice" to ensure accurate understanding of all prevention requirements and operational suggestions.
2. This Circular should be perused in conjunction with Huatai Circular [2025]07 and [2026]02 (*Main Public Shipping Routes in China's Coastal Waters*) to achieve a comprehensive understanding of all practical operational points and implementation requirements for collision prevention between merchant ships and fishing vessels in the coastal waters of China.
3. It is understood that the Notice has now been distributed to relevant shipping entities, including Chinese shipowners, competent fishery authorities, and ship agents. Some MSAs have explicitly required ship agents to forward the Notice to ships and obtain the Captain's signature as acknowledgment of receipt. It is advisable that all ships pay close attention to the contents of the Notice and strictly comply with its relevant provisions to avoid liabilities resulting from non-compliance with the stipulated operational requirements.
4. It is recommended that shipowners, ship managers/operators closely monitor the dynamic changes in collision risks between merchant ships and fishing vessels in coastal waters of China, optimize collision prevention and control measures based on the actual navigation conditions of their ships, mitigate the risk of collision accidents, and safeguard the safety of ships, crew, and

cargo.

We will continue to monitor the subsequent notices and requirements issued by the China MSA regarding collision prevention between merchant ships and fishing vessels, and promptly disseminate relevant information to the Clubs and their Members.

For any related questions, please feel free to contact Huatai Beijing (pni.bj@huatai-serv.com) or our local branch offices.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'CUI JIYU' in a stylized, cursive script.

CUI Jiyu

Head of Marine Team

Attachment:

Note: The Chinese and English versions of this attachment were both provided by the Maritime Safety Administration of the People's Republic of China.

加强中国沿海防范商渔船碰撞工作的建议

Notice on Strengthening the Prevention of Collisions between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in Coastal Waters of China

春节假期后，正值中国沿海渔业春汛，沿海水域渔船数量将大幅增加，商渔船交汇密集，碰撞风险显著上升。为坚决防范商渔船碰撞事故，保障船舶航行安全，现就进一步加强防范商渔船碰撞工作提出如下建议：

Following the Spring Festival holiday, the coastal waters of China will enter the spring fishing season. The number of fishing vessels will increase sharply, resulting in dense encounters between merchant ships and fishing vessels and a significant rise in collision risks. To further prevent collisions between merchant ships and fishing vessels and ensure navigation safety, the following suggestions are hereby put forward.

一、加强岸基监控指导

1. Strengthen Shore-based Monitoring and Guidance

（一）开展 24 小时岸基值班，加强对所属船舶的动态监控，及时收取主管机关发布的渔船密集水域、高风险水域、渔船集中进出港等预警信息，指导所属船舶认真开展航前风险评估，重点核查渔区航行计划、避让方案与值班安排。

1. 1 Implement 24-hour shore-based watch-keeping, strengthen dynamic monitoring of your ships, and promptly receive early warning information issued by competent authorities on waters with dense fishing vessels, high-risk waters, and concentrated entry or exit of fishing vessels. Guide your ships to conduct thorough pre-voyage risk assessments, focusing on verifying voyage plans, collision prevention measures, and watch-keeping arrangements in fishing areas.

（二）制定航行计划时，应充分参考 《沿海公共航路指南》《中华人民共和国海事局关

于公布中国沿海商渔船碰撞高风险警示区的通告》《中国沿海防范商渔船碰撞事故指引》等文件要求，合理规划航线，明确避让措施。

1. 2 When developing voyage plans, full reference should be made to documents including the Guidelines for Coastal Public Shipping Routes, the Notice of the Maritime Safety Administration of the People's Republic of China on Promulgating High-risk Warning Zones for Collisions between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in Coastal Waters of China, and the Guidelines for the Prevention of Collisions between Merchant Ships and Fishing Vessels in Coastal Waters of China, to plan reasonable routes and specify collision prevention measures.

二、加强航行安全工作

2. Enhance Navigation Safety

（一）航经中国沿海的船舶，应科学制定航次计划，计划航线尽量远离渔区和较大渔场，应尽可能使用推荐航路航行。航行交接班时，应全面交接周围商船、渔船动态及所有航行安全威胁，应在避让操作完成且驶过让清后再进行交接班。

2. 1 Ships navigating through coastal waters of China should develop sound voyage plans, keep routes as far away from fishing areas and major fishing grounds as possible, and use recommended routes wherever practicable. During navigation watch handover, a complete handover should be made, including the movements of surrounding merchant ships and fishing vessels, as well as all threats to navigation safety. Watch handover should only be carried out after collision prevention operations are completed and the ship has passed and cleared the other vessel.

（二）进入中国沿海渔船密集区前，应召开航行安全会议，明确航行要求。船舶航行于中国沿海渔船密集水域应加强驾驶台值班力量配备，驾驶台应保持至少两名值班人员，必要时船长亲自指挥。夜间渔区航行，船长应签发有关安全航行要求的夜航命令。

2. 2 Before entering areas with dense fishing vessels in the coastal waters of China, a navigation safety meeting should be convened to clarify navigation requirements. When navigating in waters with dense fishing vessels, ships should strengthen bridge watch-keeping manpower, with at least two watch-keeping officers on the bridge. The master should take command when necessary. When navigating in fishing areas at night, the master should issue night orders

specifying safe navigation requirements.

（三） 进入渔区前，应对雷达、电子海图、船舶自动识别系统、航行数据记录仪、甚高频无线电话、应急电源，以及航行

灯、白昼信号灯和其他声响信号设备进行检查和测试。要检查“四机一炉”，确保工作状况良好；备妥主机，以便随时用车。要对手操舵（随动、非随动）、自动舵和应急操舵等操舵方式进行测试，确保操舵系统工作正常，以便紧急时随时操纵避碰。

2. 3 Before entering fishing areas, inspect and test radar, electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS), automatic identification system (AIS), voyage data recorder (VDR), very high frequency (VHF) radio, emergency power supply, navigation lights, daylight signalling lights and other sound signalling equipment. Inspect the “four engines and one boiler” to ensure their good working conditions and stand by the main engine for immediate use. Test manual steering (follow-up, non-follow-up), automatic steering, and emergency steering to ensure the steering system functions properly for emergency collision avoidance manoeuvres.

（四） 避碰渔船时，在确保自身航行安全情况下注意运用良好的船艺及早主动避让渔船，避免形成紧迫局面，最小会遇距离尽可能保持 1 海里以上（渔船密集水域尽可能保持 0.5 海里以上），并综合运用 VHF16 频道、汽笛以及灯光等方式及早联系和警示渔船。

2. 4 When taking measures to avoid collision with fishing vessels, on the premise of ensuring the ship's own navigation safety, exercise good seamanship to take early and positive action to keep clear of fishing vessels, so as to avoid the close-quarters situation. The minimum distance at the closest point of approach (CPA) should be kept at no less than 1 nautical mile (0.5 nautical mile as far as possible in dense fishing areas). Use VHF Channel 16, the ship's whistle, and lights to carry out early communication and warning with fishing vessels.

（五） 避让正在捕鱼作业的渔船时，应与渔船及渔网保持足够的安全距离。避让拖网作业渔船时，应保持距离其船艏不少于 1 海里通过，禁止从双拖渔船间通过；避让围网作业渔船时，应从其上风流侧保持安全距离通过。

2. 5 When giving way to fishing vessels engaged in fishing operations, maintain a sufficient safe distance from both the vessels and their fishing nets. When passing a trawler, keep a distance of no less than 1 nautical mile from its

stern. Crossing between pair trawlers is prohibited. When passing fishing vessels engaged in seining operations, keep a safe distance to windward and upstream of the vessel.

三、做好应急救助工作

3. Emergency Response and Rescue

（一） 紧迫局面时，应果断采取减速、停车、倒车、改变航向避免船首与渔船侧面撞击或其他应急避让措施，以最大程度减轻碰撞后果。

3. 1 In a close-quarters situation, take decisive evasive actions such as slowing down, stopping, reversing, and altering course to avoid bow-on collision with the side of fishing vessels, to minimize collision consequences.

（二） 发生碰撞事故后，应将人命救助置于首位，采取一切办法，全力救助人命；应通过一切有效途径，立即向就近的海事管理机构报告，报告内容应包含事故发生位置、遇险船舶名称、人员伤亡情况、船舶受损情况、天气海况、救助需求等。同时，通告周围船舶，请求参与救助。

3. 2 In the event of a collision, prioritize the rescue of human life and adopt all possible measures to rescue persons in distress. Immediately report to the nearest maritime administration through all effective means, including the location of the incident, name of the vessel in distress, casualties, ship damage, weather and sea conditions, and rescue needs. Meanwhile, notify surrounding vessels and request their assistance in rescue operations.

四、其他有关注意事项

4. Other Important Notices

（一） 渔船从事流刺网、张网和网箱捕鱼作业活动时，通常使用 AIS 网位仪显示渔网，在电子海图上显示为三角形图形标识。AIS 网位仪可能影响航行值班人员对船舶 AIS、ECDIS 和雷达信息的判断，需重点关注识别。

4. 1 Fishing vessels engaged in drift netting, stow netting and cage fishing usually use fishing net position AIS locator to indicate fishing nets, which appear as triangular symbols on ECDIS. Fishing net position AIS locator may

affect watch-keepers' judgment of shipborne AIS, ECDIS and radar information, requiring special attention and identification.

（二） 渔船在从事捕鱼作业时，可能未按照规则显示相应的号灯号型。应远离低船速渔船，此类渔船可能处于捕鱼作业、锚泊或漂航状态，可能值班异常，甚高频或 AIS 设备可能停止工作。部分木质渔船因其材质和构造，可能难以被雷达识别。

4. 2 Fishing vessels engaged in fishing operations may fail to exhibit appropriate lights and shapes in accordance with regulations. Keep clear of low — speed fishing vessels, which may be operating, anchored or adrift, possibly with improper watch-keeping or switched — off VHF/AIS equipment. Some wooden fishing vessels may be difficult to be detected by radar due to their material and structure.

（三） 渔船有可能会因保护其渔网而突然改变航向、加速，需加强瞭望。

4. 3 Fishing vessels may suddenly alter course or increase speed to protect their fishing nets. Enhanced lookout is required.

（四） 外籍船舶在中国沿海与渔船通过 VHF 沟通时，应充分考虑语言问题。

4. 4 Foreign ships communicating with fishing vessels via VHF in the coastal waters of China should fully consider language barriers.