IMO Maritime Safety Committee's 111th Session (MSC 111)

13-22 May 2026

IUMI attended the 111th session of the IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111), held from 13 to 22 May 2026. Among the various items on the agenda, IUMI paid particular attention to the following:

Non-mandatory International Code of Safety for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS Code)

The Committee finalised the new non-mandatory International Code of Safety for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS Code) to support the safe integration of AI-enabled and remotely operated commercial ships into global shipping. IUMI, represented by Cristina Guerrero, participated in the MASS Working Group which completed several remaining issues.

The purpose of the Code is to provide an international regulatory framework to address autonomous or remote operation of key functions and systems, and ensure safe, secure, and environmentally sound operation of Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships. It further aims to support the adoption and integration of new technology for ship operations, and provide a consistent approach to the design, build and operation of MASS.

The Code applies to cargo ships that fall under SOLAS Chapter I (ships engaged on international voyages) and will take effect from 1 July 2026. As it is a non-mandatory instrument, Member States are given the opportunity to test its use while paving the way for making it mandatory under the SOLAS Convention in 2032.

The MASS Code is structured around three parts. The first is an introduction covering the code's purpose, scope, structure and definitions.

The second and most substantial part establishes the principles applying to all MASS. It covers surveys and certification, including a new MASS Safety Certificate and ROC Certificate. System design and software are each given dedicated chapters addressing safety, redundancy, cybersecurity, transparency and accountability. Further chapters cover the Safety Management System, maritime security, alert management, manning and watchkeeping, and maintenance.

The third part is goal based and sets functional requirements for nine specific operational areas: safety of navigation, connectivity, remote operations, structural integrity, fire protection, search and rescue, carriage of cargoes, anchoring and mooring, and machinery

and electrical installations. The code is completed by an appendix with certificate formats, an approval process framework, and a Concept of Operations framework.

As regards next steps, the Committee agreed the following:

- For the 112th session of the MSC in December 2026, re-establish the MASS Working Group to develop a framework for an Experience-Building Phase (EBP) of the non-mandatory MASS Code.
- From 2028, begin developing a mandatory MASS Code, drawing on the non-mandatory Code, the results of the EBP, and reviews conducted by the relevant sub-committees. This work will also include consideration of SOLAS amendments required for the Code's adoption.
- By July 2030, adopt the mandatory MASS Code, with entry into force on 1 January 2032.

Guidelines for ships using alternative fuels

Work was also carried out in parallel in the field of alternative fuels. Although IUMI was unable to attend the meetings of the working group, which ran in parallel with those of the MASS Code, the Committee reported that work continued on the safety regulatory framework for ships using new technologies and alternative fuels. Two new sets of interim guidelines were approved covering the safety of ships using hydrogen and ammonia as fuel.

Interim guidelines were also approved for training seafarers on ships using alternative fuels and technologies, reflecting the need to develop new competencies while addressing the specific risks of each fuel type. These cover training for seafarers on ships using methyl/ethyl alcohol and ammonia as fuel.

As part of the discussions it was also clarified how the “one ship, one code” principle applies to gas carriers using alternative fuels, including whether the International Code of Safety for Ships Using Gases or Other Low-Flashpoint Fuels (IGF Code) or the International Code for the Construction and Equipment of Ships Carrying Liquefied Gases in Bulk (IGC Code) should apply, improving consistency and clarity in the regulatory framework.