

TRANSSC 52

June 2026

INTERVENTION BY THE IMO

(T6.1)

Outcome of the 12th session of the Sub-Committee on Ship Design and Equipment (SDC) in January 2026 and the 111th session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) in May 2026.

1. Revision of the Nuclear Code and SOLAS Chapter VIII

The revision of the **Code of Safety for Nuclear Merchant Ships (1981 Nuclear Code)** and **SOLAS chapter VIII** is being handled as part of the broader work on a safety regulatory framework for alternative fuels and new technologies (GHG Safety).

- **Work Plan and Prioritization:** MSC 111 endorsed the work plan developed by SDC 12, which schedules and established a **Correspondence Group on GHG Safety** to progress the ongoing scoping of this revision.
- **Security Scope:** During MSC 111, there was a proposal to expand the scope of the Nuclear Code revision to include security risks such as **sabotage, terrorism, and cyberattacks**. The Committee has invited further input on this matter for its next session (MSC 112) and instructed the SDC Correspondence Group to take these discussions into account during its scoping work.
- **Civil Liability:** SDC 12 noted that non-safety matters, such as **civil liability for nuclear damage**, fall under the purview of other governing bodies (e.g. LEG and FAL Committees). MSC 111 has formally invited those bodies to consider these aspects.
- **Need for Modernization:** Nuclear Code revision should consider current technology and existing regulatory guidance.
- **Goal Based approach** The revision of the Nuclear Code is intended to adopt a **goal-based and technology-neutral approach**. Rather than prescribing specific technologies or solutions, the updated Code would focus on defining safety objectives and requirements, allowing flexibility to accommodate future technological developments.
 - **Alignment with GBS Guidelines:** The revision is expected to follow the **Generic guidelines for developing IMO goal-based standards** (MSC.1/Circ.1394/Rev.2). SDC 12 emphasized that any shift toward purely prescriptive regulations would require a robust rationale, as the Committee's call was for a framework that is technology-agnostic.
 - **Complementary Nature of Standards:** During discussions at SDC 12, it was noted that **goal-based and prescriptive requirements are not mutually exclusive**. While the framework starts by identifying high-level goals and functional requirements, it allows for more detailed prescriptive requirements or performance.
- **Safety and Risk Considerations:** While some delegations initially argued for retaining a prescriptive formulation due to the high-risk nature of nuclear reactors and the specialized requirements involved, the consensus leaned toward a technology-neutral approach to accommodate various developing reactor technologies.
- **Work Plan Timeline:** The finalization of the revised Nuclear Code and associated amendments to SOLAS chapter VIII is expected to be finalized in **2030** (SDC 16).

2. Proposal on Floating Nuclear Power Plants (FNPPs)

The **Maritime Safety Committee** considered (May 2026) a new proposal presented by a Member State (The Russian Federation) to develop non-mandatory safety guidelines for non-self-propelled FNPPs (also referred to as FPU).

- **Outcome of the Proposal:** After noting the arguments by some Member States that it would be premature to initiate this work before the IAEA has finalized its own standards for reactor safety, security, and safeguards for such units, the MSC could not agree to the proposal at this stage.
- **Future Action:** The IMO Secretariat has been requested to liaise with the IAEA on their ongoing work regarding FNPPs and report back to future sessions of the Committee. Member States were invited to submit new proposals in the future once relevant developments in the IAEA framework have occurred.

3. IMO/IAEA Cooperation and Working Arrangements

- **SDC 12** considered the possibility to establish an **IMO/IAEA Joint Working Group (JWG)** but decided not to recommend its creation at this time. Instead, the Subcommittee expressed a preference for progressing the work through existing mechanisms, including **IAEA's expertise participation** in IMO meetings and correspondence groups. While the establishment of a JWG has not been ruled out for the future, it was considered that the work currently underway would be more effectively progressed through these flexible arrangements, with IAEA input continuing to be provided through established channels.
- **IAEA "Safeguards" Terminology:** There have been discussions regarding the use of the term "safeguards." The Russian Federation suggested removing references to IAEA "safeguards" from IMO documents to avoid confusion with non-proliferation controls, while other delegations argued the term should be retained where it refers to maritime applications of nuclear technology.

General Message

The IMO should continuously emphasize is one of **coordinated progression and cooperation with IAEA**.

Regarding the ongoing work on the Nuclear Code, **IAEA may consider taking the lead on nuclear-specific safety and security standards**, while the IMO focuses on **maritime safety and marine environment protection**.

FPU/FNPP proposal

The rejection of the FPU/FNPP proposal was specifically due to **the Committee's preference to be cautious** and monitor that the IAEA framework on these matter matures first in view to ensure regulatory alignment.

The **IMO's request its Secretariat to maintain active liaison with the IAEA** to ensure these two regulatory streams remain complementary.