GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF MARITIME AFFAIRS
(PORTS & SHIPPING WING)
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No. 3(3)/2021-CNS Karachi, 19Th November, 2026.

MERCHANT SHIPPING NOTICE

Circular No. 004/2026

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Notice to All Pakistani Flag Shipowners, Ship Managers and Operators, Recognized Organizations authorized by the Government of Pakistan, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation and other concerned shipping companies, Karachi Port Trust, Port Qasim Authority, Gwadar Port Authority and other relevant port / terminal operators,Shipping Agents, Cargo Interests, Grain Shippers and Cargo Surveyors, Maritime Training Institutes in Public and Private sector.

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Subject: IMPLEMENTATION OF AMENDMENTS TO THE INTERNATIONAL CODE FOR THE SAFE CARRIAGE OF GRAIN IN BULK (INTERNATIONAL GRAIN CODE) – RESOLUTION MSC.552(108), EFFECTIVE FROM 01 JANUARY 2026

1. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

1.1. The purpose of this Circular is to bring to the attention of all concerned the amendments to the International Code for the Safe Carriage of Grain in Bulk (hereinafter referred to as the "International Grain Code" or "the Code"), adopted by the IMO Maritime Safety Committee through Resolution MSC.552(108) on 23 May 2024 and which entered into force internationally on 01 January 2026.

1.2. The International Grain Code was originally adopted by Resolution MSC.23(59) and has been mandatory under SOLAS Chapter VI since 01 January 1994. In accordance with SOLAS Chapter VI, Part C, ships carrying grain in bulk shall comply with the Code. The Code applies to ships, irrespective of size, engaged in the carriage of grain in bulk to which Part C of SOLAS Chapter VI applies.

1.3. For the purposes of the Code, "grain" includes wheat, maize (corn), oats, rye, barley, rice, pulses, seeds and processed forms thereof whose behaviour is similar to that of grain in its natural state.

2. SUMMARY OF THE 2026 AMENDMENTS

2.1. Resolution MSC.552(108) introduces a new definition in Part A, paragraph 2.8, namely "specially suitable compartment, partly filled in way of the hatch opening, with ends untrimmed". The amendment also inserts a new paragraph A 10.4 dealing with the

stowage of bulk grain in such a compartment and makes consequential amendments and renumbering in Parts A and B of the Code.

2.2. The new loading condition is intended for a compartment which already qualifies as a "specially suitable compartment" under Part A, paragraph 2.7. It is not a general relaxation for ordinary cargo holds, nor does it dispense with the approved grain stability calculations, grain fittings, securing arrangements or other requirements of the Code.

2.3. The revised Code and the January 2026 Supplement shall be read together with the 1991 Edition of the International Grain Code. Shipowners, operators, Masters and ROs shall ensure that the current amended text is available and applied.

3. SUITABILITY OF COMPARTMENTS FOR CARRIAGE OF GRAIN

3.1. A cargo compartment proposed for the carriage of grain in bulk shall be suitable for the intended loading condition and shall be assessed in accordance with the ship's approved grain loading manual, the Document of Authorization for the Carriage of Grain and the International Grain Code.

3.2. Under Part A, paragraph 2.7, a "specially suitable compartment" is a cargo space constructed with at least two vertical or sloping, longitudinal, grain-tight divisions which coincide with the hatch side girders or are positioned so as to limit the effect of any transverse shift of grain. Where such divisions are sloping, their inclination shall be not less than 30 degrees to the horizontal.

3.3. Accordingly, a hold shall not be treated as a specially suitable compartment merely because it is a conventional cargo hold, has a narrow hatch, or is fitted with ordinary shifting boards. The existence, location, grain-tightness, strength and approved arrangement of the required longitudinal divisions shall be verified against the ship's approved plans and documentation.

3.4. The Code recognizes different loading conditions, including: (a) filled compartment, trimmed; (b) filled compartment, untrimmed; (c) partly filled compartment; and, from 01 January 2026, (d) specially suitable compartment, partly filled in way of the hatch opening, with ends untrimmed. The applicable condition shall be expressly identified and correctly represented in the ship's approved grain loading information and stability calculations.

3.5. The new 2026 condition may only be used where the compartment meets the definition of a specially suitable compartment under Part A, paragraph 2.7, and the loading arrangement complies fully with Part A, paragraph 10.4, and the relevant Part B assumptions.

4. REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NEW LOADING CONDITION – PARTLY FILLED IN WAY OF THE HATCH OPENING, WITH ENDS UNTRIMMED

4.1. In accordance with the new Part A, paragraph 2.8, the compartment shall not be filled to the maximum extent possible in way of the hatch opening, but the grain shall be filled to a level equal with or above the bottom edge of the hatch end beams. The grain outside the periphery of the hatch opening may remain at its natural angle of repose, without trimming the forward and aft ends, in accordance with paragraph A 10.4.

4.2. Part A, paragraph 10.4, provides that in such a specially suitable compartment the bulk grain shall be filled to a level equal with or above the bottom edge of the hatch end beams but may be at its natural angle of repose outside the periphery of the hatch opening. A compartment may qualify for this classification if it is specially suitable as defined in A 2.7, in which case dispensation may be granted from trimming the ends of that compartment.

4.3. The dispensation is limited to trimming the ends in the specific qualifying arrangement. It shall not be interpreted as permission to leave the grain surface in the way of the hatch opening uneven. Following completion of loading, the free grain surface in way of the hatch opening shall be level.

4.4. As amended, Part A, paragraph 10.7, requires all free grain surfaces in partly filled compartments to be level after loading, except where the compartment is loaded in accordance with A 10.4. In the latter case, only the free grain surface in the way of the hatch opening is required to be level.

4.5. The Master and Chief Officer shall verify the actual grain level against the bottom edge of the hatch end beams, confirm the compartment's qualifying structural arrangement and ensure that the loading method and final surface condition correspond to the approved loading condition. Any deviation shall be referred to the ship's Administration / authorized RO before sailing.

5. STABILITY CALCULATIONS AND GRAIN SHIFT

5.1. The introduction of the new loading condition does not reduce or remove the ship's obligation to demonstrate compliance with the intact stability criteria in Part A, section 7 of the International Grain Code, throughout the voyage, taking account of the assumed heeling moments due to grain shift.

5.2. The amended Part B, paragraph 1.1.5, provides the assumed grain-surface geometry for the new condition. Where the compartment is exempted from trimming under A 10.4, the grain surface after loading is assumed to slope in all directions away from the filling area at an angle of 30 degrees from the lower edge of the hatch end beam. Where feeding holes are provided in the hatch end beams in accordance with the relevant table and the free grain surface in way of the hatch opening is above the level of those feeding holes, the specified 30-degree assumption is taken from the line on the hatch end beam representing the mean of the peaks and valleys of the actual grain surface, as illustrated in the Code.

5.3. Amended Part B, paragraph 1.5, requires that in partly filled compartments and in the new specially suitable partly filled condition, the adverse effect of the vertical shift of grain surfaces shall be taken into account by applying: Total heeling moment = 1.12 × calculated transverse heeling moment.

5.4. The new Part B, section 4, paragraph 4.2, further specifies that, for the new condition, the resulting grain surface in way of the hatch opening and the resulting grain surface in the ends, forward and aft of the hatchway, after shifting, shall be assumed to be at an angle of 25 degrees to the horizontal.

5.5. The above assumptions are technical inputs to the approved grain stability calculations. Masters and shipboard personnel shall not substitute estimates, generic loading

computer settings or calculations prepared for a different loading condition. The actual compartment, cargo quantity, stowage factor, loading distribution, grain fittings and voyage conditions shall be represented in the approved calculations.

5.6. The principal grain stability criteria in Part A, paragraph 7.1 include: (a) the angle of heel due to grain shift not exceeding 12 degrees or, for ships constructed on or after 01 January 1994, the angle at which the deck edge is immersed, whichever is less; (b) the residual area in the righting-lever / heeling-arm diagram not less than 0.075 metre-radians up to the limiting angle specified in the Code; and (c) corrected initial metacentric height not less than 0.30 metres. The full wording, qualifications and calculation method in the Code shall be applied.

5.7. After loading, the Master shall ensure that the ship is upright before proceeding to sea, as required by Part A, paragraph 7.3. Departure and arrival conditions, intermediate conditions, ballast and consumables, free surface effects and the worst service condition shall be checked as required by the approved grain loading manual.

6. DOCUMENTATION, APPROVALS AND ONBOARD REQUIREMENTS

6.1. Every ship loaded in accordance with the International Grain Code shall hold a valid Document of Authorization for the Carriage of Grain issued by the Administration or an organization recognized by it, in accordance with Part A, section 3. The Document of Authorization shall accompany or be incorporated into the grain loading manual.

6.2. The ship shall carry on board the Document of Authorization, the approved grain loading stability data and associated plans, together with the grain loading manual and the current applicable text of the International Grain Code. These documents shall be readily available for inspection by the competent authority.

6.3. Shipowners and operators intending to use the new loading condition shall arrange for the grain loading manual/stability booklet and associated compartment plans, loading tables, assumed volumetric heeling moments and worked examples to be reviewed and, where necessary, revised and approved by the Administration or its authorized RO before the condition is used.

6.4. Where a grain loading computer or software is used, the owner shall ensure that its algorithms, input data, loading-condition definitions and output calculations correctly incorporate the amended Code. Any required software modification, validation and approval shall be completed by the Administration / authorized RO. A software update alone shall not be treated as approval of a new loading condition.

6.5. Where the ship does not hold a Document of Authorization, SOLAS Chapter VI, Regulation 9.2 and Part A, paragraph 3.5 of the Code shall be complied with. Grain shall not be loaded unless the Master demonstrates to the satisfaction of the Administration, or the Contracting Government of the port of loading acting on its behalf, that the ship in the proposed loaded condition will comply with the Code. This provision is not an automatic exemption from the Code.

6.6. Any structural modification, installation or alteration of longitudinal divisions, shifting boards, feeders, hatch arrangements or other grain fittings shall be subject to the applicable approval, strength and grain-tightness requirements. The strength of grain fittings shall comply with Part A, section 11 and other relevant provisions of the Code.

7. CARGO INFORMATION, LOADING OPERATIONS AND TERMINAL COORDINATION

7.1. Before loading, the shipper shall provide the Master with the cargo information required by SOLAS Chapter VI, Regulation 2, in sufficient time to enable the necessary precautions for proper stowage and safe carriage. Such information shall include the cargo's description, quantity, stowage factor and other particulars necessary for the ship's safe loading and stability assessment.

7.2. The Master shall ensure that the cargo information is checked against the ship's approved grain loading manual and the intended loading plan. The intended loading condition shall be agreed and clearly communicated to the terminal, loading facility, shipper, agent and surveyor before commencement of loading.

7.3. Loading and unloading operations on bulk carriers shall be planned and conducted with due regard to the BLU Code and BLU Manual, where applicable, the ship/shore safety checklist, the agreed loading sequence, permissible loading rates, loading instrument limitations, hull girder strength, local loading limits and the ship's approved loading plan.

7.4. The Master shall retain overall responsibility for the safety of the ship. Loading shall be stopped if the actual distribution, level or quantity of grain departs from the agreed plan, if the ship's stability or structural limits may be exceeded, or if the terminal cannot maintain the agreed sequence and rate. Loading shall resume only after the discrepancy has been resolved and the plan revalidated.

7.5. The ship's records should identify the compartments used, the loading condition applied, cargo quantity and stowage factor, final grain levels, relevant survey / measurement records, stability calculations and any approval or authorization relied upon.

8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SHIPOWNERS, MASTERS, ROs AND PORT / TERMINAL AUTHORITIES

8.1. Shipowners and managers shall circulate this Circular to their ships, update their SMS procedures and ensure that Masters and deck officers responsible for cargo planning are familiar with the 2026 amendments.

8.2. Masters shall verify the ship's authorization and approved documentation, confirm the suitability of the selected compartments, ensure that the correct loading condition is used and retain evidence that the actual loading operation complies with the approved plan.

8.3. Recognized Organizations shall, within the scope of their authorization, review relevant grain loading manuals, stability data, compartment arrangements and loading computer updates when submitted for approval, and shall ensure that any approval issued accurately reflects the amended Code.

8.4. Port and terminal authorities, loading facilities, shippers, agents and cargo surveyors are requested to coordinate with the Master to ensure that the loading sequence, cargo information, loading rate, quantity and final grain surface are consistent with the approved loading plan.

8.5. DG (P&S) / MMD surveyors may verify compliance during relevant surveys, inspections or port State control activities, including the availability of the Document of Authorization,

grain loading manual, approved stability information and evidence that the intended loading condition is authorized.

9. ACTION REQUIRED AND COMPLIANCE

9.1. All Pakistani-flagged ships engaged in the carriage of grain in bulk shall comply with the International Grain Code as amended by Resolution MSC.552(108), effective from 01 January 2026.

9.2. Shipowners and operators shall review their fleet documentation and confirm whether any ship intends to use the new specially suitable, partly filled loading condition. Where it is intended to be used, the required approval of the revised grain loading documentation and any associated loading computer arrangements shall be obtained before loading.

9.3. No ship shall claim the benefit of the new untrimmed-end loading condition unless the compartment satisfies the Code's definition of "specially suitable compartment", the loading condition is covered by approved ship-specific stability information, and the requirements of Part A, paragraph 10.4 and Part B are met.

9.4. Any doubt regarding the applicability of the amended provisions, the suitability of a compartment or the approval status of ship-specific loading information shall be referred to DG(P&S) / the Administration through the recognized channels before commencement of loading.

10. IMPLEMENTATION

10.1. This Circular shall be brought to the notice of all concerned for strict compliance. It shall be read in conjunction with SOLAS 1974, as amended, the International Grain Code, 1991 Edition, as amended, and all other applicable statutory instruments.

10.2. The requirements of the International Grain Code and the amendments adopted by Resolution MSC.552(108) are mandatory from 01 January 2026. This Circular is issued to facilitate uniform implementation and does not waive, replace or modify any requirement of SOLAS or the Code.

This Circular is issued with the Approval of the Competent Authority.



Capt. Rafaqat Hussain
Chief Nautical Surveyor
Directorate General Ports & Shipping Wing Karachi
Ministry of Maritime Affairs

Distribution:

1. The Director General, Ports & Shipping Wing, Karachi.
2. The Principal Officer, Mercantile Marine Department, Karachi.

3. The Chief Engineering & Ship Surveyor, (CESS)
4. Recognized Organizations authorized by the Administration.
5. The Chairman, Karachi Port Trust
6. Chairman Port Qasim Authority
7. Chairman Gwadar Port Authority.
8. The Chairman, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC), Karachi.
9. All Public and Private Maritime Training Institutes.