

4 ALBERT EMBANKMENT  
LONDON SE1 7SR  
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7735 7611 Fax: +44 (0)20 7587 3210

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**GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF THE UN/LOCODE  
IN THE DESTINATION FIELD IN AIS MESSAGES**

- 1 The Sub-Committee on Safety of Navigation (NAV), at its fiftieth session (5 to 9 July 2004), agreed on a Guidance on the use of the UN/LOCODE in the destination field in AIS messages.
- 2 The Maritime Safety Committee, at its seventy-ninth session (1 to 10 December 2004), concurred with the Sub-Committee's view and approved the annexed Guidance and encouraged the use of the UN/LOCODE.
- 3 Recently, the Secretariat has been informed by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe that the URL for the relevant information on their website has been changed. Therefore, a revision of this circular is needed to correct the URL at the bottom of page 1 of the annex.
- 4 Member States are invited to bring this information to the attention of Vessel Traffic Services and masters of their ships and recommend them to use the UN/LOCODE.
- 5 This circular revokes SN/Circ.244.

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## ANNEX

### GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF THE UN/LOCODE IN THE DESTINATION FIELD IN AIS MESSAGES

1 The Automatic Identification System (AIS) is a working system for ship identification and tracking that has the capability to transfer predefined messages to other ships and shore stations. One such message includes a text field designated for destination.

2 The mariner is able to enter the ship's destination into the AIS at the start of each voyage, and to keep this information updated. Evidence shows that mariners are using different names for the same location when entering destination data in their AIS units. This situation leads to confusion and inefficiency in data interchange. Therefore, there is a need to harmonize data input when entering port information, by adopting an available universal protocol.

3 The AIS field for the destination allows for "free text" of up to 20 characters. This results in numerous variations in the spelling of the same port, making it difficult for other ships and shore authorities to identify the port uniquely. Also the use of the data in information systems is difficult or impossible without considerable manual effort.

4 It is recommended to use the existing destination field for entering both the port of departure and the next port of call (space for 20 characters of 6 bit ASCII is available), using the UN/LOCODE.

#### The UN/LOCODE

5 The UN Economic Commission for Europe's Recommendation 16, entitled, *UN/LOCODE – CODES FOR PORTS AND OTHER LOCATIONS* states, inter alia:

*The identification of a particular location is frequently required in information interchange in international trade and transport, to direct the movement of goods e.g. in addresses, in shipping marks and in data elements identifying ports of call, ports or places of loading and unloading, ports or places of transshipment and destination, etc.*

*The names of such locations are often spelled in different ways and sometimes the same location is given different names in different languages (e.g. LIVORNO – LIBOURNE – LEGHORN-LONDON-LONDRES-LONDRA-WARSAW-VARSOVIE-WARSZAWA), which creates confusion and difficulties in data interchange. The identification in a unique unambiguous way of any place involved in international trade is therefore an essential element for facilitation of trade procedures and documentation. This can be achieved using agreed, unique coded designations for such locations; this would have the added advantage of permitting the exchange of data in a safer and more economic way.*

Full information can be found at the UNECE website: <http://www.unece.org/cefact/locode/welcome.html>.

### Recommended use of the UN/LOCODE

6 The recommended format is to indicate the port of departure at the first six positions of the data field followed by a separator and then the code for the next port of call.

7 In order to identify that it is a LOCODE, to separate the locations and to indicate the "from" and "to" ports, a ">" symbol should be used as a separator. See example below.

A ship is leaving Dubai bound for Rotterdam. Use of the UN/LOCODE would represent this voyage as below:

"AE DXB>NL RTM"

8 If the next port of call is unknown, "?? ???" should be entered instead of the UN/LOCODE in the corresponding place in the data field. See example below:

"AE DXB>?? ???"

9 If the port of departure does not have a designated UN/LOCODE, then "XX XXX" should be entered instead of the UN/LOCODE in the corresponding place in the data field. See example below.

"XX XXX>US PBI"

10 If the next port of call does not have a designated UN/LOCODE, the commonly accepted English name of the destination port should be entered, preceded by "===" (3 "equals signs"). , If no such name is known, the locally used name should be entered. , In this case, there may not be enough space available to indicate the port of departure. , See example below:

"===Orrviken"

11 If only the general area of destination is known, the name or accepted abbreviation of the area preceded by "===" ("three equals signs") should be entered. , See example below:

"NL RMT> === US WC"

Indicating a destination on the United States West Coast.