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'I/A' ITEM NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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Subject: Draft COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION on safety goals and non-binding functional requirements for passenger ships below 24 meters in length

- Adoption
- *Statement by Ireland*

Delegations will find attached a statement by Ireland to the minutes of the Permanent Representatives Committee and of the Council.

Statement by Ireland

Proposal for a Council Recommendation on safety goals and functional requirements for passenger ships below 24 meters in length

Ireland has consistently raised safety concerns regarding the current proposal for a Recommendation on safety goals and functional requirements for passenger ships below 24 meters in length. Ireland has actively engaged in the work on this Recommendation at the expert level and at the Shipping Working Party seeking to improve the proposed safety levels. We welcome that some of our comments have been included. However, some of our more substantive comments on safety have not been included. In particular, Ireland considers that the safety levels as currently outlined in the Recommendation and its Annex are very low and much lower than those which currently apply in Ireland and at the EU and international level.

Small passenger ship safety is a key national safety issue for Ireland as vessels operating off our coast are operating in some of the most hostile marine environments in the world with severe weather and exposed coast lines. It is the view of Ireland that the proposed safety levels in the Recommendation are too low and would expose EU citizens to unacceptable transport safety risks. On this basis, Ireland considers that there should be a binding standard for passenger ship safety in the EU and that a Recommendation is not a suitable means to achieve passenger safety. Furthermore, Ireland has consistently recommended that the standard of the vessel should be separated from the operation of the vessel. This means that while there would be a binding EU standard for the vessels that the operational issues and plying limits would be regulated by the port state and host state at member state level. This is because the Member State is best placed to assess these using local knowledge of routes, weather and harbours. Additionally, Ireland has raised concerns regarding the verification and implementation measures. As passenger ships are required to be registered and subject to flag state, port state and host state control, it is essential to the safety of such vessels that such controls continue.

Ireland welcomes that further studies in this area will be carried out and we will actively engage with these. However, Ireland considers that the safety levels to be achieved in these studies for passenger carriage in the EU should not be reduced or diluted in any manner and that the safety levels to be achieved should be in-line with the existing passenger ship safety standards at EU and international and national level.
