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CIRCULAR

## Sierra Leone – Inspections outside of the Ship's bottom

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Notice to: Ship Owners / Managers / Operators / Surveyors

The Sierra Leone Maritime Administration (SLMARAD) has issued [Maritime Circular No. 13](#), which entered into force on 24 March 2026 and outlines the procedure and the requirements for extension of the inspection of the outside of the ship's bottom of Sierra Leone Cargo Ships of 500 GT and above.

### Points to Note:

There should be a minimum of two inspections of the outside of the ship's bottom during any five-year period, except where SOLAS 74/88 Regulation I/14(e) or (f) is applicable:

- One such inspection should be carried out on or after the fourth annual survey in conjunction with the renewal of the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate or the Cargo Ship Safety Certificate.
- Where the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate or the Cargo Ship Safety Certificate has been extended under SOLAS 74/88, Regulation I/14(e) or (f), this five-year period may be extended to coincide with the validity of the certificate.
- In all cases, the interval between any two such inspections should not exceed 36 months.

The inspection of the outside of the ship's bottom and the survey of related items should include an inspection to ensure that they are in a satisfactory condition and fit for the service for which the ship is intended.

Inspections of the outside of the ship's bottom should normally be carried out with the ship in dry dock. Consideration may be given to conducting alternative inspections with the ship afloat.

- Special consideration should be given before permitting ships of 15 years of age and over, other than bulk carriers and oil tankers, to undergo such surveys afloat.
- Inspections with the ship afloat, for bulk carriers and oil tankers of 15 years of age and over, should only be carried out when conditions are satisfactory, and proper equipment and suitably trained staff are available. In such cases, the responsible RO and/or Classification Society is to inform SLMARAD of the shipowner's intention to proceed with an alternative inspection of the outside of the ship's bottom and obtain written approval at least 15 days before the inspection.

Ships subject to enhanced survey:

- The provisions of paragraph 2.2.22 of the applicable part of annex A or B of the International Code on the Enhanced Programme of Inspections during Surveys of Bulk Carriers and Oil Tankers, 2011 (2011 ESP Code), as amended, apply.

Where an inspection of the ship's bottom has not been carried out before the due dates, reference should be made to paragraph 5.6 of the IMO Resolution A.1207 (34).

Extending the period of inspection of the outside of the bottom of cargo ships:

- As per SOLAS 74 as amended, it is permitted for a five-year period during which two inspections of the ship's bottom were carried out, to get an extension of not more than three (3) months when the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate or the Cargo Ship Safety Certificate is extended under regulation I/14 (e) and (f). This extension should be permitted within a period of 36 months between any two such inspections.
- For SLMARAD to grant extension between inspections of the outside of the ship's bottom, the RO issuing the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate or the Cargo Ship Safety Certificate must submit:
  - 1) Formal letter from the Ship Owner(s) and/or Management Company addressed to Sierra Leone International Maritime Administration requesting the extension of the inspection of the outside of the ship's bottom and clarifying the reasons that such inspection cannot be carried out at the due time.
  - 2) Confirmation from the Dock Yard that an inspection of the outside ship's bottom is scheduled no later than the extended date.
  - 3) An underwater survey report, carried out in the presence of the RO, including approval of the diving company by the RO or by an Organization approved by the Flag State Administration.
  - 4) Statement from the RO confirming acceptance of the dry dock extension, based on the evaluation of the underwater survey report.
  - 5) An updated Survey Status Report of the vessel, clearly indicating the previous dry dock survey and the upcoming intermediate or renewal survey on the vessel.
  - 6) SLMARAD Application form "TE-DOC-24 - Application for Extension of Bottom Survey, Special Survey or Statutory Certificates" duly filled and signed by RO.
  - 7) Copy of the current Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate or Cargo Ship Safety Certificate.
- SLMARAD will evaluate each application and grant authorization for the extension of the outside of the ship's bottom inspection in accordance with the relevant regulation or article. SLMARAD will not grant more than three (3) months dry-dock extension. In exceptional cases where a vessel requires further extension, the documents must be resubmitted for re-evaluation by SLMARAD.

A certificate ceases to be valid if the periodical, intermediate or annual survey, as appropriate, or the inspection of the outside of the ship's bottom is not completed within the period specified in the relevant regulation or article.

- The validity of the certificate should be restored by carrying out the appropriate survey, which should consist of the requirements of the survey that was not carried out, but its thoroughness and stringency should have regard to the time this survey was allowed to lapse.
- SLMARAD will ascertain why the survey was allowed to lapse and consider further action, if necessary.

Any unscheduled dry-docking survey for emergency repairs will not be credited by SLMARAD as an inspection of the outside of the ship's bottom as per SOLAS 74/78 Regulation I/10(a) (v). SLMARAD may only credit such a bottom survey in case the RO issuing the Cargo Ship Safety Construction Certificate or the Cargo Ship Safety Certificate, ascertains that the repairs and survey were equivalent to the requirements of such an inspection of International Standards and the Requirements of the RO.

#### Act now

Ship Owners/Managers/Operators/Surveyors are to take note of the contents of Marine Circular No.13 and be guided accordingly.