The Committee will recall that, at its eighty-third session (MSC 83/28, paragraphs 17.9 to 17.10), following consideration of document MSC 83/17/2 on the progress of the implementation of the various phases of the IMO and INTERFERRY pilot programme and efforts towards enhancing the safety of domestic ferries in Bangladesh, noted that following the signing of the MoU and conducting the needs assessment mission, the two Organizations had carried out a detailed research-based analysis of the problems prior to the establishment of a Working Group in the pilot country. It also noted that under phase 4, the Working Group was established and its first meeting was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh from 18 to 20 December 2006, at which various stakeholders and experts participated. A number of recommendations were made by the Working Group on critical issues involving the safety of domestic ferries for incorporation into the pilot project.

2 The Committee (MSC 83/28, paragraphs 17.11 and 17.13) noting further that both Organizations were working on phase 5 of the plan on resource mobilization of funds for the project, and that the pilot project was under preparation and would be launched once funds from donors had been committed, urged Governments and the industry to contribute to the IMO’s technical co-operation programmes and requested the Secretariat to continue providing the Committee with updated information.
3 The Committee may wish to note the following progress made in the development and implementation of activities relating to the pilot project on enhancing the safety of domestic ferries since its eighty-third meeting.

Changes to existing regulations

4 An IMO needs assessment mission, funded by the United Kingdom, was carried out in Bangladesh from 12 to 18 December 2007 to evaluate the status of implementation of existing national regulations within the industry and the maritime Administration. During the course of the mission, a workshop was conducted to discuss with stakeholders the shortcomings in the implementation of the existing regulations. The meeting proposed recommended changes to the existing national regulations, to improve the control and monitoring mechanisms and to conduct the training of maritime administrators, marine surveyors, inspectors, managers and operators of ferries and other personnel involved in the operation of ferries. The recommended modifications to the existing regulations were agreed and will be effected by the Government accordingly.

Establishment of a National Database

5 The Working Group meeting held in Bangladesh in December 2006 also recognized that one of the problems facing the maritime Administration of Bangladesh was the use of the manual data recording system covering a domestic shipping fleet of some 70,000 vessels of which about 8,000 are engaged in carrying passengers. The meeting noted that the lack of a proper mechanism for monitoring the safety standards of these vessels makes them susceptible to accidents. The Working Group agreed that, in order to address these problems, it was necessary to improve the monitoring of vessel safety standards by establishing an electronic national database for the management of the domestic fleet, which will further enhance the records on registration, surveys and certification. The establishment of this database is currently progressing through funding provided by the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Preparation of training materials

6 The preparation of training and awareness materials in the national language (Bengali) and English will enhance the education and training of ferry operators, crew and other stakeholders, including ferry builders as well as passengers, in the safe operation and use of domestic ferries. To assist in the process, a Letter of Agreement had been signed between IMO and Videotel Marine International. An assessment mission, funded by Videotel, has been planned to Bangladesh in March 2008 to gather salient information and materials for the preparation of the training modules dealing with site-specific aspects of ferry safety and development of other generic safety modules which may be necessary.

Meteorological and hydrological phenomena

7 This activity is aimed at the preparation of a guidance document for the maritime Administration, ferry operators and crew with regard to the meteorological phenomena peculiar to the country and its surroundings, focusing on their effect on domestic ferry safety. Under the fund provided by the United States National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), their experts will visit Bangladesh between June and July 2008 to assist the meteorological department of Bangladesh to develop and deliver a user-friendly alert system on hazardous weather for masters and operators of ferries.

Action requested of the Committee

8 The Committee is invited to note the above information and take action as appropriate.