

OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT POLICY & REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR SEAFARERS

Comprehensive Guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), Rights, and Legal Provisions for Machine-Readable Seafarer Identity Document (MR-SID) Holders

Issued By: Government Shipping Office (GSO), Ministry of Maritime Affairs

Technical Authority: National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA)

Compliance Framework: ILO Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003 (No. 185)

Document Status: Active Regulatory Policy and Consolidated Operating Procedure

1. Statutory Authorization & Regulatory Foundation

This document establishes the official regulatory guidelines and operating frameworks governing the issuance, validation, privileges, and legal protocols for Machine-Readable Seafarer Identity Document (MR-SID) holders in Pakistan. This policy is administered under the statutory powers of the Merchant Shipping Ordinance and in strict compliance with the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention C-185.

2. Core Policy Clauses & Compliance Points

The governance framework for all active and certified SID holders is defined by the following essential points and operational rules:

- 01. Statutory Entitlement:** Every citizen who holds a valid Seaman Service Book (SSB) or Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC) and is qualified under national laws is entitled to apply for and hold an MR-SID.
- 02. Joint Institutional Execution:** The policy mandates a strict dual-agency structure: the Government Shipping Office (GSO) provides legal authorization, while the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) manages biometric production.
- 03. Verification Mandatory for Sign-On:** It is a core requirement that all maritime professionals obtain and verify their MR-SID before signing official Articles of Agreement to join any commercial vessel.
- 04. Global Biometric Interoperability:** SIDs must utilize global template standards containing biometric fingerprint parameters encoded inside a high-security bi-dimensional barcode readable by foreign port state control systems.
- 05. Explicit Travel Document Limitations:** The SID is legally defined as a stand-alone identity confirmation document. It does not replace a national passport and cannot be used alone for international air travel or border crossings.
- 06. Mandatory Passport Pairing:** When traveling via air or land to transit, repatriate, or join a vessel in a foreign port, the SID must always be accompanied by a valid, active national passport.
- 07. Universal Visa-Free Shore Leave:** Under ILO Convention C-185, all ratifying member states are required to permit valid SID holders visa-free entry for temporary shore leave while their vessel is at berth.
- 08. Transit and Crew Change Clearance:** Border and immigration authorities must expedite the transit, entry, and repatriation procedures for SID holders traveling to or from an assigned vessel.
- 09. Protection of Document Ownership:** The SID belongs solely to the individual seafarer. Employers, shipowners, and crewing agencies are strictly prohibited from confiscating or permanently withholding the card.
- 10. Transferability Across Employers:** Changing shipping lines, vessels, or crewing agencies does not invalidate the document; it remains fully active and valid until its formal date of expiration.
- 11. Fixed Validity and Renewal Terms:** The policy sets a definitive validity period (typically up to 5 or 10 years depending on the current gazetted rules), requiring regular biometric updates upon renewal.
- 12. Physical Data Boundaries:** Permitted visual data elements printed on the document face are legally restricted to full name, sex, date of birth, place of birth, nationality, physical identifying marks, digital photo, and signature.

- 13. Absolute Nationality Restrictions:** The issuance of a national SID is restricted strictly to citizens of the country or documented permanent residents under explicit federal authorization.
- 14. Online Data Sync and Verification:** GSO maintains a centralized, live digital database synchronized directly with NADRA to allow instantaneous credential checks by international immigration and port state controllers.
- 15. Disciplinary Sanctions and Revocation:** The government retains full legal authority to suspend, cancel, or permanently confiscate an SID if the holder violates local laws, maritime codes, or commits document fraud.
- 16. Mandatory Pre-Employment Authorization:** Before approaching NADRA biometric processing desks, applicants must obtain an official clearance letter stamped and approved by the Shipping Master.
- 17. Regulated Pricing Framework:** Application, processing, and biometric generation fees are strictly regulated and fixed by the government to prevent price exploitation of maritime workers.
- 18. Key Worker Status Validation:** The document serves as definitive proof that the bearer is an internationally recognized maritime key worker, granting prioritized passage and medical protection during global emergencies.
- 19. Protection of Seafarer Rights:** The policy provides robust mechanisms to monitor administrative procedures, ensuring that no qualified applicant is denied a card without due process and a legal right of appeal.
- 20. Medical & Eye Examination Pre-requisites:** Issuance is legally contingent upon the seafarer maintaining valid medical and eyesight certifications issued by authorized government medical officers.
- 21. Dispute Resolution Channels:** Any disputes arising over crew placement, document validation, or deployment under the SID system fall under the immediate jurisdiction of the Shipping Master for adjudication.
- 22. Mandatory Bunkering & Manning Alignment:** Shipping corporations and licensed crewing agencies are legally advised and incentivized to prioritize the deployment of crew members holding certified MR-SIDs.

3. Step-by-Step Application Procedure

To ensure operational compliance under the current policy directives, all applicants must execute the following sequential administrative steps:

- 1. Complete the prescribed application form available at the Government Shipping Office (GSO).
- 2. Submit the completed dossier along with an active Seaman Service Book (SSB) and valid medical clearance papers to the Shipping Master.
- 3. Obtain an official Letter of Authorization signed by the GSO authority.
- 4. Present the GSO authorization letter to the designated NADRA Executive Desk (Karachi/Regional Centers).
- 5. Complete the biometric data acquisition process (fingerprint templates, digital photography, and signature capture).
- 6. Remit the official processing fee directly to the authorized banking counter and secure an official tracking receipt.

- 7. Collect the verified Machine-Readable Seafarer Identity Document (MR-SID) draft and card following institutional verification.

4. Institutional Signatures & Authority

Prepared & Verified by:

Technical Authentication by:

Government Shipping Office (GSO)
Ministry of Maritime Affairs

National Database & Registration Authority
NADRA Biometric Division

This consolidated regulatory text serves as an accurate representation of the unified guidelines issued by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, the Government Shipping Office, and NADRA regarding Machine-Readable Seafarer Identity Documents (MR-SID) in full alignment with international ILO C-185 mandates.