



IMO Briefing

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WORLD MARITIME DAY 2009
“Climate change: a challenge for IMO too!”

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IMO and industry review progress on addressing seafarers’ shortage and the scourge of piracy

At the invitation of IMO Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos, a meeting took place on 30 March 2009, at the IMO Headquarters, with the participation of representatives of shipping industry bodies (known collectively as the “Round Table of international shipping associations”, i.e. BIMCO, ICS/ISF, INTERCARGO and INTERTANKO), and of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), to review developments related to:

- the “Go to Sea!” campaign, which they had launched jointly in November 2008 to attract entrants to the shipping industry (*see IMO Briefing 53/2008*); and
- the situation of piracy and armed robbery against ships in waters off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden.

Go to Sea! campaign

The participants welcomed actions taken by parties involved in the campaign to promote its objectives; took note of additional initiatives, which they were currently pursuing with the same goal; and identified several issues to be further addressed collectively and individually. In particular, they:

- agreed that the shortage of seafarers was the biggest issue for shipping and further agreed to intensify their efforts in support of this worthy cause;
- noted that the Round Table was in the process of finalizing a strategic document on industry action to attract, train/educate and retain seafarers;
- agreed that industry should continue its efforts to ensure the provision of berths for cadets so as to enable them to undertake on-the-job training and build up sea-going experience;



- encouraged States to ratify expeditiously the consolidated Maritime Labour Convention, adopted by the International Labour Organization in 2006, with a view to ensuring its earliest possible entry into force;
- expressed concern over the continued and unjustified criminalization of seafarers;
- denounced the unwarranted denial of shore-leave to seafarers; and
- endorsed three objectives associated with the “Go to Sea!” campaign, namely, to achieve:
 - an enhanced, more favourable public perception of the maritime industry, in line with its excellent safety and environmental record, and vital role as the carrier of world trade;
 - greater knowledge among young people of the opportunities offered by a career at sea; and
 - a marked shift in the quality of life at sea by bringing it more closely in line with that available ashore.

Piracy off Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden

The participants welcomed the concerted efforts of the international community, spearheaded by the United Nations, IMO and the industry, to protect shipping from acts of piracy and armed robbery off Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden, noting, with satisfaction, recent decreases in the number of successful piracy attacks resulting in hijackings and hostage takings. Reasons given included intense international activity, raising the profile of the issue, successful interventions by a growing number of warships operating within the region, coordinated industry advice and guidance, practical measures adopted by Masters and shipping companies and, not least, adverse weather conditions.

In reviewing the progress made since October 2008, when they had agreed joint approaches to addressing the problem (*see IMO Briefing 45/2008*), the participants also noted a number of developments requiring continuous vigilance of the situation in the region and the maintenance of ongoing efforts aimed at the disruption of pirate operations by naval, coastguard and law enforcement assets. In particular, they:

- underlined that developments ashore in Somalia are probably the only way to resolve this problem in the long term and favourable political developments ashore would help stem the scourge of piracy offshore;
- unanimously encouraged the continuation and strengthening of naval protection for shipping sailing through the region, until the problems ashore are solved;
- welcomed the planned completion of revised IMO guidelines on the prevention and repression of piratical attacks by the forthcoming session of the Organization’s Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 86 – 27 May to 8 June 2009);
- agreed to work together towards the early and comprehensive implementation of the Djibouti Code of Conduct (*see IMO briefing 3/2009*);

- drew attention to the Best Management Practice guidance document produced by the industry to assist vessels in avoiding and deterring piracy attacks and delaying successful attacks;
- called for support to be given to countries in the region, through IMO's Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme and other modalities, for the establishment of appropriate legislation and jurisdiction enabling the arrest, prosecution and imprisonment of pirates and armed robbers;
- noted the efforts of industry organizations to sustain the morale of seafarers in the region, including, in this regard, the possible submission of papers to the MSC on:
 - the requirement for professional counselling for those that are victims of piracy attacks; and
 - the worrying situation of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Gulf of Guinea;
- agreed to continue meeting periodically to review developments on this subject globally; and
- thanked all the Governments and navies that have to date provided military and other assets to protect seafarers and shipping off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden.

IMO – the International Maritime Organization – is the United Nations specialized agency with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine pollution by ships.

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