IMO ANTI-PIRACY PRESSURE

Within the Action Plan to promote this year’s World Maritime Day theme – Piracy: Orchestrating the Response, a meeting took place at IMO Headquarters on 17\textsuperscript{th} February between IMO Secretary-General Admiral Efthimios E. Mitropoulos and industry and seafarer representatives. All re-iterated the need for urgent and co-ordinated action from Governments, the shipping industry and the maritime community to address the escalating crisis of kidnap and ransom of seafarers off the coast of Somalia, in the Gulf of Aden, in the Arabian Sea and in the western Indian Ocean.

Representatives of the Round Table of international shipping associations: (BIMCO, ICS, INTERCARGO and INTERTANKO), OCIMF and ITF agreed that the situation off the coast of Somalia is nearing crisis point with escalating levels of violence, increased risk to seafarers’ lives and significant disruption to global trade and the world economy.

The meeting agreed on the need for compliance with the IMO guidance and best management practices; the need for improved co-operation, communication with, and deployment of, naval forces operating in the area; and the need for more proactive measures to avoid ships becoming victim to this organized criminal activity at sea.

In noting the reported use of armed personnel by some shipowners in response to the growing threat of piracy attacks, the meeting maintained the position recommended by IMO (namely, that this should be decided by the shipping companies concerned in consultation with the flag State) and, although recognizing that some shipping companies felt compelled to employ such personnel, reiterated the need to ensure that the recommended preventive, evasive and defensive measures, including reporting, are effectively implemented.

The meeting welcomed the initiatives taken by IMO towards development of regional capacity through the Djibouti Code of Conduct and recognized the need for further engagement with navies and coastguards from the region.

Furthermore, the contribution being made by naval forces currently operating in the region to protect both humanitarian aid shipments to Somalia operated by the World Food Programme (WFP) and merchant shipping, while also keeping open the vital shipping lanes of the Gulf of Aden and that linking the Persian Gulf with the Cape of Good Hope, was warmly welcomed.
The Secretary-General reported on his efforts to encourage increased provision of support to naval and military activities in the region and again called upon Governments and States, including littoral States, to recognize the scale of the issue and its potential impacts and to deploy further military assets accordingly.

Secretary-General Mitropoulos highlighted the requirement for financial support for both the IMO Djibouti Code Trust Fund and International Contact Group trust funds to enable the establishment of information-sharing centres and training for experts in the region and the ongoing development of an international infrastructure for the prosecution of captured pirates.

As one of the key objectives of the 2011 IMO theme is to provide care, during the post traumatic period, for those attacked or hijacked by pirates and for their families, the meeting welcomed information on the work being undertaken by a group of industry organizations in response.

Other items on a full agenda included a review of the outcomes of the “2010 - Year of the Seafarer” theme and an update on the outcome of last December’s United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 16/CMP 6) held in Cancún, Mexico.

With respect to international shipping, COP 16/CMP 6 had noted the progress made by IMO on its work plan to limit or reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases from ships and invited the Organization to continue informing future Conferences and their subsidiary bodies of progress on this issue and the Secretary-General briefed the meeting on work being undertaken intersessionally leading to the July 2011 session of the MEPC.