

## SEMINAR

### Piracy and armed robbery at sea - How best to protect seafarers?

03 MARCH 2010

---

#### **KEYNOTE FOR THE CHAIRMAN – MR FOTIS KARAMITSOS, DIRECTOR, MARITIME TRANSPORT, DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION.**

- This seminar is a natural follow-up of the one held in January 2009, whose main focus was on:
  - the practical recommendations and good practices with regard to ship self-defence in order to combat more effectively acts of piracy,
  - the existing legal framework and
  - the consequences of the growing number of maritime attacks of piracy on the global economical and geopolitical situation.
- Today, we would like to address the security and welfare of the seafarers from various perspectives, taking into account that the fact that the acts of piracy and armed robbery escalated in frequency and violence, in particular in the seas off Somalia and the Horn of Africa.
- This question is particularly pertinent in view of the surge of the piracy attacks by 38% in 2009, which marks the third year of increased reported incidents. Although some sources suggest that a considerable number of piracy and armed robbery have not been reported, more than 400 attacks and 49 hijackings have been recorded. More than 1000 crew members have been taken hostages and about 70 of them were injured and 8 – killed.
- The attacks perpetrated by the Somali pirates in 2009 were 217, with 47 vessels hijacked and 867 seafarers taken hostage. Up to 1st March, 10 vessels and 200 seafarers are in the hands of Somali pirates.
- The above figures underline the importance of focusing our attention on the seafarers without whom it would not be possible to carry out about 90% of the world trade.
- I would like to thank the distinguished guests representing the maritime transport sector: the representatives of the seafarers - seamen and captains; the maritime insurance sector, the international or national organisations and the Seafarers Assistance Associations. All these distinguished guests agreed to share with us their expertise and professional skills through their presentations and during the debates of two round-tables.
- This second seminar aims to examine the impact of piracy on the life and working conditions of the seafarers and to provide a picture as complete as possible of the situation they are confronted. We will consider all the measures to be envisaged prior to transiting dangerous areas until the treatment of the traumatism generated by the period of captivity for both the seamen and their family from the seafarers' perspective. The impact of piracy on the cost of the insurance premiums as well as the new insurance products will also be dealt with.
- The seminar has also the ambition to reflect about all useful means to contribute to

the protection and welfare of the seafarers in their activities at sea.

- Recognising the importance and validity of the UN guidance on "surviving as a hostage", also incorporated in an IMO document, we have dedicated the second part of today's seminar to the seafarers' experience during the period of captivity and curing the post-trauma, having in mind the great importance of these issues as far as seafarers and their families are concerned.
- Last but not least, we will envisage the actions intended to retain or manage people at sea *vis-à-vis* the risks of piracy and to attract the young generations for a career at sea.
- We have therefore in front of us an intensive programme for this working and reflection day, but first of all allow me to give the floor to **Mr Brian Simpson, Chairman of the European Parliament Committee on "transport"** for the opening of this seminar.