

**Statement at the EC Seminar on  
"Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea – How Best to Protect Seafarers"**

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Thank you Mr. Chairman,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me formally express my sincere appreciation to the European Commission for the invitation extended to me to participate in today's Seminar and to speak on the implications of piracy and armed robbery on the attractiveness of the maritime professions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Each year IMO selects a specific theme for celebration of World Maritime Day and this year's theme is "2010 - Year of the Seafarer". This theme has been chosen in order to provide the maritime community with an opportunity to pay tribute to seafarers for their unique contribution to society and in recognition of the vital part they play in the facilitation of global trade.

Indeed, we hope that "Year of the Seafarer" will provide an excellent opportunity to convey to the 1.5 million seafarers of the world a clear message that the entire shipping community understands and cares for them.

We all know that about 90% of world trade is carried by the international shipping industry. Without shipping, the import and export of foods and goods would not be possible – half the world would starve and the other half would freeze!

The World GDP has been expanding by a factor of 30 in the last 40 years. This has been a tremendous expansion. The history of the World economy over the last 40 years has been that of a huge expansion and international shipping was the mechanism to provide low-cost-transportation which enabled the World economy to expand and, at the same time, international shipping has also grown.

Over the last 40 years, the volume of seaborne trade was quadrupled. In the last 40 years, the number of ships was doubled and the size of ships was doubled and the total carriage capacity of the shipping industry was quadrupled.

The history of international shipping has been that of expansion. We have seen containerization. We have seen bigger ships. We have seen the flagging out of ships. More and more seafarers have been provided from developing countries. We have ensured the low cost of transportation.

The worldwide population of seafarers serving on internationally trading merchant ships is estimated to be in the order of:

- 466,000 officers and
- 721,000 ratings

According to the 2005 BIMCO/ISF Manpower update, the present shortage of officers is estimated at 10,000 or 2% of the total workforce of officers.

- For ratings, we are still enjoying a significant surplus, however
- It is estimated that, by 2015, the expected shortage of officers would be 27,000.

If you imagine the situation in 40 years time, in the future, you would have a different perspective. 40 years ahead means the year 2050.

- According to the recent study conducted by the Ocean Policy Research Foundation of Japan, seaborne trade will grow by 2.5 times in 2050, rather than 4 times as has been the past record and the required number of officers in 2050 will be 830,000.
- This means that the required annual increase of new officers will be 20,750.
- This projects serious long-term challenges for the world maritime community.

Then what should be done in order to ensure a continuous supply of quality seafarers?

First of all education and training of a new generation of seafarers. It is mainly the responsibility of Governments to put in place national systems of elementary and higher education to bring up members of the younger generation to be potential seafarers and to provide training institutes for seafarers for the shipping industry to meet the domestic and international requirements for seafarers.

Secondly, it is essential for shipping companies to establish a policy of:

- Training seafarers for the needs of the company; and
- Retaining seafarers as the most valuable in-house human resources and employed in the context of long-term or life-time employment, rather than treating them as a short-term workforce.

Thirdly, we must establish international practical measures to reduce discouraging and negative actions such as the criminalization of seafarers and restriction of shore leave on security grounds. In addition, we must improve working conditions onboard and the acceptance of requirements under the 2006 Maritime Labour Convention should be encouraged. Furthermore, IMO is taking an active role in the fight against piracy off the Coast of Somalia and we must all make further significant progress in our anti-piracy activities.

The focus of this final session of the Seminar today is on the implications of piracy and armed robbery on the attractiveness of the maritime profession. It is obvious that piracy and armed robbery and the risk of being taken as hostage have serious negative impacts on the attractiveness of seafaring.

IMO has been dealing with the issue of piracy for the last 25 years and produced a number of recommendations and guidelines for Governments and the industry.

The reality is that with the exception of piracy in waters off the coast of Somalia and armed robbery against ships within the territorial waters of some States in the Gulf of Guinea, the number of incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships reported to the Organization over the last few years has been steadily decreasing.

Three factors have been critical in the reduction of piracy and armed robbery against ships:

- .1 Better co-operation between States on a regional or sub-regional basis, for example the implementation of the ReCAAP agreement in Asia Pacific;
- .2 A more pro-active approach taken by coastal States and port States to security in their waters, including the implementation of the ISPS Code, which has shown a marked reduction in the number of attacks reported in port areas; and
- .3 The better implementation of defensive security measures on board by the industry, such as measures which have been developed and updated by the Maritime Safety Committee of IMO.

The situation in the waters off the coast of Somalia has developed because of a lack of effective national government and the rule of law both ashore and at sea. I could give you a history of IMO's counter-piracy efforts in this region since early 2005; on the actions taken by the IMO Assembly, tireless efforts of my Secretary-General, the adoption of the Djibouti Code of Conduct; and IMO participation in the Contact Group on Piracy off the coast of Somalia and its working groups, however time is short and limited today.

Suffice to say that although the number of attacks remains too high, there are positive signs that the situation will improve. IMO, in partnership with the United Nations Political Office for Somalia and Department of Political Affairs, supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Interpol, held meetings with the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the authorities of Puntland and Somaliland in Kampala in January and again in Djibouti last month, with a view towards establishing a co-operative anti-piracy mechanism. Although it is early days, the results of these meetings are encouraging and further meetings are planned.

IMO continues to work with the States in the region and donor partners including the European Commission, to implement the Djibouti Code of Conduct which provides a framework for the regional mechanism for anti-piracy operations covering, *inter alia*:

- .1 Information sharing;
- .2 National rules and regulations;
- .3 Maritime situational awareness;
- .4 Anti-piracy operations by law enforcement officers; and
- .5 Training of law enforcement officers including coast guard officers via a regional training centre in Djibouti.

The implementation of the Djibouti Code of Conduct as a regional mechanism for co-operation providing coast guard functions to counter piracy will in the longer term also provide the region with a firm basis for other maritime law enforcement activities leading to better coastal security, EEZ management, navigational safety and protection of the marine environment.

It would be remiss of me not to highlight the very significant contribution made by naval forces from a wide range of States to the protection of World Food Programme and other humanitarian shipping, to the protection of global maritime trade, and to the disruption and suppression of piracy throughout the region. The effectiveness of navies conducting group transits through the Gulf of Aden, conducting targeted operations to deter and disrupt attacks under the current mechanism of EUNAVFOR, MSCHOA, UKMTO Dubai and MARLO, has led to a significant drop in the number of successful attacks in the Gulf of Aden.

However, undoubtedly there do remain challenges in the region, particularly in the vast western Indian Ocean area where there are just not enough warships and maritime patrol and reconnaissance assets to protect every ship. Flag States and Companies still need to do more

to get merchant ships to implement fully the best management practices. These procedures, coupled with the activities of navies, are undoubtedly effective.

So far, international efforts have yielded some significant success but still more work is needed. Further action will be required in a comprehensive approach with co-operation with UN Agencies and Governments dealing with:

- root causes;
- co-operation with the International Contact Group for Somalia;
- building on the Kampala process;
- coordination among capacity building partners;
- strengthening regional capacity for prosecution of suspected pirates;
- more proactive action and patrols; and
- more effective approach for the implementation of the Best Management Practice and relevant provisions of the ISPS Code.

2010 is the year of the seafarer. Our efforts should be concentrated in further work aiming at effective measures which could actually suppress the acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia. However, it will take more time before such measures take real effect and impact so as to reduce piracy off the coast of Somalia; hence, seafarers may continuously have to suffer from this risk and actual hostage takings. For this reason the international community and IMO, in particular, must ensure that every possible action is taken to provide maximum care for seafarers who have been subjected to acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships. Comprehensive guidelines for taking care of seafarers, therefore, must be established as soon as possible.

Ladies and gentlemen, if shipping is to continue to serve global trade, it cannot afford to ignore the current shortage of good entrants to the industry. The evidence clearly suggests that not enough young people today seem to find seafaring an attractive and appealing career.

While we are facing a serious challenge in ensuring the continuous supply of quality seafarers for years to come, we must change the image of shipping held by the general public, so that we can change the tide and bring young generations back to the industry. In this context, it is of absolute importance for the international community to make further significant efforts to reduce and eradicate piracy as a crime, in particular off the coast of Somalia, and to ensure that seafarers are protected and cared for.

I am confident that we can work together towards this objective and, in particular in this "Year of the seafarer", we can strengthen our efforts to provide maximum care to seafarers. For the future of world trade and the international community it is vital to protect and care for seafarers now and to ensure a continuous supply of quality seafarers to shipping, because no seafarers means no shipping and no shipping means no world trade.

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