



Asian Shipowners Forum

Safe Navigation & Environment Committee
(SNEC)

c/o Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations (FASA)
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PRESS RELEASE

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ASIAN SHIPOWNERS EXPRESS OUTRAGE AT LACK OF GOVERNMENT ACTION IN FACE OF ESCALATING PIRACY INCIDENTS

At the 20th Interim Meeting of the Asian Shipowners' Forum (ASF) Safe Navigation & Environment Committee (SNEC) held in Singapore on 18 March 2011, representatives of Asian shipowners' associations expressed their anger and outrage at the increasing number of attacks on their ships and the brutality shown by Somali pirates.

“The current situation, where a handful of pirates in open skiffs can hold the world's economy hostage, is completely unacceptable – as responsible owners and managers, we must take all necessary steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our seafarers!” said Mr. S. S. Teo, SNEC Chairman. “Not only are seafarers being tortured and murdered – civilians and children are being targeted as well. The situation is increasingly untenable.”

It was noted that pirates had attacked 445 ships, hijacked 53 of them and taken 1181 seafarers hostage worldwide in 2010. Today, about 700 seafarers remain hostages in deplorable conditions off Somalia.

The Committee expressed very serious concern at the threat posed by pirates to international shipping, particularly in the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean and in the waters off Somalia.

The Committee demands that all governments must act decisively and expeditiously to eradicate piracy and attacks on ships. Whilst appreciating the assistance and protection provided by the naval forces stationed in the Gulf of Aden presently, the Committee does not consider it sustainable in the longer term. The Committee is of the unanimous view that the United Nations and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) must exercise strong political will to bring the situation under control.

The Meeting strongly supports the call by international shipping organisations worldwide to neutralise the threat of the captured, hostage-crewed mother ships that are allowing pirates to roam the Indian Ocean unimpeded. The Committee acknowledges that in addition to complying fully with all the measures put forward in the latest version of *Best Management Practices to deter piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Coast of Somalia*, which has been developed by the industry, the Committee notes and appreciates that individual ASF Members may adopt additional safety measures such as the use of armed guards to protect the lives and well-being of their seafarers.

Whilst the Committee further acknowledged that the use of private armed guards should be a measure of last resort, the Committee nonetheless welcomes the proposal by Singapore, with support from the Philippines, ICS and BIMCO, calling on the IMO to consider the development of non-mandatory guidance to assist ship owners and operators in employing private armed security service providers. Furthermore, the Committee supports the submission to IMO from the Bahamas and the Marshall Islands calling for the accreditation of independent maritime security providers.

In closing, the Committee stressed that whilst ship owners and managers should do their utmost to protect their seafarers, ultimate responsibility for ensuring safety of navigation on the high seas should rest with governments.

“This is the most pressing issue for the industry at this time” said Mr. S. S. Teo.

Hosted by the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA), the 20th Interim Meeting of the SNEC was attended by representatives of shipowners’ associations from Hong Kong, India, Chinese Taipei and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners’ Associations (FASA) as represented by the shipowners’ associations of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Mr. S.S. Teo, President of SSA chaired the SNEC meeting on behalf of FASA.

During the meeting, the Committee also considered and discussed current issues of concern relating to the safe navigation of ships and the protection of the marine environment.

For any further questions, please contact:

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Editor's note:

The Asian Shipowners’ Forum is a voluntary organization of the shipowner associations of Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners’ Associations comprising shipping associations of ASEAN countries. The aims of the ASF are to promote the interests of the Asian shipowning industries. Between annual ASF meetings, the ongoing work is carried out by the five Standing Committees; the Shipping Economics Review Committee, the Seafarers Committee, the Ship Recycling Committee, the Safe Navigation and Environment Committee, and the Ship Insurance and Liability Committee. It has been estimated that ASF owners and managers control and operate nearly 50% of the world's cargo carrying fleet.