



Asian Shipowners Forum
Safe Navigation & Environment Committee (SNEC)
c/o Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations
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For Immediate Release

Asian Shipowners urge UN to take new and bold anti-piracy measures

At the 21st Interim Meeting of the Asian Shipowners' Forum (ASF) Safe Navigation & Environment Committee (SNEC) held in Singapore on 16 September 2011, the Committee again expressed their anger and frustration at the ever-increasing threat of piracy and ship hijacks, particularly in the Somali Basin, Arabian Sea and in the West Indian Ocean. The Meeting also criticised the United Nations (UN) and governments for the lack of urgency and political will to suppress this growing problem.

The Committee expressed concern that, despite the presence of military and naval forces, Somali pirates attacked 163 ships, hijacked 21 of them and took 361 seafarers hostage so far in 2011. Based on UKMTO's report as at 9 September 2011, 11 merchant vessels with 271 seafarers remain captive under deplorable conditions in Somalia.

"Not only are these dangerous Somali pirates free to roam the Indian Ocean at will attacking and hijacking ships, they have not spared ships anchored in sovereign waters. Also, Somali pirates may serve as a strong inspiration for criminals in other states," said Mr. Patrick Phoon, SNEC Chairman.

"The safety and welfare of our seafarers and their families must remain of utmost importance. Discounting the economic cost of anywhere between US\$3.5 and US\$8 billion a year, we cannot ignore the lasting physical and psychological trauma suffered by our seafarers at the hands of these merciless outlaws."

The Committee agreed that the time has come to implement bold measures. In the absence of concrete policy to address the root problem of Somali piracy, the Committee strongly supports the Round Table of International Shipowners Associations' (RTisa) call urging the UN to establish an Anti – Piracy Military Task Force consisting of Armed Military Guards that can be deployed in small detachments onboard merchant ships to protect them during their transits through those treacherous waters. It urges the UN and all governments to adopt a strong political will and take decisive actions to resolve this problem expeditiously.

The Committee reiterates that, as a bare minimum, ship owners and managers must comply with BMP 4. The Committee further recognises that BMP 4 alone will not guarantee that a vessel is safe from being pirated.

Whilst ship owners and managers are doing their utmost to protect their seafarers and ships, the Committee stressed that the ultimate responsibility for ensuring safety of navigation on the high seas should rest with Flag States and all governments.

The Committee further urged individual Flag States to offer clear and concise guidelines on the use of privately contracted armed security providers which have been duly vetted and accredited by the Flag State in question.

“We emphasise that Governments must have the political will to firmly address this pressing problem”, said Mr. Phoon. “The situation as it stands is unsustainable, and places a very serious financial burden on the shipping industry. If the situation fails to improve, soaring transportation costs will have a detrimental effect on already-fragile regional and global economies.

The Committee remains committed to environmentally friendly shipping.

It welcomes the International Maritime Organisation’s (IMO) recent adoption of mandatory measures to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) from international shipping.

The amendments to MARPOL Annex VI Regulations, which make mandatory the Energy Efficiency Design Index (EEDI) for new ships, and the Ship Energy Efficiency Management Plan (SEEMP) for all ships are pragmatic and goal-based which adhere to the IMO’s principles of no more favourable treatment. The Committee hopes that the implementation of these IMO energy efficiency design standards will discourage any individual or regional group of countries from introducing unilateral measures to curb GHG emission from international shipping.

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Hosted by the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA), the 21st Interim Meeting of the SNEC was attended by representatives of shipowners’ associations from India, Japan, Korea, 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. Patrick Phoon, President of SSA chaired the SNEC meeting on behalf of FASA.

During the meeting, the Committee also considered and discussed other 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.
