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Agenda item 17(g)

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EXTERNAL RELATIONS

(g) IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea

Note by the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	This document reports on the recommendations of the Assessment Panel and the decision of the Panel of Judges on the recipient of the 2017 IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea
<i>Strategic direction:</i>	11
<i>High-level action:</i>	11.1.1
<i>Output:</i>	No related provisions
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 15
<i>Related document:</i>	C 118/17(g)

Outcome of the Assessment Panel

1 As stated in paragraph 3 of document C 118/17(g), the Assessment Panel met at IMO Headquarters on 6 June 2017, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General's nominee, the Director of the Legal Affairs and External Relations Division, to scrutinize the nominations (see annex to document C 118/17(g)) which had been received for this year's Awards. The Assessment Panel comprised representatives of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the International Maritime Pilots' Association (IMPA), the International Federation of Shipmasters' Associations (IFSMA), the International Salvage Union (ISU), the International Maritime Rescue Federation (IMRF) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

2 The Assessment Panel examined a total of 33 nominations, which had been received from 16 Member States and 5 non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO and, in accordance with the Guidelines for the Award, submitted its proposals for the Award, Certificates of Commendation and Letters of Commendation, together with the rationale leading to its recommendations, for consideration by the Panel of Judges.

Outcome of the Panel of Judges

3 The Panel of Judges met at IMO Headquarters on 21 July 2017, under the chairmanship of the Chair of the Council, to consider the recommendations of the Assessment Panel and to select the recipient of the Award. The Chairs of the Maritime Safety Committee, the Legal Committee, the Technical Cooperation Committee and the Facilitation Committee were present at the meeting.

4 After carefully considering the rationale and recommendations of the Assessment Panel, the Panel of Judges decided to select:

For the Award

5 Captain Michael C. McGee and Captain Michael C. Phillips, members of the Houston Pilots, nominated by the International Maritime Pilots' Association, as the recipients of the **2017 IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea**.

6 On 6 September 2016 shortly after midnight, Captain McGee and Captain Phillips were required to pilot the 247 meters-long tanker **Aframax River** at the Houston Ship Channel. While doing so, the vessel experienced a mechanical failure and consequent loss of control, which caused the ship to strike two mooring dolphins. As a result, a fuel tank ruptured causing a spill of diesel fuel that quickly ignited. The flames, on and around the ship, reached 60 to 90 meters in height. The raging fire quickly spread across the channel, threatening other tankers and nearby waterfront facilities, and enveloped the area in thick toxic smoke.

7 Despite the imminent danger, at great risk to their own lives, both pilots remained at their stations on the bridge of the ship. Captain McGee managed to manoeuvre the stricken ship away from surrounding ships and facilities while Captain Phillips coordinated communications and firefighting efforts with the United States Coast Guard and numerous local fireboats. Captain Phillips also had to break out and charge a fire hose to fight and extinguish a fire raging on the port bridge wing.

8 The fire was finally extinguished after 90 minutes, leaving both pilots exhausted and suffering minor burns. Captain McGee, using assist tugs, was then able to bring the damaged tanker safely to a mooring facility.

9 The Panel was of the view that Captain McGee and Captain Phillips displayed great decisiveness, dedication and ship-handling expertise, while surrounded by a towering wall of burning fuel for nearly 90 minutes. As a result of their courageous actions, no lives were lost, serious damage to pier structures and petro-chemical facilities were prevented and a major marine pollution incident was avoided.

For Certificates of Commendation

10 The Panel of Judges agreed that the following nominees (not in any order of merit) should also receive **Certificates of Commendation** citing their acts of bravery:

- Vice-Captain Damir Rikanovic and Marina Team Leader Kurt Dreyer, crew members of the passenger ship M/Y **Crystal Esprit**, nominated by the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), for rescuing, at great risk to themselves, eight people whose catamaran **El Diablo** had been dragged from its mooring buoy and grounded on a reef due to severe weather conditions, by efficiently operating the ship's inflatable boat in darkness;

- Mr. Lee Gwang Hee, Chief Engineer of the fishing vessel **2015 Bogyeongho**, nominated by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), for his courage and determination while fighting a fire that broke out in the engine-room and was quickly spreading. As Mr. Lee was not able to put out the flames with the fire extinguisher, he re-entered the scene after closing the ventilators and the entrance door of the engine-room and finally was able to extinguish the fire, thus, saving the lives of his fellow seafarers as well as the ship;
- Boatswain's Mate Second Class Jacob M. Hylkema, crew member of the 52-foot motor life boat **Invincible**, United States Coast Guard, nominated by the United States of America, for risking his own life in rescuing the master of the sailing vessel **Grace**, whose legs became wrapped in the heaving line during the rescue operation and was drowning. BM2 Hylkema did not hesitate to jump into the water, in darkness and extremely heavy seas, to cut the exhausted master free and kept him in the life ring, as they were pulled back to the life boat by the rest of the crew.

For Letters of Commendation

11 The Panel further recommended that the following nominees (not in any order of merit) should receive Letters of Commendation in recognition of their actions:

- Captain Lu Guoqiang, Master of the patrol boat **Haixun0611**, Lianyungang Maritime Safety Administration, nominated by China, for his determination and tireless efforts in rescuing all seven crew members of the sinking cargo ship **Sulianyunganghuo 1667**, which was listing 50 degrees. The challenging rescue operation lasted over 18 hours due to strong winds, heavy swells and severe weather conditions;
- Captain Patrick Norrgård and the crew of the M/V **Norstream**, nominated by Finland, for their courage, tenacity and professionalism in rescuing, in complete darkness and gale-force winds, all seven crew members of the sunken cargo vessel **Fluvius Tamar**, who had abandoned their ship and were found in a drifting life raft and in the sea. Captain Norrgård skilfully manoeuvred the large ship alongside the crew members in distress, while keeping a safe distance from the sunken ship, and the crew of the **Norstream** got them on board through the pilot door;
- Captain Amir Janbod (posthumously), Master of the M/V **Golafruz**, nominated by the Islamic Republic of Iran, for the excellent seamanship displayed, in adverse weather and sea conditions, in the rescue of the eight crew members of the yacht **Trekker II**. Sadly, Captain Janbod passed away on the **Golafruz** three days later, following a heart attack which is believed to be linked to the stress suffered during the rescue operation;
- The crew of the rescue helicopter Pesca II, Galicia Coast Guard Service, and the crew of the rescue helicopter Helimer 211, Spanish Maritime Safety Agency, nominated by Spain, for their courage, dedication and professionalism in the coordinated rescue operation of 12 crew members of the sunken fishing vessel **Gure Uxua**, who had abandoned the ship and were found drifting in a raft, in dangerous waters with waves of 10 meters and very strong winds; and

- The crew of the fast rescue boat **Kiyem 5**, Turkish Directorate General of Coastal Safety, nominated by Turkey, for their professionalism and tireless efforts in rescuing all 10 crew members of the sailing boat **Acadia 7**, whose rudder frame was broken and the main mast was damaged, caused by strong winds and rough seas. After aborting a towing operation due to risk of capsizing, the **Kiyem 5**, with the assistance of the RO/RO vessel **Kale** by making a lee, managed to accomplish the arduous rescue operation.

Other matters addressed by the Panel of Judges

12 The Panel of Judges noted with appreciation the increasing number of nominations, as well as a larger participation from both Governments and organizations, and emphasized the importance of the submission of nominations to recognize acts of outstanding bravery.

13 As in previous years, both Panels considered it appropriate to differentiate between the actions of professional rescuers and those of others who, in the normal course of their duties, would not be expected to risk their lives to rescue persons in distress at sea. The Panel of Judges also concurred with the recommendation of the Assessment Panel that one nomination submitted did not meet the criteria for the Award, as the rescue did not occur at sea or those rescued did not emanate from a vessel.

14 Taking into consideration the five nominations received in connection with the rescue of migrants at sea, the Panel made a distinction between the rescues performed by SAR professionals and those carried out by crews of merchant vessels:

- For the nominations of SAR professionals, the Panel was of the view that the Secretary-General may wish to recognize at the Awards ceremony, as he did last year, all the forces involved in such rescue operations for their outstanding humanitarian work and continued efforts.
- For the nominations of crews of merchant vessels, the Panel recalled Assembly resolution A.1093(29) on *Special recognition for merchant vessels and their crew involved in the rescue of mixed migrants at sea*, and identified it as the appropriate channel to recognize these rescues. The Panel was of the view that each of them should receive the commendation of the IMO Assembly, in the form of a certificate, and be mentioned at the Awards ceremony. The Panel also recommended that future similar acts should be reported to the Secretariat following the procedure contained in Circular Letter No.3619, as they do not fall under the criteria of the IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea.

Action requested of the Council

15 The Council is invited to take note of the information provided in this document and to endorse the outcome of the Panel of Judges with respect to its recommendations for the Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea, the Certificates of Commendation, the Letters of Commendation and other matters addressed under paragraphs 13 and 14.