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PROTECTION OF VITAL SHIPPING LANES

Strengthening global cooperation to counter piracy and armed robbery against ships

Submitted by Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Singapore, ReCAAP-ISC and ICC

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This document provides information on a Meeting of Anti-Piracy Contact Points and Workshop on Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships, co-organized by Singapore and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia-Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP-ISC). This initiative contributes to the strengthening of a global network of anti-piracy contact points

Strategic direction: 6.2, 6.3

High-level action: 6.2.2, 6.2.3, 6.2.4

Output: No related provisions

Action to be taken: Paragraph 12

Related documents: None

Introduction

1 In 2016, there were improvements in the global piracy and armed robbery against ships situation. In Asia, the ReCAAP-ISC reported that the number of piracy and armed robbery against ships incidents fell to 85, as compared to 203 in 2015. Within the Straits of Malacca and Singapore, there were 2 incidents, in contrast to 104 in 2015. In the Gulf of Aden, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported 1 incident, a sharp drop from the numbers in previous years. The improvements in these regions are a testament to the strong collective responses by all stakeholders, including Governments, maritime administrations, the shipping industry and international organizations. Concerted and coordinated action by enforcement agencies also helped to deter and address the threat from maritime piracy.

2 Nonetheless, the international maritime community cannot lessen its efforts to address the threat that piracy and armed robbery against ships continue to pose to international shipping and trade, as the threat evolves and new trouble spots emerge. The incidents involving the abduction of crew for ransom in the Sulu-Celebes Sea and waters off Eastern Sabah in Asia, the recurrence of incidents in the waters off Somalia in 2017 and the incidents in the Gulf of Guinea in Africa attest to this.

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3 Collective action, timely and effective information sharing and communication at the international, regional and national levels continue to be key in safeguarding international shipping and the welfare of seafarers.

Inaugural Meeting of Anti-Piracy Contact Points and Workshop on Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships

4 Recognizing the need to foster closer linkages amongst various anti-piracy contact points and reporting centres in Africa, Asia and Europe, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) and the ReCAAP-ISC co-organized the Inaugural Meeting of Anti-Piracy Contact Points and Workshop on Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships (hereafter Meeting and Workshop), from 11-12 January 2017, in Singapore.

5 The objectives of the Meeting and Workshop were twofold: first, to strengthen the relationships amongst anti-piracy contact points and reporting centres in order to facilitate timely information exchanges; and second, to promote active cross-sharing and learning of best practices amongst anti-piracy contact points and reporting centres.

6 The Meeting and Workshop brought together representatives from key anti-piracy contact points, maritime administrations and international organizations, including the International Maritime Organization (IMO), across Africa, Asia and Europe. The programme also included a dedicated session with the shipping industry. In all, a total of 55 participants, attended the Meeting and Workshop. One hundred and thirty-three participants from the shipping industry attended the industry session.

7 The Meeting and Workshop covered the following topics:

- .1 the structure, functions and scope of operations of the various anti-piracy reporting centres;
- .2 cooperative regional reporting and information sharing mechanisms such as ReCAAP in Asia, and the Djibouti Code of Conduct Centres in the East African region;
- .3 case studies of incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships; and
- .4 industry-government cooperation.

Summary of discussions

8 The following summarizes the key themes and discussion points arising from the Meeting and Workshop:

- .1 anti-piracy contact points and reporting centres have made good progress in tackling piracy and armed robbery against ships within their respective domains;
- .2 there is a need for anti-piracy contact points and reporting centres to remain relevant and sustain their operations, even as new national and international priorities (e.g. terrorism, illicit maritime activities like illegal fishing) emerge and incidents of piracy and armed robbery against ships fluctuate;

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- .3 collective action and political will at all levels – national, regional and international – is therefore necessary to sustain the work of anti-piracy contact points and reporting centres;
 - .4 successful information sharing practices are built around both formal and informal processes, trust in the system and multiple touch points across a network of contact points;
 - .5 there is a need for appropriate national legal regimes to deal with perpetrators of piracy and armed robbery against ships; and
 - .6 closer collaboration between the shipping industry and government could be achieved when both parties have a clear understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities.

Key outcomes

9 Participants found the Meeting and Workshop to be useful. Besides the opportunity to network and get a better understanding of each other's work, and that of industry, they benefited from the sharing of experiences and best practices in information sharing. There was also broad agreement by participants on the value of having regular platforms for anti-piracy contact points and reporting centres to meet from time to time, and interest to hold future similar activities and forums to develop strong institutional and personal relationships. Singapore would be happy to explore future arrangements where such exchanges on anti-piracy information sharing can be conducted, in partnership with other anti-piracy contact points and reporting centres.

10 To complement existing information sharing channels and keep up the momentum for future interactions and discussions, Singapore has, after the event, put together and circulated a listing of contact point information amongst participants. The effort was well received by participants who have since readily shared contact information, and established communications checks with each other. It is hoped that this effort would provide the impetus to continue to build on the linkages that have been established.

Conclusion

11 The Meeting and Workshop were a new initiative to bring together anti-piracy contact points from Africa, Asia and Europe. Singapore and ReCAAP-ISC, along with other co-sponsors of the document, look forward to working collectively with IMO Member States, IMO and relevant stakeholders globally to maintain efforts to counter piracy and armed robbery against ships.

Action requested of the Council

12 The Council is invited to take note of the information in this document.