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MSC.1/Circ.1302
16 April 2009

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS IN WATERS OFF THE COAST OF SOMALIA

1 During 2008, most reported acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the waters off the coast of Somalia and, in particular, the seizure and attempted seizure of ships for ransom, occurred in the Gulf of Aden. However, since the beginning of this year, there has been a worrying increase in the number of attacks reported off the east coast of Somalia in the Western Indian Ocean, some taking place over 500 nautical miles off that coast.

2 The recent increase in the number of acts of piracy in the waters off the coast of Somalia is considered to be largely due to an improvement in the weather following the end of the monsoon season. The successful efforts of navies in patrolling and disrupting pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden may also have been a contributory factor in the increase in pirate activity in the Somali Basin and the Western Indian Ocean.

3 In view of the increased number of attacks in the Western Indian Ocean, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) released advice to its members, on 15 April 2009, to the effect that, as advised by the Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), shipmasters should not, unless unavoidable, plan their passage within 600 nautical miles of the Somali coast in the Western Indian Ocean (ICS (09)10, copy attached).

4 In view of the current situation, as described above, and the impact any act of piracy and armed robbery may have on human life, the safety of navigation and the environment, Member Governments and international organizations concerned are invited, as a matter of urgency, to advise shipowners, ship operators and managers, shipping companies, shipmasters and all other relevant parties to make further efforts to implement fully the preventive measures provided in:

- .1 MSC/Circ.622/Rev.1 – Recommendations to Governments for preventing and suppressing piracy and armed robbery against ships; and
- .2 MSC/Circ.623/Rev.3 – Guidance to shipowners and ship operators, shipmasters and crews on preventing and suppressing acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships.

5 Furthermore, Governments and international organizations concerned should, as a matter of urgency, advise shipowners, ship operators and managers, shipping companies, shipmasters and all other relevant parties to:

- .1 accept the advice of MSCHOA and ICS as provided in paragraph 3 above;
- .2 unless operating under national schemes, register the intended movement of their ship with MSCHOA via the website www.mschoa.org;

- .3 unless operating under national schemes, report the navigation route of their ship to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) Dubai, when navigating through the Gulf of Aden and/or the Western Indian Ocean;
 - .4 take prompt action in response to any alerts or guidance issued by MSCHOA, UKMTO Dubai, Maritime Liaison Office (MARLO) Bahrain, the International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC), ALINDIEN (Tel: +33 (0) 4 83 16 10 97 – alindien@free.fr) or any coastal State authority in the region so as to minimize the risk of attack; and
 - .5 report any attacks or suspected pirate activity to UKMTO Dubai (Tel: +97 1505523215 – ukmto@eim.ae) or IMB PRC (Tel: +60 320310014 – imbkl@icc-ccs.org / piracy@icc-ccs.org) immediately, with further reports to MSCHOA (opscentre@mschoa.org) and the regional Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre as soon as possible.
- 6 This circular is issued following consultations between the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Maritime Safety Committee.

ANNEX

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To: ALL FULL AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS ICS(09)10
Copy: All Full and Associate Members (for information)
Marine Committee
Maritime Law Committee
ISF Labour Affairs Committee
PIRACY UPDATE – SHIPS TRANSITTING THE INDIAN OCEAN OFF THE COAST OF SOMALIA

Action required: ICS endorses MSCHOA advice that ships should, unless unavoidable, avoid planning a passage within 600nm of the Somali coast in the Indian Ocean.

The piracy situation off the coast of Somali has changed in recent weeks with successful attacks being conducted much farther East into the Indian Ocean than seen hitherto. The rate of attacks taken through to successful hijacking has also increased.

The problem for ships in the Indian Ocean does differ from the situation in the Gulf of Aden where the protective Group Transit system still operates, under the coordination of MSCHOA. In the Indian Ocean there is not likely to be the same level of warship presence nor at this stage is a group transit approach likely to be appropriate. The MSCHOA website now recommends that, unless unavoidable, **ships keep at least 600 nautical miles from the Somali coastline and when routing north/south consider keeping East of longitude 60E until East of the Seychelles.**

ICS fully endorses this advice and requests members to disseminate it as widely as possible.

ICS is seeking further advice from the military authorities and will keep members updated.

P B Hinchliffe
 Marine Director