



ASIAN SHIPOWNERS FORUM SEAFARERS COMMITTEE

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The 14th Interim Meeting of ASF Seafarers Committee
Kuala Lumpur, 20-21 November 2008

JOINT STATEMENT

The ASF Seafarers Committee held its 14th interim meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Friday, 21st November 2008. The meeting was hosted by the Malaysia Shipowners Association (MASA) and was chaired by Mr. Li Shanmin, China Shipowners Association (CSA).

Delegates from ASF member associations of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Chinese Taipei and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations (FASA), as represented by the shipowner associations of Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam, together with the Secretary-General of the ASF attended the meeting. Written submissions were received from Korea, who were not able to attend the meeting.

The Committee noted with serious concern the continuing attacks on ships in the Gulf of Aden, which represent a severe threat to the safety of ships trading through this area, one of the world's most strategically important seaways linking Europe and Asia via the Red Sea/Suez Canal. In particular, the Committee expressed its concern over the trauma suffered by seafarers on hijacked ships and on ships passing through the area, as well as the concern felt by their families. The Committee is encouraged by the efforts of individual countries to support and protect merchant ships transiting this area. The Committee calls upon all governments, individually and collectively through the United Nations, to take immediate action to ensure safe navigation and security of seafarers in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia.

The Committee discussed the current status of the work of the IMO's STW Committee in its comprehensive review of the STCW Convention and Code. In particular, Members support the work to harmonise the provisions of ILO C180 and STCW rest hour regimes, but consider that STCW, as a safety Convention, should apply to watchkeepers only, and not all seafarers. The Committee supports the inclusion of Bridge Resource Management (BRM) and Engine Resource Management (ERM) in the relevant part of the STCW Code. The Committee agreed that given the fact that the majority of the world's seafarers are recruited and supplied from the region, ASF Associations and their Governments should be actively involved and contribute to the review by sharing their experiences of the implementation of STCW 95 so as

to ensure the revision will be conducted in a systematic and organized manner and will best reflect the interests of shipping industry and governments in the region.

The Committee noted the difficulties of shore leave for seafarers in many countries and the increasing difficulty faced by seafarers to obtain visas in order to join or leave their ship. The Committee noted with concern the low ratification rate of ILO Convention 185 but welcomed a changing attitude seen in some countries to treat seafarers with more respect.

The Committee is pleased to note progress towards the entry into force of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 and encourages all ASF members to continue to work with their individual countries to achieve early ratification of the Convention. The Committee welcomed the recent development of the Port and Flag State Inspection Guidelines. The Committee considers it important for members to continue to encourage their individual administrations, where appropriate, to refer to the Guidelines in order to observe consistent compliance and enforcement of the Convention without over burdening shipowners and seafarers.

The Committee discussed the practical application of the IMO/ILO Guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers Following a Maritime Accident. The Committee noted the efforts of industry organizations as well as ASF members to encourage the Korean Government to permit the two senior officers of the *Hebei Spirit* to return home. The Committee calls upon the Korean courts to ensure that the seafarers are given a fair trial with full rights of defence, in accordance with the relevant international instruments.

The Committee reaffirms its position that the employment conditions of seafarers should be consistent with the economic situation and standard of living of each country/region where the seafarers are domiciled rather than on a single global basis.

The Committee was pleased to note that the number of seafarers serving on ships in most ASF member countries/regions has increased compared to previous years. The Committee was encouraged by the active cooperation between the governments, the training institutions and shipowners in the region in the training and employment of seafarers. The Committee was also pleased note that incentive schemes of governments to attract more young people to join the sea-going career had been in place in many member countries and considered that these interactions would assist in the continued promotion of the supply and employment of Asian seafarers. The Committee urges ASF members to maintain recruitment and training initiatives despite the present economic turmoil.

The Committee accepted the offer from VSA to host the 15th interim meeting of the Committee in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam in the autumn of 2009. The Committee expressed its gratitude to the Malaysia Shipowners Association (MASA) for its kindness and generosity in hosting the 14th interim meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

21st November 2008

Editor's note:

The Asian Shipowners Forum consists of 7 Shipowner Associations in the Asian region, being those from Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowner Associations, which consists of the Shipowner Associations of the ASEAN countries. Between annual ASF meetings, the ongoing work is carried out by five "S" 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. The main objectives of the Seafarers Committee are to ensure and maintain common standards of training, to promote the stability of employment, the acceptance and well-being of Asian seafarers, and to monitor, consider and comment upon any new international maritime legislation and convention on manning and training. It has been estimated that ASF Owners and Managers control and operate around 50% of the world's cargo carrying fleet.

For more information about this press release, please contact Gilbert Feng, Secretary of the Committee, at the above contact details.

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