



ASIAN SHIPOWNERS FORUM SEAFARERS COMMITTEE

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Press Release

(Final)

Fatigue of Seafarers has, for some time, been an important agenda item for the ASF Seafarers Committee. In this respect, the Committee urges delegate Governments attending MSC 88 to approve the proposed resolution on the Principles of Safe Manning with a view to submission to the 27th meeting of the IMO Assembly for adoption, and to adopt the related revision to SOLAS Chapter V, Regulation 14. In the meantime, the Committee urges Asian governments to adopt the revised 'Guidelines for the Application of Principles of Safe Manning' at an early stage.

The shortage of seafarers is an increasing concern, particularly in consequence of the massive order book of newbuilding ships that is scheduled to be delivered in the near future. In response, many of the member Associations of the ASF Seafarers Committee have been taking urgent action to recruit, train and retain seafarers. The Committee, however, recognised that it takes time to train seafarers and expressed concern about the consequences of too rapid promotion of seafarers through the ranks, and urges shipowners and managers to consider implementing a stringent process of post-qualification seetime and proper appraisal before promotion.

The Committee continued to express its strong concern at the continuing trend of piracy attacks on merchant ships and the apparent inability of the world's navies to protect ships passing through the Gulf of Aden and the Western Indian Ocean. There were also rising concerns about the increased number of attacks in the South China Sea. The meeting discussed, in particular, the traumatic experience of seafarers especially those on ships that had been hijacked by pirates in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean. The situation has become a serious crisis, one that deeply affects the mental health of the seafarers and their families and the carriage of world trade. While the ASF is grateful for the protection of the naval forces deployed in and around the Gulf, the United Nations and the IMO must exercise greater efforts

to protect ships and their crews when transiting pirate infested and treacherous waters.

It is likely that the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, will achieve the necessary ratification to come into force in late 2011 or early 2012. It is of concern that some 40,000 ships will need to be certified within the next year, or two if the relevant ILO resolution is adopted by port and flag States. The Committee urges all Governments that have ratified, or are about to ratify, the Convention to ensure as a matter of urgency that national laws and regulations are in place so that recognised organisations can be authorized, if necessary, and Part I of the Declaration of Maritime Labour Compliance can be issued. Early 'voluntary certification' of ships flying the flag of ratifying States will greatly assist the certification process.

The Committee expressed serious concern at a proposal by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) to unilaterally attempt to determine crew costs of national flag vessels, which would violate national policies. The determination of seafarer wages is a matter of negotiation between the shipowner and seafarer. The Committee reiterates its position that the employment conditions of seafarers should be consistent with the current market, economic and living situation of each country/region where the seafarers are domiciled.

The Asian Shipowners' Forum would like to use this opportunity, in the IMO's Year of the Seafarer, to thank the seafarers who serve on their ships. Despite increasing unfair treatment and court-sanctioned violations of their human rights, seafarers continue, as true professionals, to serve the lifeblood of international trade.

Editor's Note

The ASF Seafarers Committee held its 16th interim meeting in Qingdao, China on Friday, 22nd October 2010. The meeting was hosted by the China Shipowners Association (CSA) and was chaired by Mr. Li Shanmin (CSA), Chairman of the ASF Seafarers Committee. Delegates from ASF member associations of China (CSA), Hong Kong (HKSOA), Japan (JSA), Korea (KSA), Chinese Taipei (NACS) and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations (FASA), as represented by the shipowner associations of the Philippines and Singapore attended the meeting, together with the Secretary-General of the ASF.

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 Shipowner Associations, comprising the Shipowner Associations of the ASEAN countries. The aims of the ASF are to promote the interests of the Asian shipowning industries. Between annual ASF meetings, ongoing work is carried out by 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. 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.