



ASIAN SHIPOWNERS' FORUM

Safe Navigation & Environment Committee (SNEC)

c/o Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations (FASA)

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PRESS RELEASE

1. The 18th Interim Meeting of the Asian Shipowners' Forum (ASF) Safe Navigation & Environment Committee (SNEC) was held in Singapore on 19 March 2010. It was hosted by the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA).
2. The meeting was attended by 19 representatives of shipowners' associations from China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Korea, Chinese Taipei and ASEAN, as represented by the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations (FASA) which is composed of the shipowners' associations of Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
3. Mr. S.S. Teo, President of Singapore Shipping Association chaired the SNEC meeting on behalf of FASA.
4. During the meeting, the Committee considered and discussed various current issues concerning the safe navigation of ships and the protection of the marine environment.
5. On the **Piracy and Armed Robbery** problem manifested worldwide, the Committee expressed grave concern on the almost 40% increase in the number of pirate incidents in 2009 as compared with 2008. In particular, the Committee noted that over 50% of the reported incidents had taken place in waters off Somalia, in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, with 47 vessels hijacked and 867 crew taken hostage.

Recognizing the very serious threat of imminent pirate attacks and hijacks in the Gulf of Aden, the Meeting strongly urged all Governments and the United Nations to take more actions to deal with this problem and to help protect international shipping through the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. Meanwhile, the Committee agreed that all transiting ships should remain highly vigilant and adopt the Best Management Practices approved by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to tackle this pressing problem. Shipowners should adopt the voluntary reporting system provided by the Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA) and to seek the assistance of the escort and security services provided by the multi-national naval forces stationed in that area.

- 6 The Committee noted that there is currently a **proposal by the United States to ban the payment of ransoms for acts of piracy**.

The Committee expressed great concern that in the absence of any effective efforts to stop piracy, a ban on ransom payments would have a very adverse effect on the crews being held hostage by pirates. Such a proposal will also place additional burdens on the families of the crew.

The Committee further urged each member Association to convey their concerns to their respective governments.

- 7 The Committee expressed grave concern that the National Hydrographic Office of India had, in early February 2010, issued a **NAVAREA VIII warning** for the arbitrary closure¹ of, for all intents and purposes, the entirety of the Bay of Bengal to all flights and shipping activities on 7 and 9 February 2010. It is the Committee's opinion that such very short notice and unilateral nature of the closure of the Bay of Bengal, a major shipping lane, is not in accordance with IMO regulations.
- 8 Whilst the Committee supports every effort to enhance maritime safety and the protection of our marine environment, the Committee is however worried that the **Ballast Water Convention 2004** might enter into force very soon. Whilst there are a number of IMO-approved ballast water treatment systems available, these systems are not necessarily operationally effective for all types and sizes of ships. As ships not in compliance with the provisions of the Convention may be barred from a State party to the Convention once it enters into force, the lack of suitable systems for all types and sizes of ships might have serious repercussions on the industry.

Furthermore, the Committee also expressed concern that the installation of a ballast water treatment systems might have unintended consequences with regard to a vessel's energy efficiency.

As such, the Committee hopes that States would take due consideration prior to ratification as a number of operational issues remain to be addressed.

- 9 The Committee noted with regret that adoption of the Copenhagen Accord at the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) last December provided little guidance with regard to international shipping.

The Committee recognises that the onus now lies with the International Maritime Organisation to take a pro-active role with regard to the development of a road map aimed at reducing **Greenhouse Gas Emissions from ships** so as to avoid the imposition of unilateral regulations by individual States.

¹ Based on Indian newspapers reports, the closure of the Bay of Bengal was apparently for the test launch of India's Agni III ballistic missile.

In closing, the Committee reiterated that any measures adopted must meet IMO principles.

- 10 The members of the Committee expressed their appreciation to the SSA for hosting the 18th Interim Meeting of the SNEC in Singapore.

Editor's note:

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 Shipowners' Associations comprising shipping associations of ASEAN countries. The aims of the ASF are to promote the interests of the Asian shipowning industries. Between annual ASF meetings, the ongoing work is carried out by the 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. It has been estimated that ASF owners and managers control and operate nearly 50% of the world's cargo carrying fleet.

For any further questions, please contact:

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