



### ***Press briefing***

*1 March, 2011*

*For immediate release*

## Shipping chiefs call on 'people power' to pressure governments to crack down on Somali pirates now throttling vital trade routes

Ship owners and seafarers are calling on 'people power' to push their governments to act now and show the political will to resolve the growing Somali piracy crisis before it strangles world trade and before more innocent seafarers are tortured and murdered.

The SOS Save Our Seafarers campaign, launched today by BIMCO, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the International Shipping Federation (ISF), Intercargo, INTERTANKO and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), is aimed at encouraging millions of people around the world to heap pressure on their national Governments to crack down on piracy. They are calling on YOUR help.

The Somali piracy crisis affects you and every one of us worldwide. The dramatic recent extension of the pirates' operating area right across the Indian Ocean\*\* means that there are now no alternative routes to avoid the Somali pirate gangs, especially for tankers coming out of the Gulf. Ship owners and seafarers are re-evaluating their current determination to ensure that these vital trade routes remain open, and are going to have to choose whether to trade through this area or not.

Merchant ships are being attacked daily, running a gauntlet of gunfire and rocket propelled grenade attacks from armed gangs of Somali pirates. Over 800 seafarers are currently held hostage on their hijacked ships. Subjected to physical and psychological abuse for months at a time, they are held ransom for millions of dollars.

Yet even when caught red handed by naval forces, 80% of pirates are released to attack again. Why? Because the world's politicians don't realise the severity of this critical situation. The governments give the orders. The governments hold the key to resolving this crisis. But they seem unwilling to face reality and act. Their brief to the naval forces is simply to deter and disrupt, unless it involves a national interest.

Enough is enough. The Round Table of international shipping associations (RT) and the ITF are placing hard-hitting advertisements in key major international newspapers on 1 March to kick off the SOS Save Our Seafarers campaign which highlights the plight of seafarers and, with six specific requests, brings pressure to

bear on governments to show more political will and fewer legalistic excuses in dealing with Somali piracy.

### **Six specific requests**

We are specifically asking for governments to recognise the threat to our seafarers and the world economy, and take the necessary steps to eradicate piracy at sea and ashore by:

- Reducing the effectiveness of the easily-identifiable pirate motherships.
- Authorising naval forces to detain pirates and deliver them for prosecution and punishment.
- Fully criminalising all acts of piracy and intent to commit piracy under national laws in accordance with their mandatory duty to co-operate to suppress piracy under international conventions.
- Increasing naval assets available in this area.
- Providing greater protection and support for seafarers.
- Tracing and criminalising the organisers and financiers behind the criminal networks.

### **SOS Save our Seafarers**

The RT and the ITF have launched a new website for the SOS Save Our Seafarers campaign <http://www.saveourseafarers.com/>. Just two clicks and supporters can send a pre-prepared letter, signed by them, to their chosen heads of government. The website will also have up-to-the minute information on the piracy situation, and an SOS TV page with film clips and pictures.

### **Piracy is out of control – background\*\***

As pirates use hijacked merchant ships (so-called motherships) to extend their reach almost to India's coast some 1,500 miles from Somalia, the lawlessness has spread right across the Indian Ocean through which half the world's oil supply passes. Tankers coming from the Gulf and the Middle East can no longer avoid the pirates – and a hijacked tanker with 2 million barrels of oil represents 20% of daily oil imports to the USA.

In addition to the human cost, piracy is strangling key supply routes and costing the global economy \$12 billion a year.

We rely on freedom of the seas for the safe delivery of 90% of our food, fuel, raw materials, humanitarian aid and manufactured goods. Shipping serves international trade and assists economic activity and therefore regional stability in neighbouring countries. This freedom to serve world trade is threatened.

## Quotable quotes

*"It's time for Governments across the world to take firm action against the pirates that attack and hijack our ships. The current practice of releasing apprehended pirates without trial is a disgrace to our seafarers and to the international conventions. The upholding of international law and order is being grossly neglected."*

BIMCO President, Robert Lorenz-Meyer

*"Pirates are getting stronger, more violent and richer every day as a result of inertia by Governments. On behalf of all the major shipping organisations, we're calling for help from Governments to tackle this human and economic terror being inflicted upon innocent seafarers. We hope that by working together and encouraging support from the global community we can ease the current crisis of Somali piracy."*

ITF General Secretary, David Cockroft

*"Piracy is out of control. The pirates' extended reach through the use of hijacked merchant ships (so-called motherships) means that for tankers coming from the Gulf, there is no longer an optional route to avoid the risk of hijacking – and one captured tanker with 2m barrels of oil represents one fifth of U.S. daily oil imports. Governments need to protect the world's shipping lanes by showing political will, not political indifference."*

INTERTANKO Chairman, Capt Graham Westgarth

*"Politicians don't realise the severity of this crisis. Escalation affects our seafarers first and foremost, but the potential effect on world trade and regional stability will affect us all. Governments can no longer afford to simply to deter and disrupt the pirates."*

Intercargo Chairman, Nicky Pappadakis

*"We are drawing to the urgent attention of governments and inter-governmental organizations the recent deeply concerning shift in the modus operandi of Somali pirates, particularly where torture and murder of innocent seafarers is involved. The impact of this growing crisis on the welfare of seafarers and on trading patterns has to be understood by politicians and the public alike."*

Chairman of ICS/ISF, Spyros M Polemis

## Contacts:

The **Round Table** of international shipping associations:

**BIMCO** Peter Grube [pg@bimco.org](mailto:pg@bimco.org) Phone +45 44 366800

**ICS/ISF** Simon Bennett [simon.bennett@marisec.org](mailto:simon.bennett@marisec.org) Phone +44 20 7417 2857

**INTERCARGO** David Jones [david.jones@intercargoo.org](mailto:david.jones@intercargoo.org) Phone +44 20 7977 7035

**INTERTANKO** Bill Box [bill.box@intertanko.com](mailto:bill.box@intertanko.com) Phone +44 20 7977 7023

**ITF** Sam Dawson [dawson\\_sam@itf.org](mailto:dawson_sam@itf.org) Phone +44 20 7940 9260

## +4 attachments

SOS logo

SOS website home page

SOS letter to heads of government

SOS advertisement