

MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
98th session
Agenda item 15

MSC 98/15/1
10 March 2017
Original: ENGLISH

PIRACY AND ARMED ROBBERY AGAINST SHIPS

Information sharing on incidents of piracy and armed robbery – Gulf of Guinea

Submitted by Liberia, the Marshall Islands, Panama, ICS, ICC, BIMCO, INTERTANKO
and INTERCARGO

SUMMARY

Executive summary: There is concern over the under-reporting of piracy and armed robbery incidents within the Gulf of Guinea (GoG) region, which could lead to a misleading analysis of the scale and frequency of risks to seafarers and trade within this region. It is proposed that stakeholders be encouraged to report all incidents.

Strategic direction: 6.1, 6.2

High-level action: 6.2.2, 6.2.3, 6.2.4

Output: 6.2.1.1, 6.2.2.1

Action to be taken: Paragraph 7

Related documents: Resolution A.1069(28); MSC.1/Circ.1333, MSC.1/Circ.1334 and Circular Letter No.3684

Background

1 The ICC – International Maritime Bureau Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC) is a non-governmental and non-profit organization, which receives information on incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea directly from masters of vessels under attack, their owners or flag States. Since 1991, the IMB PRC statistics on this crime have been recognized as one of the most comprehensive sources of data on this crime and help governments, law enforcement and industry to generate a response and adopt best practices.

2 Upon receipt of the report of an incident, the IMB PRC promptly relays the incident information to local response agencies for their action. In addition, IMB broadcasts the incident details direct to ships via the INMARSAT Safety Net Service, warning other masters in the vicinity of the incident. No vessel identity details are broadcast.

3 Incidents of piracy and armed robbery in the GoG are under-reported. The IMB PRC compares reports received by it with other reports in the private and public domain and concludes that the level of under-reporting is approximately 60 to 70%. This is only for merchant vessels and does not include the incidents involving fishing vessels.

4 This significant level of under-reporting fails to generate a true and accurate picture of the risk faced by seafarers on both merchant and fishing vessels. This hides the risk of conducting business in the GoG and has a direct impact on the security and safety of seafarers. Additionally, it restricts the ability of coastal States to mount a properly resourced and focused response.

5 In June 2016, the French/United Kingdom operated Marine Domain Awareness for Trade – Gulf of Guinea Centre (MDAT-GoG) commenced operations. The MDAT-GoG supports the interregional Yaoundé Code of Conduct architecture. The Centre's aim is to provide industry with a coherent maritime situational awareness picture. This is achieved by encouraging vessels to report to the Centre when transiting through the Voluntary Reporting Area (VRA).

Proposal

6 In an effort to obtain a more accurate understanding of the levels of piracy and armed robbery the co-sponsors urge flag States, ship masters, shipowners/operators and commercial companies providing risk and security advice to clients operating within the GoG, to report incidents of piracy and armed robbery in a timely manner to the MDAT-GoG and IMB PRC. In turn, this will allow these organizations to work closely with coastal States to encourage a response, promptly alert other masters in the vicinity and develop a more meaningful understanding of the risk level while operating in these waters. It will also allow coastal States to initiate investigations in a timely manner, taking into account the welfare of the seafarers who are the victims of these crimes. This voluntary measure of information exchange will contribute to the reduction of incidents of piracy and armed robbery in the GoG.

Action requested of the Committee

7 The Committee is requested to note the above and encourage and urge all IMO Member States and observers, through an MSC Circular or other appropriate method, to take the necessary steps to provide accurate and timely information on incidents of piracy and armed robbery to the IMB PRC and MDAT-GoG.
