

Fourth United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries

Istanbul, Turkey

Statement by the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

13 May 2011

Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is an honour and privilege for me to address the Plenary Meeting of the fourth UN Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) today on behalf of the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) who, unavoidably could not be here.

IMO would like to join other delegations in expressing its appreciation to the Conference organizers and to the Government and Peoples of the Republic of Turkey for the excellent host ship facilities, warm welcome and the arrangements.

Chair,

The maritime transport sector represents one of the primary services for the development of the global economy, as over 90% of international trade is carried by sea and, it is, by far, the most cost-effective way to move en mass goods and raw materials around the world. Indeed, many LDCs depend on maritime transport or shipping services to access global markets. Further, many developing countries including are major suppliers of seafarers. It has been generally recognized that IMO rules and regulations have been successful in reducing the loss of life at sea and the quantities of oil spilled into the oceans by ships. However, a number of factors - such as the lack of required resources and skills in many developing countries - can influence the levels of global maritime safety, while others - such as poor management, incompetent manning of vessels - continue to threaten the safety of life at sea, the security of shipping and the marine environment.

IMO is the UN system's regulatory agency for the maritime sector and its global mandate is "safe, secure, environmentally sound, efficient and sustainable shipping through cooperation". IMO's rules and standards are accepted by Governments and

the global shipping industry because they provide a single, universal framework governing maritime operations. Many developing countries do not have the capacity to effectively implement IMO's instruments. For this reason and, as mandated by the Convention that created IMO, the Organization has established an Integrated Technical Co-operation Programme (ITCP), with the sole purpose of assisting countries in building up their human and institutional capacities for uniform and effective compliance with the Organization's regulatory framework.

Chair,

Following the 2005 World Summit which endorsed and re-affirmed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), IMO has established a linkage between its technical co-operation programme and the MDGs. Through this linkage, the technical co-operation programme gives priority to those activities which not only promote early ratification and effective implementation of IMO instruments but also contribute to the attainment of the MDGs, taking into account the special needs of Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and the particular maritime transport needs of Africa.

Thirty three of the LDCs are in Africa and meeting the special needs of Africa is one of the key objectives of the 2000 United Nations Millennium Declaration. In line with several resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly, IMO has, since the mid-1990s, given priority to Africa in the allocation of its technical assistance resources. In November 2009, IMO Assembly adopted a Strategic Plan for the period 2010 to 2015 which includes a requirement *to identify, address and pay special attention to the special shipping needs of SIDs and LDCs*. High transport and logistics costs result in high costs of doing business for LDCs which negatively impacts the ability of these nations to be competitive in the global market place and hinders socio-economic development. Available statistics show that many LDCs pay between two and three times more freight for shipping services than developed countries. In response to this, IMO has dedicated a global programme to support SIDs and LDCs for their shipping needs. The immediate objectives of this programme are – to address the issue of sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation through capacity-building activities in the maritime sector; to implement those activities that are linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); to drive continuous improvement and innovation in the facilitation of maritime traffic; to raise awareness and increase the knowledge of oil pollution preparedness response and co-operation to pollution

incidents; and to enhance the knowledge of the safety of domestic ferries and non-convention ships in countries such as Bangladesh.

Chair,

The economies of the countries in the Gulf of Aden, wider Indian Ocean and the East African region have been hardest hit by the on-going piracy and armed robbery against ships off the coast of Somalia. The number of acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships reported to IMO and which occurred in 2010 was 489, against 406 during the previous year, representing an increase of 20% from the figure for 2009. The areas most affected in 2010 were East Africa and the Indian Ocean followed by the Far East and, in particular, the South China Sea, West Africa, South America and the Caribbean. Further to the trauma that piracy causes to seafarers and their families, it is estimated, in accordance with a recent study reported by Chatham House (London), to cost the world economy between 7bn and 12bn US dollars per year, as a result of the disruption it effects on shipping services and international trade.

Last year, the IMO Council decided that the 2011 World Maritime Day theme should be **“Piracy: orchestrating the response”**. In this regard, IMO has developed, in co-operation with the shipping industry, seafaring representative organizations and other stakeholders, an action plan to maintain and, indeed, strengthen its focus on anti-piracy endeavours of all kinds and to facilitate a broader, global effort. This action plan was officially launched in London in February this year by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The main aims of the action plan and the campaign IMO is pursuing, and will continue to pursue throughout 2011 (and beyond, if necessary), are:

- one, to increase awareness about the severity of the piracy situation off the coast of Somalia and its implications for seafarers, the transport of humanitarian aid to the country and the disruption and resulting consequences piracy causes to shipping, international shipborne trade and the world economy;

- two, to motivate Governments, the shipping industry, merchant ships and naval vessels to redouble their efforts to stem the unacceptable incidence of piracy in the areas around the Horn of Africa and beyond; and
- three, to send to seafarers a clear message that their plight, while sailing off Somalia and, worst, when their ships are captured by pirates and they are held hostage for ransom, is central in our thoughts and work; that we do care about them; and that we do all we can to stem the scourge.

IMO acknowledges that whilst the long term solution to piracy off the coast of Somalia depends on the political will of the international community to assist Somalia establish a stable Government, piracy has highlighted how inter-dependent the global economy and supply chain is on maritime transport. IMO appreciates the efforts and assistance that has been given by some Member States, the UN system and stakeholders towards tackling piracy.

Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished participants,

In conclusion, IMO has within, its mandate and resources, played its role towards the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the LDCs and would like to express its support for the successful adoption, today, of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs for the decade 2011-2020 by this Conference. IMO will continue to establish partnerships with Governments, organizations and industry to enhance the delivery of its capacity-building programmes for the LDCs.

Thank you.