



IMO

E

SUB-COMMITTEE ON STABILITY AND
LOAD LINES AND ON FISHING VESSELS
SAFETY
52nd session

SLF 52/INF.6
26 January 2010
ENGLISH ONLY

**ADDRESS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
AT THE OPENING OF THE FIFTY-SECOND SESSION OF THE
SUB-COMMITTEE ON STABILITY AND LOAD LINES
AND ON FISHING VESSELS SAFETY
(25 to 29 January 2010)**

Good morning, distinguished delegates and observers, – and **welcome** to the fifty-second session of the Sub-Committee on Stability and Load Lines and on Fishing Vessels Safety.

As we are still in the month of January, I consider it timely and appropriate for me to **wish** you all a happy new year – a year in which we should redouble our efforts for enhanced safety, security and environmental protection. In this, your Sub-Committee has, as ever, an important role to play.

As the chairman you elected for 2009 (when your Sub-Committee's session was cancelled), **Mr. Rob Gehling of Australia**, is no longer attending the Sub-Committee, you will have, at the end of my speech, to elect a new chairman for this year – and also hold another election on Thursday for the next year. In the meantime, I am sure you would wish to join me in conveying to Mr. Gehling our sincere thanks and appreciation for his excellent services to the Sub-Committee over many years and, in particular, during the last five years when he served it as its Chairman. I would ask the Australian delegation to inform Mr. Gehling accordingly.

Distinguished delegates,

Before turning to the most important items on your agenda for this week, I wish to say a few words about this year's World Maritime Day theme, which is "**2010: Year of the Seafarer**". By choosing this theme, the Organization and the maritime community at large will have, throughout the year, the opportunity to pay tribute to the more than 1.5 million seafarers from all over the world for their unique contribution to society and in recognition of the risks they shoulder in the execution of their daily tasks and duties in an often hostile environment. The theme should, furthermore, help to attract continued attention to some unique hazards confronting seafarers nowadays, such as pirate attacks, unwarranted detention when their ships are involved in accidents, refusal of shore leave for security purposes and abandonment, to name but a few.

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number. Delegates are kindly asked to bring their copies to meetings and not to request additional copies.



Coupled with the reported – and disconcerting – projected shortage of qualified merchant navy officers worldwide, it makes it ever more incumbent upon IMO and the shipping industry to take immediate and effective action to prevent a situation from taking hold in which ships are not adequately manned because of the lack of sufficient skilled personnel.

The selection of 2010 as “Year of the Seafarer” is also in line with the “**Go to Sea!**” campaign, which we launched in November 2008, in association with the International Labour Organization, the “Round Table” of shipping industry organizations and the International Transport Workers’ Federation. The principal reason behind that initiative was to focus our attention on the urgent need to **attract young people** of the right calibre to the seafaring profession, by emphasizing to them that seafaring offers **rewarding, stimulating and long-term** prospects, not only at sea but also in the broader maritime industry ashore.

In supporting the campaign, the Maritime Safety Committee has urged Member Governments and international organizations to **provide information** on any activities they have undertaken or are planning in promoting the goals of the campaign with a view to transferring elements of best practice, positive examples and useful experiences gained in one part of the world to others elsewhere so that every party concerned can benefit. To such an end, I would invite all concerned to respond to the request of the MSC so that we can coordinate our activities and meet the challenge that confronts us head-on – collectively and expeditiously.

What should we try to achieve during the Year of the Seafarer in order to inject substance in the theme and, eventually, make a difference? – **three** things, in my view:

- **One**, increase awareness among the general public of the indispensable services seafarers render to civil society at large;
- **Two**, send them a message that we recognize and appreciate their services; that we **do** care about them; and that we do all that we can to look after and protect them when the circumstances of their life at sea so warrant; and
- **Three**, redouble, during this auspicious year, our efforts at the regulatory level to move from words to deeds to create a better world in which seafarers operate.

Distinguished delegates,

While the decline in shipping activities resulting from the economic downturn has manifestly brought a relative decrease in accidents, we may run the risk that, unless we take appropriate measures to prevent the development of conditions that may cause an accident, the upward trend we observed during the shipping boom that preceded the recent financial crisis could well resurface. Our constant, focused and undivided attention to our work should, therefore, be ceaselessly pursued, now and at any time in the future. I consider it incumbent on all of us, at IMO and in the wider maritime community, to ensure that safety and environmental standards are not compromised in any way and that, as I have stressed many times in the past, commercial considerations should not be given any precedence over safety and environmental protection.

Distinguished delegates,

Since you last met, eighteen months ago, the **Maritime Safety Committee** has met twice and, under agenda item 2, you will be informed of decisions it took relevant to your work along with those made by **other IMO bodies** of similar relevance.

You will be pleased to know that, in December 2008, the MSC adopted an updated version of the **International Code on Intact Stability**, together with associated amendments to the 1974 SOLAS Convention and the 1988 Load Lines Protocol to make the Code mandatory; these amendments are due to enter into force in July of this year. According to the updated plan of action on intact stability-related work, you are expected to commence, at this session, the **development of new generation intact stability criteria**, such as performance-based stability criteria, based on the new concept of intact stability failure, with the aim of making the new criteria applicable to unconventional types of ship. The performance-based approach to intact stability standards not only has distinct advantages, such as allowing for the incorporation of the latest technological developments and innovative solutions, it also encourages the development of high practicable standards, based on scientific analysis. I hope that, taking into account the work accomplished intersessionally by the correspondence group you established last time, you will be able to make considerable progress on this matter this week.

The **safety of small fishing vessels** is an issue that, in collaboration with other IMO bodies, FAO and ILO, the Sub-Committee has been dealing with for some considerable time. At this session, you are expected to finalize **draft recommendations** for decked fishing vessels of less than 12 metres in length and undecked fishing vessels, so that they may be submitted to the May session of the MSC for approval and, subsequently, forwarded to FAO and ILO for their respective approval as well. The rigorous work undertaken intersessionally by the *ad hoc* correspondence group should help you to complete this task this week. In addition, you should consider the first draft text of new **guidelines to assist competent authorities** in the implementation of relevant instruments, such as the Fishing Vessels Safety Code and the Voluntary Guidelines for the design, construction and equipment of small fishing vessels, along with the draft Safety recommendations I mentioned before.

The slow progress in the ratification of the **1993 Torremolinos Protocol** and the **1995 STCW-F Convention** to enable the two instruments to come into force remains an issue of utmost concern and an impediment to the enhancement of the safety of ships and personnel engaged in the fishing industry worldwide we seek to achieve. I would, once again, reiterate my previous pleas by urging all Governments that have not yet done so to **ratify the two instruments at the earliest possible time**, if we want to see the high loss of life in the sector being reduced through a rigorous implementation and enforcement of their provisions. Following endorsement by the Assembly of the decision of the Maritime Safety Committee to explore options to facilitate and expedite the entry into force of the Torremolinos Protocol, the Committee included in your Sub-Committee's agenda a new item concerning the **development of an agreement on the implementation of the 1993 Torremolinos Protocol**, a task that you are expected to pursue further this week when you consider a relevant draft agreement **and, as an alternative option, a draft Assembly resolution** along with the identification of regulations of the Protocol that would need to be amended. In doing so, you should take into account the replies to the questionnaire on technical and legal issues sent out by the Secretariat and the outcome of the *ad hoc* subregional seminar, which was held in Bali, Indonesia, in October 2009.

Another important item on which to focus this week concerns the **development of options to improve the effect on ship design and safety of the 1969 Tonnage Measurement Convention**. The MSC decided to include this item in your agenda, with a target completion date of 2011,

having noted the possible adverse effect on both the design and the safety of ships of using a vessel's total enclosed volume as the sole basis for calculating the tonnage of ships. Developing options to improve safety from the design stage of a ship may necessitate amendments to the Convention, which would, of course, prompt the most careful approach at this and subsequent sessions.

In the context of the comprehensive amendments to SOLAS chapter II-1 regarding damage stability and subdivision, which entered into force in January 2009, several issues have emerged, which require careful consideration. As a follow-up to the passenger ship safety initiative, for example, and with the aim of developing appropriate amendments to the relevant SOLAS regulation, you should consider further the issue of **time-dependent survivability of passenger ships in damaged condition** and, taking into account the report of the *ad hoc* correspondence group, progress your work on **stability and sea-keeping characteristics of damaged passenger ships in a seaway when returning to port by own power or under tow**. Also at this session, you are expected to finalize the development of **guidance on the impact of open watertight doors on existing and new ship survivability**, also taking into account the report of the correspondence group, and to commence work on **damage stability regulations for ro-ro passenger ships** with a view to ensuring that the issue of water on deck is adequately addressed with regard to ro-ro passenger ships in the revised SOLAS chapter II-1.

Equally important, of course, are other items on your agenda, such as **subdivision standards for cargo ships, guidelines for verification of damage stability requirements for tankers and bulk carriers, safety provisions applicable to tenders operating from passenger ships, and amendments to the 1966 Load Lines Convention and the 1988 Load Lines Protocol related to seasonal zones**.

In considering all these items, you should keep uppermost in your mind the role of the human element, as repeatedly emphasized by the MSC and specifically called for in the Committee's Guidelines on the organization and methods of work.

It is encouraging that considerable progress was made intersessionally by various **correspondence groups** on several important agenda items and all the members of these groups, especially their coordinators, deserve our thanks and appreciation. I have no doubt that their contribution will enable you to make good use of your time this week so that you may make good progress on all of them.

Before I conclude, I will briefly invite your attention, once again, to two issues of a more general nature.

The first concerns **security during meetings** – a matter on which I will appreciate your co-operation now and in the future. These are not easy times and we should not, for lack of alertness or the demonstration of any complacent attitude, make it easier for criminal elements to perpetrate any of the unlawful acts they may have in mind. The **second** concerns the need to seek continued progress in the implementation of the **Voluntary IMO Member State Audit Scheme** so that its benefits may be enjoyed by all Member States. I am pleased that the Assembly, at its session last November, decided that the Scheme should move to a more substantive phase of development engaging all Members party to a list of specified IMO conventions, and I know that I can count on the support and contribution of all of you to the success of the process leading to the new phase.

Distinguished delegates,

From the items on your agenda I have highlighted it is evident that, once again, you have not only a lot of work to do but also a considerable number of important issues to address. I am confident that you will tackle the task at hand successfully, guided by your constant commitment to the twin causes of maritime safety and environmental protection and inspired by the customary IMO spirit of co-operation. This, in turn, will ensure that you will make sound, balanced and timely decisions on which to base your advice to the Maritime Safety and Marine Environment Protection Committees, as appropriate. I look forward to a fruitful outcome to your endeavours. It goes without saying that the Secretariat will, as usual, stand by you with any service that might be required in the accomplishment of your tasks. I wish you every success and the best of luck.

We will now move on to the election of your Chairman and Vice-Chairman for this session and year. However, before doing so, there is something else I wish to speak to you about.

I am sure that, like me, you have been following the news on **Haiti** and that, like me, you have been moved by the devastation the earthquake has caused to the country – an IMO Member –its citizens and several UN workers on the ground who paid the ultimate price in the line of duty. Mr. Ban, the UN Secretary-General, has called the situation “one of the worst humanitarian crises in decades” and has launched a Flash Appeal for \$562m to enable the UN System to provide emergency relief for three million people for up to six months.

Many of you may have made donations to aid charities already. For those who have not or wish to give more, we have opened an account to collect as much money as possible to add our contribution to that of the United Nations. To such an end, we have placed boxes outside this Room in which you may please put your donations. We are doing the same among the staff of the Organization. Any donation you may wish to make for the cause I just mentioned will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you.
