

**Ninth Asia Pacific Heads of Maritime Safety Agencies Forum
Viña del Mar, Chile, 18-22 April 2006**

COMMUNIQUE

1. General

The Asia Pacific Heads of Maritime Safety Agencies Forum held its ninth session from 18 to 22 April 2006 at Viña del Mar, Republic of Chile.

The Forum was attended by delegations from the following countries and regions;

Australia	Solomon Islands
Canada	The Republic of the Philippines
Chile	The Republic of Korea
The People's Republic of China	The Republic of Singapore
Hong Kong, China	The United States of America
Japan	The Republic of Vanuatu
Malaysia	Socialist Republic of Vietnam
New Zealand	

The Forum was chaired by Vice Admiral FRANCISCO MARTINEZ from Chile, and vice-chaired by Mr. Bakoa Kaltongga, from the Republic of Vanuatu.

In welcoming the participants, Mrs. Carolina Echeverria, the Undersecretary of the Navy, on behalf of the Chilean Government, provided the keynote speech. The Undersecretary emphasized that this Forum shows the real interest of the economies of the Pacific Basin in consolidating policies, doctrines and, mainly in agreeing cooperation strategies in order to create a safe and secure place in the Pacific Ocean, with a sustainable and harmonic environment. She also remarked that the world we live in today, offers us great opportunities for development; but we are also faced with different and continuous threats, for which we must keep in mind what has been said in the APEC leaders' statements: terrorism poses a

threat to the steady growth and national security of the Pacific Ocean's coastal countries.

Consequently, the fight against international terrorism and criminal acts at sea, constitute a goal for all States, with the purpose of assuring people's integrity and development through a safe and free trade.

Cooperation among Member States is imperative to jointly face these non-traditional threats.

2. Maritime Security

The session on Maritime Security, chaired by Chile, considered papers from Canada, Chile, New Zealand and Singapore, covering subjects dealing with the implementation of the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code after its worldwide adoption. Specific topics covered included: security clearances for port and ship workers; training and control measures for dockworkers and security guards; the importance of supply security chain as an integral part of maritime security; and, technical harbour craft transponder system, with the purpose of fully addressing these issues, including efforts to share the best practices.

The Forum acknowledged that the participating nations have worked diligently in successfully implementing the ISPS Code requirements.

The Forum agreed that this issue should continue to receive attention in future Forums.

The Republic of Korea made a statement regarding a piracy attack against a Korean fishing vessel "Dongwon No.628" which had taken place off Somalia's eastern coast while conducting legal fishing operations. Korea reported that a total of 25 crew members, consisting of 8 Korean, 9 Indonesian, 5 Vietnamese and 3 Chinese still remain detained on board the ship.

The Forum expressed a great sympathy with Korean government and the crew of a fishing vessel taken over by pirates off Somalia's eastern coast. The Forum concurred with the view of Korean government that this issue should be considered, taking into consideration IMO Resolution A979(24), by the 81st session of Maritime Safety Committee of the IMO as a priority item for further strengthening international and regional cooperation to combat piracy and armed robbery against ships especially in waters off the coast of Somalia.

The Forum agreed that this issue should continue to receive attention in future Forums.

3. Safety Systems

This session, chaired by Canada, considered papers from Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Republic of Korea, and the USA on issues of emergency response for vessels in distress in the Remote Southern Oceans; Marine Evacuation Systems with their organization and procedures; the experiences gained with the implementation of the International Safety Management Code (ISM Code); the application of the Voluntary Member States Audit Scheme proposed by the IMO, and Maritime and Aeronautical Search and Rescue matters in the Pacific Ocean.

Guidelines have been implemented in Australia for their fulfilment by ships and their crews sailing Antarctic Waters aimed at safeguarding life at sea and the marine environment. These guidelines are an excellent contribution to the Forum and a strong co-operation in the Antarctic Area will improve the safety of navigation.

However, the Forum suggest to have the presented guidelines analyzed, so that a higher number of countries operating vessels in the Antarctic may participate with ships and assets, coordinating joint actions in case of a maritime incident striking in the area.

Noting the vastness of the Pacific Ocean presented in the papers by Australia, Chile, and the United States; the Asia-Pacific Heads of Maritime Safety Agencies

IX Forum strongly supports the use of Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) data by Search and Rescue (SAR) services, and that this information be provided at no cost to the SAR Centers. The Forum also urges the IMO to have the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) consider as large a distance as possible for LRIT information in order to give the SAR Regional Centers the most comprehensive data possible.

The Forum strongly supported greater cooperation in the field of training and technical assistance, joint exercises and measures to improve SAR communications, especially the use of LRIT for all vessel in this remote and environmental sensitive region and response capabilities.

From the SAR perspective and with the common interest between APHMSA Forum and APANPIRG, the Forum also noted the potential benefits in exchanging appropriate information regarding their meetings.

The Forum also encouraged their members, to participated in the Voluntary Member State Audit Scheme (VMSAS) proposed by of the IMO, as this will improve the implementation of the International Conventions of this body, and thereby further enhance maritime safety and marine environmental protection in this way we will have clean oceans and the reinforcement of the safety of life at sea.

The Forum agreed that this issue should continue to receive attention at future Forums.

4. Environmental Protection

The session on Environmental Protection, chaired by New Zealand , considered papers from Australia , Canada, China, New Zealand , Singapore and the US, covering emergency response and towage; ballast water protection, overall Oceans Policy, and lessons learned from knowledge the response to Hurricane Katrina.

The Forum recognized the importance of sharing experiences in joint SAR and pollution control operations, and also the use of rational and scientific methods combined with information technologies (IT) to provide quick and on time decisions making.

The Forum also recognized the critical importance of protecting the marine environment and acknowledged the need to address the issue in accordance with international conventions, civil liability and international law.

The Forum recognized the excellent job done by the USCG during the Katrina disaster, including support in search and rescue activities developed during that emergency, and the large period of time spend in support of all the people in danger in the Louisiana area.

The Forum agreed that coastal issues should continue to receive attention at future Forums.

5. Safety of People

The session chaired by Australia, considered papers from Chile on training and education of seafarers, Australia on managing coastal pilotage risks and the ways to find the next generation of pilots ; Hong Kong-China on a report where a routine inspection of the fixed CO2 fire extinguishing system led to the death of four officers onboard a vessel ; and New Zealand on management of fatigue among seafarers.

The Forum reaffirmed the importance of the human factor in managing and preventing environmental, security, and safety incidents.

In particular, the Forum expressed appreciation for the work being carried out on identifying the causes of fatigue among seafarers and pilots, and welcomed the development of practical measures to address and reduce fatigue.

The Forum agreed that this issue should continue to receive attention at future Forums; noted the impact of commercial pressures on ship manning and hours of work. It was suggested that Administrations need to identify and promote the commercial benefits to employers on the proper management of fatigue.

The Forum also noted that further consideration needs to be given to ensure that appropriate training is provided to enhance safety awareness and to develop a safety culture.

The Forum accepts the paper from Hong Kong-China with the support of the Asia Pacific Maritime Safety Agencies, attending at this meeting, and submit the accident report to the IMO showing their experiences in the case of the accident occurred during a routine inspection of the fixed CO2 fire extinguishing system on board, that led to the death of four officers in a vessel, with the proposal that IMO develops a guideline instructing about the procedures and safety measures to be adopted in this cases , to protect the life of seafarers .

Specific references were made by general delegations to the issues of fatigue and overall safety within the fishing industry and linked to this the importance of ratifying the STCW – F Convention. This subject should be carried forward to the eleven Forum

6. Maritime Domain Awareness

This session of the Forum, chaired by the USA, considered a single presentation on Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). MDA is defined as the effective understanding of anything associated with the global maritime domain that could impact the security, safety, the economy or the environment was acknowledged as an essential element of a common strategy to counter all transnational threats. It was also acknowledged by the Forum that for MDA to be effective, information from all maritime mission areas must be integrated, and that the sharing of maritime information among international partners, particularly among APHMSA members, is essential in achieving transparency. In addition, it was the considered opinion and

consensus among the delegates that the Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) amendment to being considered for adoption at the 81st meeting of the Maritime Safety Committee should include provisions to allow coastal states access to LRIT data and that the range from shore to which coastal states should have LRIT data; access should be determined based not only on security requirements but also on the vast search and rescue regions for which many nations, particularly those in the Southern hemisphere, are responsible. It was recognized that even though MDA may involve issues outside a strict interpretation of maritime security, MDA could be adequately accommodated within the charter of the Maritime Security Working Group. It was therefore decided by this Forum that in the future MDA issues and papers will be considered under the Maritime Security Working Group.

Noting the great potential for MDA to contribute to many aspect of maritime safety, SAR, environmental protection, as well as security, the Forum suggested further work should be carried out or discussed at future meeting regarding the precise benefits with can be derived.

7. Other Issues

The session on other issues was chaired by Chile and considered a paper from Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore on Status update on the development of international cooperation in the maintenance of navigational safety in the Malacca and Singapore Straits.

Also was presented a paper of Solomon Island on the maritime security initiatives in line with the ISPS Code in their country, showing their organization , surveyors and the details of their implementation.

The Forum noted the information and expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the respective Administrations.

8. Conclusion

The Forum expressed warm appreciation for the very kind offer made by the Republic of Vanuatu to host the tenth session of the Forum in April 2007.

The Forum also extended their warm thanks to Philippines for their offer to host the eleventh session of the Forum.

Finally, participants expressed their appreciation to the Chilean Maritime Authority for hosting the ninth Forum in Viña del Mar.