

11 February 2011

Dear Seafarer,

In naming 2010 “The Year of the Seafarer”, I expressed the hope that when, at the end of the year, we took stock of what we achieved, we would be able to say that 2010 did, indeed, make a difference to the lives of seafarers.

We had three main objectives:

- to increase awareness among the general public of the indispensable services you render to international seaborne trade, the world economy and society at large;
- to send a clear message to you that we recognize and appreciate your services; that we understand the extraordinary conditions and circumstances of your profession; that we do care about you; and that we do all that we can to look after and protect you when the circumstances of your life at sea so warrant; and
- to redouble our efforts at the regulatory level to create a better, safer and more secure world in which you can operate.

With regard to the first, it was most encouraging to see how many Governments, international organizations and industry bodies took the spirit of the event to heart and provided opportunities for publicizing the Year of the Seafarer through many conferences, seminars, workshops, award schemes, etc., all focusing on you and your all-too-often overlooked role in serving, daily, the citizens of the world.

I am well aware that the hardships you face today cannot be solved by a publicity campaign alone and that we still need to do more to inform the general public. But, I am hopeful that those who create, or perpetuate, the poor conditions under which some of you are forced to live and work will find it increasingly difficult to escape the glare of the spotlight that, prompted by the Year of the Seafarer, is now being shone upon them.

IMO Member Governments did much to endorse the second objective when, at the 2010 Manila Conference, they unanimously adopted a resolution, entitled “**Year of the Seafarer**”, expressing deep appreciation and gratitude to you for your unique contribution to international seaborne trade, the world economy and society as a whole. The adoption by the Conference of amendments to the STCW Convention and Code (the Manila Amendments) will set the international benchmark for the training and education of seafarers for many years to come. The success of the Conference was crowned by its decision to declare the day on which the Amendments were adopted, the **25<sup>th</sup> of June**, as the annual “**Day of the Seafarer**”, which will



be celebrated for the first time this year – an event that, we hope, will maintain our efforts to raise awareness among the general public of the key role you play in today's world.

During 2010 we also made considerable efforts to address the problem of piracy that has blighted the lives of many of you for too long. However, as the rising statistics so bleakly indicate, this remains a real and ever-present danger to shipping – and we are neither proud of, nor content, with the results achieved so far. And so it was with you very much in mind that the IMO Council decided that the 2011 World Maritime Day theme should be "**Piracy: orchestrating the response**", with the aim of encouraging a decisive and effective global response to piracy. Our comprehensive action plan for the year and beyond was launched by the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, at IMO Headquarters at the beginning of this month.

In conjunction with the shipping industry, seafaring representative organizations and other stakeholders, we aim to promote further co-operation between and among States, regions and organizations to reduce the risk of attacks on ships and seafarers through information-sharing; coordination of military and civil efforts, above and beyond the unprecedented degree of co-operation that has already characterized the international naval response; and development and implementation of regional initiatives.

On board ship, rigorous implementation of the relevant IMO Codes and guidelines and industry best management practice guidance on how to access the available naval protection and implement the preventive, evasive and defensive measures recommended by IMO and the industry will do much to reduce the risk of successful attacks. In this, each of you has a role to play and I urge you, together with your fellow seafarers, to play it consistently, persistently and effectively every time your ship sails through piracy-infested areas.

More needs to be done – of that we are clear – if the ultimate goal of consigning piracy to the realms of history is to be achieved. We hope that our choice of theme for 2011 and our anti-piracy action plan will provide an appropriate rallying point around which all those who can make a difference can focus their efforts.

With best wishes for calm seas, fair winds and a safe return home,



E.E. Mitropoulos  
Secretary-General