

Number 4 – August/September 2010

Arming of crew rejected

On 3 August, an attempt was made to hijack “Bow Saga” and shots were fired at the vessel by pirates in the Gulf of Aden. The Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association is of the opinion that the failure to take action and the lack of will to prosecute these pirates on the part of Norwegian and international authorities following the hijacking attempt is a provocation.

The Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association is in agreement with the Norwegian Shipowners' Association, Norwegian authorities and IMO that Norwegian seamen should not be armed in order to fight off pirate attacks.

“Firstly, we fear that arming crews could create escalation in the use of violence. Secondly, civilian seamen are not trained in the use of weapons. From a legal viewpoint, a ship's master could also encounter problems. For the same reasons we are also of the opinion that the hire of armed guards is not a good solution either,” says Director and Captain Hans Sande.

He underlines that the safety of the crew on board must be given first priority and that it is vital that the recommended international security measures are followed when sailing in dangerous waters.

Major shipowner criticized

“The Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association are disconcerted that the shipowner John Fredriksen has reversed his decision and is flagging out five ships from the Norwegian International Ship Register (NIS) to the Marshall Islands,” says Director and Captain Hans Sande. At the same time he is of the opinion that the fact that certain politicians are trying to score political points in this case is uncalled for.

“The Government deserves credit for its active attempts to market the Norwegian International Ship Register. The fact that Fredriksen has reversed his decision after flagging ships back to Norway, is something that neither the Minister of Industry nor the regulations can be criticized for,” he says.

Hans Sande underlines that the growth in the NIS Register is first and foremost positive for Norway as a flag state, but that this growth can also have spin-off effects that will secure Norwegian jobs and Norwegian competence in the future.

New Chairman

Harald Åge Weines has been elected new chairman of the Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association. Claus P. Horntvedt is the new deputy chairman.

Negotiations with cruise lines

This autumn the Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association will be holding numerous negotiations with the international cruise companies. The main subjects in these negotiations will be wages, pensions and insurance schemes.

IMO, shipping industry, seafarers seek UN response to piracy

International Maritime Organization (IMO), shipping industry, seafarers unite in seeking UN response to piracy and release of hostages held in Somalia

Support from the United Nations Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon to secure the release of hostages - seafarers, in the main - currently being held by pirates in Somalia has been sought, via a letter jointly

signed by IMO Secretary-General Mr. Efthimios E. Mitropoulos and heads of international shipping and seafarer organizations.

In the letter they asked Mr. Ban to draw the attention of the Security Council to the unacceptable plight of the 395 hostages currently being held by pirates in Somalia and seek to develop a dynamic approach that might secure their release.

"In this, the Year of the Seafarer, your early positive response to our request will be greatly appreciated by the world's seafarers and the international maritime community," the letter adds.

The letter was drafted following the 14 July meeting of shipping industry organizations and representatives of seafarer organizations held at IMO.

Hans Sande Vice President of IFSMA

International Federation of Shipmasters Association (IFSMA) visited Manila in the Philippines during 2010 with some strength for three key events; The IFSMA AGA, The Diplomatic Conference for the review of STCW and then their Forum '2010 the Year of the Seafarer'.

The 36th Annual General Assembly was well attended with 55 delegates representing 17 associations. This year's AGA also elected by acclaim the following new Vice Presidents; Remi Boissel Dombrevail, Hans Sande and Marcel van den Broek. These were appointed following the resignations of Mark Dickinson, Patrick Vigneron-Larosa and Petr Osichansky who had served the Federation well over the years.

At the Diplomatic Conference for the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers major revisions were adopted. These amendments will be known as "The Manila Amendments to the STCW Convention and Code" and are to enter into force on 1 January 2012.

"Much of the debate from IFSMA's perspective was the issue of hours of rest and although we did not achieve everything we aimed for the consensus that was agreed was much better than had been tabled by other delegations. Our focus on this issue at the Diplomatic conference may make us overlook the fact that much has been achieved during the last four years leading up to the Manila Amendments", writes Rodger MacDonald, Secretary General on IFMAS's website.

New Ballast Water Management Regulation

The Norwegian Ballast Water Management Regulation has entered into force as of 1 July 2010.

The Norwegian Maritime Directorate has furthermore adopted a circular (RSV 09-2010) concerning compliance control relating to Ballast Water Management in accordance with the Norwegian Ballast Water Management Regulation. Primarily, this control will involve inspection of documents, e.g. ballast water record book and approved ballast water management plan.

Each ship shall have on board a ballast water and sediments management plan which must be approved in accordance with the IMO Guidelines. If the plan is not yet approved, the supervising authorities will accept a document from the flag state or recognized classification society stating that the application for approval is received and an indication of the expected handling time.

Biggest ever ITF-congress.

Some 1376 participants from 368 trade unions in 112 countries attended the ITF's forty-second congress in Mexico City. The congress determines the policies of the ITF – a global union federation with 760 affiliated trade unions with 4.69 million members in 154 countries – for the next four years.

Paddy Crumlin from Australia was elected the new ITF president. He commented: "I'm excited to be able to take on this new role and play my part in moving the work of the ITF, its hundreds of affiliated unions and their millions of members forward through the implementation of a comprehensive organising programme focused on trade union regeneration and revitalisation."

Dockers and seafarers' unions voted to accept an overhaul of the ITF's flag of convenience (FOC) policy in its first major update since 1998. It will be known as the Mexico City Policy. The new policy sets out to create a better balance between unions in beneficial ownership and labour supply countries in order to provide improvements in the protection for seafarers.

ITF maritime coordinator Steve Cotton said the new policy would continue to establish closer relationships between seafarers and dockers and their unions and develop the methods that could be used to advance their interests.

He added: "The Mexico City Policy begins to address long-standing concerns about non-domiciled seafarers. It includes an understanding that the ITF's engagement with national flag vessels is in partnership and in consultation with unions in those countries and reflects their concerns about protecting their own members."

NEWS IN BRIEF is a fresh offer from the Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association. The newsletter will give a summary of the most recent activities in our association and news of interest to English speaking members and seafarers on Norwegian ships. NEWS IN BRIEF will be distributed by e-mail as well as posted on our website www.sjooff.no. To subscribe, please e-mail oslo@sjooff.no