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Press Release

ASA SC highlights care for seafarers' safety and their fair treatment when detained on suspicion of committing maritime crimes

The 30th Interim Meeting of the Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) Seafarers Committee (SC) was held virtually on 10 December 2024, hosted and arranged by China Shipowners' Association.

Seafarers are vital in ensuring a seamless flow of essential goods in world trade. Without seafarers, the world would not be able to transport the large quantities of commodities that societies require to survive. However, seafarers' lives are being put at risk due to attacks on merchant ships and acts of piracy in the Red Sea and other areas. These incidents not only threaten the safety and welfare of seafarers, but also produce far-reaching consequences not only for the shipping industry but also for the global economy as a whole.

The Red Sea is a crucial waterway linking Europe and Asia. Many ships passing through the affected area are crewed with seafarers from Asia. As always, ASA SC condemns the attacks on civilian merchant ships and the seafarers on board, and urges the international community to find a solution to this unprecedented threat to seafarers.

Unfair treatment of seafarers, which can take many forms and be for many reasons, has an unacceptable impact on the seafarers involved. It also has a damaging effect on the image of the shipping industry and its ability to attract and retain qualified seafarers.

ASA SC is pleased to note that the third meeting of the Joint ILO/IMO Tripartite Working Group, which met in November 2024, adopted the Guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers Detained in Connection with Alleged Crimes. The objective of these Guidelines is to ensure that the human rights and legitimate interests of seafarers involved in alleged maritime crimes are recognized, that seafarers detained in connection with alleged maritime crimes are treated fairly by public authorities, and

that investigation or detention is for no longer than necessary, in accordance with the laws of the port or coastal States.

These guidelines have set out the different responsibilities to treat seafarers fairly when detained on suspicion of committing maritime crimes: for port and coastal states, flag states, shipowners and the state of which the seafarer is a national. ASA SC calls for the strengthening of co-operation between flag states, the states of nationality of seafarers, the port state where the seafarers are investigated or detained, and urges the public authorities to note their obligations under those Guidelines regarding the need to treat seafarers with respect and dignity at all times.

The ASA Seafarers' Committee (SC) is a forum for the ASA member Associations to discuss issues relating to seafarers' development, capacity-building, welfare, wellbeing and other entitlements in accordance with MLC 2006 and STCW Convention as well other international instruments.

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Editor's Note:

The Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) is a voluntary organisation of the shipowners' associations of China, Cook Islands, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations comprising shipping associations of ASEAN countries. The aims of the ASA are to promote the interests of Asian shipowners. Between ASA AGM meetings, the ongoing work is carried out by five Standing Committees: Seafarers Committee (SC) Ship Insurance and Liability Committee (SILC) Safe Navigation and Environment Committee (SNEC) Shipping Policy Committee (SPC) Ship Recycling Committee (SRC). It has been estimated that ASA shipowners and managers control and operate around 50% of the world's cargo-carrying fleet.