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Circular letter No.3290  
13 August 2012

To: IMO Member States and other Governments  
United Nations and specialized agencies  
Intergovernmental organizations  
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **World Maritime Day, 2012**

Further to Circular letter No.3244 of 30 January 2012, the Secretary-General has the honour to enclose herewith material in connection with this year's celebrations of World Maritime Day, to take place during the week of 24 to 28 September 2012, namely:

- the text of his message on the occasion (attached as annex 1); and
- a statement on the year's theme ("**IMO: One hundred years after the Titanic**") (attached as annex 2).

It would be appreciated if the material enclosed herewith could be forwarded, as soon as possible, to the authorities responsible for organizing the celebrations of World Maritime Day. In order to promote the Day more widely, it would also be appreciated if the authorities concerned would organize, wherever possible, suitable events to celebrate the Day; and inform the Secretariat, by 14 September 2012, of any activities that they are planning to this end, to enable a report to be prepared for submission to the Council at its 109th session in November 2012.

The Secretary-General's message has been recorded in English only and will be available on the IMO website, at [www.imo.org](http://www.imo.org), in audio and video format, for downloading. Additionally, hard copies of the message will be available for downloading in all of the Organization's official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish); while hard copies of the statement in annex 2 will be available for downloading in the three working languages of the Organization (i.e. in English, French and Spanish), as per the usual practice.

As stated in Circular letter No.3244, the 2012 World Maritime Day parallel event, which will be hosted by the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain, will be held in Manama on 17 and 18 October 2012. Full details of the parallel event, as well as the programme, will be circulated in due course.

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## ANNEX 1

### WORLD MARITIME DAY 2012 IMO: ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER THE TITANIC

#### A message from the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization, Mr. Koji Sekimizu

On 14 April 1912, the White Star liner **Titanic** was transformed in a few short hours from the world's most celebrated ship into a name forever associated with disaster.

Many ships have sunk – too many – but few have had the lasting impact of the seemingly invulnerable **Titanic**.

The Titanic tragedy prompted the major shipping nations of the world, at that time, to take decisive action to address maritime safety. This led to the adoption, two years later, of the first-ever International Convention on Safety of Life at Sea and, ultimately, to the establishment of IMO itself.

Today, much updated and revised, SOLAS is still the most important international treaty addressing maritime safety. And, as 2012 marks the 100th year since that ill-fated ship foundered, the IMO Council decided that the World Maritime Day theme for this year should be "IMO: One hundred years after the Titanic".

Since its formation, IMO's main task has been to develop and maintain a comprehensive regulatory framework for international shipping. Its mandate was originally limited to safety-related issues, but subsequently this remit has been expanded to embrace environmental protection, legal matters, technical co-operation, issues that affect the overall efficiency of shipping and maritime security, including piracy and armed robbery against ships.

The direct output of IMO's regulatory work is a comprehensive body of international conventions, supported by literally hundreds of guidelines and recommendations that, between them, govern just about every facet of the shipping industry – from the drawing board to the scrapyards. The most important result of all this is that shipping today is safer, cleaner, more efficient and more secure than at any time in the past.

But each new generation of vessels brings fresh challenges and, regrettably, accidents still occur, reinforcing the need for continual improvement. Our efforts to promote maritime safety, not least of passenger ships, will never stop. We should respond quickly to accidents and we must be proactive.

To this end, we are planning to hold a two-day symposium at IMO Headquarters, in London, in conjunction with IMO's Maritime Safety Committee next June, on the "Future of Ship Safety". The idea is to go beyond the current safety issues under the Committee and rigorously consider the future of maritime safety. The objective is for the discussions to contribute to the future advancement of the Organization's maritime safety policy.

What separates the passenger and cruise ship industry from the rest of shipping is the unique nature of its cargo – hundreds and thousands of people. The lives of thousands of people are in the hands of the ship's management, the captain and crew and the operating staff. I therefore hope that this sector, in particular, will take the opportunity to lead the way, because "safety" is its main product – not comfort, entertainment or leisure. Without safety, the industry will not survive, let alone sustain its growth; and real safety does not result simply as a consequence of regulation-compliance.

Some 20 years ago, the International Safety Management Code, adopted by IMO, represented a step-change in the establishment of a safety culture in shipping. The time has now come to generate another step-change. This will not be achieved through legislative measures alone. We must generate a new impetus in shipping to go beyond compliance with regulations and explore industry-wide mechanisms to ensure the safety culture is embedded throughout the entire industry.

So this year, as we look back on that pivotal disaster 100 years ago, I urge IMO Member Governments and the shipping industry as a whole to refresh their determination to improve and enhance the safety of passenger shipping today, and into the future.

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## ANNEX 2

### WORLD MARITIME DAY 2012 IMO: ONE HUNDRED YEARS AFTER THE TITANIC

#### Background Paper

On 14 April 1912, the White Star liner **Titanic** was transformed in a few short hours from the world's most celebrated ship into a name forever associated with disaster.

Many ships have sunk – too many – but few have had the lasting impact of the seemingly invulnerable **Titanic**, sparking a chain of events that led ultimately to the formation of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for so many of the improvements to maritime safety that make shipping today so much safer than it was at the time of the **Titanic**.

But the story really begins long before the **Titanic** sank, when the question of how to ensure mutually acceptable standards on ships from different jurisdictions was becoming increasingly important. As global trade increased, it became apparent that the best way to achieve significant and widespread improvements in safety at sea would be through the development of international regulations that would be applied by all shipping nations. From the mid-19th century onwards, a number of treaties to this end were adopted. One example is the 1863 rules of the road at sea – known as articles – which were adopted by more than 30 maritime countries.

But it was the **Titanic** disaster of 1912 which led to the adoption, two years later, of the first International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). SOLAS was adopted after the United Kingdom called a conference following the **Titanic** disaster and it was the first convention to lay down international rules governing safety of shipping, such as making sure enough lifeboats and lifejackets are provided for all the people on board a ship.

Even as recently as the 1950s, however, most shipping nations had their own maritime laws and there were comparatively few international treaties. Those that did exist were by no means accepted or implemented by all maritime States. The result was that standards and requirements varied considerably.

It was generally accepted that this situation was damaging to shipping safety at the global level. Not only were standards different, but some were far higher than others. Shipowners who spent relatively little money on safety had an economic advantage over their more conscientious rivals and this was a threat to any serious attempt to improve shipping safety. But it was not until the foundation of the United Nations itself that a permanent international body was set up to promote maritime safety more effectively – and that body is IMO. IMO was established by means of a convention adopted in Geneva in 1948. The convention received sufficient signatures to enter into force 10 years later and the first meeting of IMO was held in 1959.

The most immediate and important task allocated to IMO, when it met for the first time, was to develop international standards to replace the multiplicity of national legislation that then existed. And the very first of these was a new version of the SOLAS Convention, which was adopted in 1960. Thereafter, IMO turned its attention to other matters, such as the facilitation of international maritime traffic, load lines on ships, the carriage of dangerous goods and revising the system of measuring ships' tonnage.

Although safety was, and remains, IMO's most important responsibility, a new problem began to emerge soon after the Organization came into being – pollution. The growth in the amount of oil being transported by sea, and in the size of oil tankers, was of particular concern and the **Torrey Canyon** disaster of 1967, in which 120,000 tonnes of oil was spilled, demonstrated the scale of the problem.

During the next few years, IMO introduced a series of measures designed to prevent tanker accidents and to minimize their consequences. It also tackled the environmental threat caused by routine operations such as the cleaning of oil cargo tanks and the disposal of engine-room wastes – in tonnage terms, a bigger menace than accidental pollution.

The most important of all these measures was the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973, as modified by the Protocol of 1978 (MARPOL 73/78). It covers not only accidental and operational oil pollution but also pollution by chemicals, goods in packaged form, sewage, garbage and air pollution.

IMO was also given the task of establishing a system for providing compensation to those who had suffered financially as a result of pollution. Two treaties, the Civil Liability and Fund Conventions, were adopted, in 1969 and 1971, which enabled victims of pollution from oil tankers to obtain compensation much more simply and quickly than had been possible before. A number of other legal conventions have been developed since, dealing with liability and compensation issues for other types of ship-sourced marine pollution.

In the realm of safety at sea, the advances have been numerous and wide ranging. In the 1970s, for example, the Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea was adopted and a global search and rescue system was initiated, with the adoption of the International Maritime Search and Rescue Convention.

In 1988, the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System was adopted and began to be phased in from 1992. In February 1999, it became fully operational which means that now, unlike in the days of the **Titanic**, a ship that is in distress anywhere in the world can be virtually guaranteed assistance. This applies even if the ship's crew do not have time to radio for help, as the distress message will be transmitted automatically.

Despite huge improvements in maritime safety since the era of the **Titanic**, accidents do, nevertheless, still occur and there is clearly a great deal of work that still needs to be done. While the regulatory regime, fostered by IMO, undoubtedly has its part to play, the underlying reason why accidents continue to befall ships can, in the vast majority of cases, be traced back to human error.

This is why IMO's focus on people continues to be so important. Two initiatives of the 1990s are especially significant in this respect, as they relate directly to the human element in shipping.

On 1 July 1998, the International Safety Management Code (ISM Code) entered into force and became applicable to passenger ships, oil and chemical tankers, bulk carriers, gas carriers and cargo high-speed craft of 500 gross tonnage and above. It became applicable to other cargo ships and mobile offshore drilling units of 500 gross tonnage and above from 1 July 2002. The ISM Code provides a blueprint for the way shipping companies manage and operate their fleets and sets out to promote the development of a widespread safety culture and environmental conscience in shipping. By defining the company's responsibility for safety and ensuring that senior management can more easily be held accountable, the Code seeks to ensure that safety is given the appropriate priority.

In 1997, the 1995 amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers, 1978 entered into force. These amendments greatly improved seafarer standards and, for the first time, gave IMO itself powers to check their implementation by Governments with Parties required to submit information to IMO regarding their compliance with the Convention. Subsequently, a major revision of the STCW Convention and Code was completed in 2010 with the adoption of the so-called "Manila Amendments", aimed at ensuring that the necessary global standards will be in place to train and certify seafarers to operate technologically-advanced ships for some time to come.

The 2000s also saw IMO place a strong focus on maritime security. In 2004, a new, comprehensive security regime for international shipping entered into force, including the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, made mandatory under amendments to SOLAS adopted in 2002. In 2005, IMO adopted amendments to the Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts (SUA) against the Safety of Maritime Navigation, 1988 and its related Protocol (the 2005 SUA Protocols) which widen the range of unlawful acts and establish search and arrest procedures. And, for many years, IMO has been at the forefront of global efforts to mount a coordinated response to the menace of piracy, which continues to plague the shipping industry.

All too often, regulatory policy has been dictated by events. If the **Titanic** spurred the creation of the SOLAS Convention, other disasters have also made their mark. The **Torrey Canyon** was instrumental in providing the impetus for the MARPOL Convention as well as the Civil Liability and Fund Conventions; the **Estonia** prompted a thorough review of the safety of ro-ro ferries; the **Nakhodka** and the **Prestige** incidents led to increases in the amount of compensation available to the victims of oil spills; the **Prestige** and **Erika** incidents caused the regulations surrounding single and double-hull tankers to be reviewed, while both those vessels and the **Castor** incident served to bring the question of places of refuge for stricken vessels into sharp focus. The losses of the **Derbyshire** in 1981, the **Herald of Free Enterprise** in 1987, the **Exxon Valdez** in 1989, the **Scandinavian Star** in 1990 and the **Al-Salam Boccaccio** in 2006 all resulted in either a heavy loss of life or a significant impact to the marine environment and lent direction and purpose to the work of IMO.

That these and other major casualties made the news headlines and television screens around the world should not obscure the fact that, in the majority of cases, it is either a new technical development, a response to changing circumstances within the industry, or anticipation of something that may happen in the future that provides the catalyst for the Organization's work. A proposal from a Member State, typically to amend or revise part of the existing regulatory framework, may be passed through the appropriate committee to a sub-committee and then on to a working group for detailed consideration. In this process it will go through the hands and under the scrutiny of the best experts that the shipping industry and the Member Governments of IMO have to offer, usually several times, before it emerges as a balanced measure, ready for adoption and implementation throughout the industry as a whole.

A perfect example of this proactive approach in action is the comprehensive package of amendments to the international regulations affecting new passenger ships, which entered into force on 1 July 2010. The amendments, which affect passenger ship regulations in SOLAS, came about as the result of a comprehensive review of passenger ship safety initiated in 2000 by IMO. The aim of the review was to assess whether the existing regulations were adequate to meet future challenges, in particular to address issues related to the increased size of passenger ships now being built.

The guiding philosophy behind this important review was based on the dual premise that the regulatory framework should place more emphasis on the prevention of a casualty from occurring in the first place and that future passenger ships should be designed for improved survivability so that, in the event of a casualty, persons can stay safely on board, in a "safe area" as the ship proceeds to port.

Adopted in 2006, the amendments placed increased emphasis on reducing the chance of accidents occurring and on improved survivability, embracing the concept of the ship as "its own best lifeboat".

The amendments include new concepts such as the incorporation of design criteria for the casualty threshold (the amount of damage a ship is able to withstand, according to the design basis, and still safely return to port) into SOLAS chapters II-1 and II-2. They also provide regulatory flexibility so that ship designers can meet future safety challenges.

The amendments, which largely affect new ships built from 1 July 2010, include:

- alternative designs and arrangements;
- provision of safe areas and the essential systems to be maintained while a ship proceeds to port after a casualty, which will require redundancy of propulsion and other essential systems;
- onboard safety centres, from where safety systems can be controlled, operated and monitored;
- fixed fire detection and alarm systems, including requirements for fire detectors and manually operated call points to be capable of being remotely and individually identified;
- fire prevention, including amendments aimed at enhancing the fire safety of atriums, the means of escape in case of fire and ventilation systems; and
- time for orderly evacuation and abandonment, including requirements for the essential systems that must remain operational in case any one main vertical zone is unserviceable due to fire.

And all this was prompted not by a particular accident or casualty, but by the fact that IMO understood the potential implications of rapid growth in the size of passenger ships and had the foresight to look proactively for ways to address them.

One of the Organization's greatest strengths today is the fact that its 170 Member States, together with more than 60 non-governmental organizations and over 30 intergovernmental organizations that enjoy consultative status with IMO, can embrace many different viewpoints on any given subject. The combined capacity of the expertise available within the Organization that is brought to bear on any standard, guideline, code of practice or any other matter that it deals with results in a balanced, sensible and effective regulatory regime that applies to nearly 100 per cent of shipping engaged in international trade. No other organization, either international or regional, can muster this capability.

The figures speak volumes. SOLAS, MARPOL Annexes I and II, the Load Lines Convention, the Tonnage Convention, the STCW Convention, the Collision Regulations all now apply to more than 97 per cent of the world's fleet. IMO measures such as these have come to define much of the very essence of shipping today. To a great extent, shipping's technical, operational and administrative profiles are all shaped by developments emanating from IMO.

The fact that Governments come to IMO in this way is a tribute to the confidence they have in the Organization's ability to get things done. Also, there is no doubt that the actions taken by IMO have helped to make shipping safer and to reduce pollution. This reinforces IMO's "raison d'être"

as it remains the only effective international body to promote uniform maritime safety and pollution standards on a global basis. When IMO Member States act unilaterally, they ultimately undermine the credibility of the global regulatory system that was created in 1914 in response to the tragic loss of the **Titanic**.

There can be no doubt that, in matters of safety, environmental protection and security, the shipping industry looks to IMO for leadership in creating and raising standards. IMO's response to serious accidents has been swift and decisive and its proactive policies have created a regulatory infrastructure that covers everything from measures designed to prevent casualties and accidents and to minimize damage to the environment, through measures aimed at ensuring an effective response when accidents do happen, and on to those which ensure that the innocent victims of pollution and other mishaps at sea receive adequate recompense.

Of course, adopting international treaties and standards is only part of the story. Effective implementation and enforcement is also required. And for this, States need efficient maritime administrations staffed by well-trained and experienced personnel. That is why IMO's sphere of activities also includes technical co-operation. Many of today's shipping nations did not even exist when IMO started functioning in 1959 (let alone when the **Titanic** sank in 1912), and the expectation is that still more countries will wish to expand their shipping activities in the years to come. For many, a lack of experience and resources will be a handicap. IMO has recognized this and has done a great deal to overcome this problem by building capacity in these newly emerging shipping nations.

The World Maritime University and the IMO International Maritime Law Institute, for example, were set up by IMO in the 1980s to help developing countries to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills.

Since its establishment, IMO has continuously kept the regulations under its purview up to date, not least to reflect the rapidly changing and developing state of technology in the shipping industry. And, today, IMO regulations and other measures enjoy near-universal recognition and application, a situation that could barely have been envisaged in 1912, when the **Titanic** sank.

Each new generation of ships brings new challenges, reinforcing the need for continual improvement. IMO's efforts to promote maritime safety, not least of passenger ships, will never stop. It is also imperative that IMO ensures that the measures it adopts do not impede the deployment of new technologies and the benefits that they provide to the entire maritime industry. Moreover, IMO must continue to address today's pressing safety and environmental concerns proactively, and promote the use of latest technologies, to ensure that others do not feel the need to impose inappropriate, unilateral solutions on the shipping industry.

As one would expect, the IMO that exists today is very different from the Organization envisaged in Geneva in 1948 – but so is the world of merchant shipping. The success of this evolution can be measured by the global extent of IMO membership, and, more importantly, by the consistent overall reduction of lives lost at sea due to the rigorous enforcement of the international treaties for which the Organization has been responsible.

Today, 100 years since the **Titanic**, IMO has developed – and maintains – a comprehensive regulatory framework for shipping and its remit has expanded to include not only safety, but also environmental protection, legal matters, technical co-operation, maritime security and the efficiency of shipping.

IMO provides the mechanism through which the Governments of every country with an interest in shipping can come together to decide on standards that are to be applied on ships engaged in international voyages. The membership of IMO includes not just countries in which ships are owned or registered but also coastal States, importing and exporting States, and countries which

supply support services and manpower to the shipping industry. The fact that so many nations have elected to join the Organization reflects not only the universal impact that shipping has on global trade and the global community, but also the diverse range and scope of the activities undertaken by the Organization.

The work of IMO represents the collective efforts of many hundreds of people who are dedicated to ensuring that there is a comprehensive and effective framework of international standards surrounding the design, construction, operation and manning of ships. Every aspect is considered in great detail and absolutely no stone is left unturned in the pursuit of standards that are fair, effective and which can be applied uniformly throughout the world.

For the first few decades of its existence, IMO was involved in laying foundations. But it has now adopted more than 50 different conventions and protocols, the majority dealing with maritime safety and the prevention of marine pollution. This process was essential, for in many areas there were no international standards at all and, in others, the regulations that did exist were in need of modification or replacement.

It could fairly be said the **Titanic** disaster of 1912 was the catalyst that eventually led shipping into a new era of maritime safety. Looking ahead, technological developments, new risks, changing priorities and altered public expectations are collectively building momentum towards another such quantum leap. IMO has helped maritime safety to come a very long way since the **Titanic**; and now, 100 years later, it stands ready to examine whether the prescriptive regulatory framework that can trace its roots back to the **Titanic** in 1912 is still the best model for addressing tomorrow's maritime safety issues.

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