

Piracy Crisis in the Indian Ocean

World Maritime Day 2011



PIRACY



ORCHESTRATING
THE RESPONSE

Piracy



The International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations agency responsible for safety of life at sea, has a pivotal role in orchestrating the response of the international community to the scourge of piracy, which is the theme of IMO World Maritime Day 2011.

In co-operation with the shipping industry, IMO was instrumental in bringing the seriousness of the crisis to the attention of the UN Security Council. However, the piracy crisis in the Indian Ocean has continued to spiral out of control.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and its member national shipowners' associations greatly appreciate the efforts of IMO Member States and military navies to protect merchant ships and their crews from Somali pirates. But the purpose of this brochure is to highlight the fact that governments still need to do more.

Orchest



Piracy Crisis in the Indian Ocean

Since the crisis off the coast of Somalia began to escalate in 2008, more than 3,000 seafarers have so far been kidnapped and held for ransom, enduring months of captivity in appalling conditions.

The financial cost to the shipping industry has rapidly escalated with ransom payments rising - in one case reportedly approaching US\$ 10 million for a single ship and its crew. Because of the very high financial stakes, serious violence against hostages is thought to be increasing, as disturbingly shown in 2011 by the murder of captives at sea.

Frustratingly, governments in those nations with the largest military navies in the region appear to show little willingness to increase resources to the extent that would be necessary to have a decisive impact on the problem. The fact that almost no ships currently transit via the central Indian Ocean shows the degree to which control has been ceded to the pirates.

At a time when both financial and military resources are extremely stretched, many governments appear to be tolerating the current level of piracy. Moreover, the dramatic political developments in the Middle East, and the recent famine in Somalia, have further diverted the attention of policy makers from the urgent need to address the piracy crisis.

This seemingly rather complacent assessment of the severity of the crisis has possibly been encouraged by the fact that relatively few OECD nationals have so far been taken hostage, or been amongst those 60 seafarers understood to have lost their lives. Yet the whole international community is dependent on international shipping which transports about 90% of global trade.

