MARITIME TRANSPORT: STATEMENT BY OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES ON ENFORCEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RULES AND STANDARDS (1)

1. OECD Member Governments wish to maintain open markets for international shipping based on the principle of free and fair competition. That requires, among other things, that all vessels should comply with internationally agreed rules and standards concerning the safety of ships, and persons on board, and the prevention of pollution of the marine environment. When ships operate below those standards they create unfair and therefore unacceptable competition.

2. The principal responsibility for ensuring compliance with international rules and standards lies (in addition to the responsibility of shipowners and classification societies) with the flag state. It is therefore essential for the flag state to have a maritime administration that effectively fulfills this task.

3. Recent statistical evidence shows that marine losses, casualties and pollution are to a great extent due to human error. The ability of all flag states, and shipowners under their jurisdiction, to minimise the risk of maritime incidents due to human error, depends primarily on targeting controls and enforcement mechanisms, on crew quality and standards of management. The Governments welcome the revisions of the STCW Convention.

4. The Governments consider that there is now a compelling case for all flag states to demonstrate that they are carrying out their supervisory responsibilities effectively.

5. The Governments therefore consider that each flag state should in accordance with decisions taken in IMO (International Maritime Organisation) make transparent all aspects of the work of its maritime administration in implementing and complying with IMO conventions and codes on safety and pollution control. They should similarly make transparent the work of organisations to which they may have delegated the task of establishing and maintaining safety standards.

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6. The Governments furthermore consider that all flag states should join with the IMO in investigating the establishment of a common database accessible to all maritime authorities on all vessels showing their survey status and condition.

7. The Governments appreciate the efforts being taken within IMO to expedite the entry into force of amendments which will improve safety and pollution prevention standards and call on the IMO to consider introducing arrangements to:

   i) monitor and report on the performance of all flag states in implementing and enforcing IMO rules and standards and to monitor and report on the performance of any organisations that might be used in carrying out these tasks;

   ii) analyse and publish the key factors relating to casualties and marine pollution including flag, ownership, construction standards, classification societies, crew nationality and age of vessels;

   iii) identify where improvements need to be made;

   iv) monitor and report on the training and certification of seafarers.

8. The Governments consider that, while the IMO has the prime responsibility for addressing the problem of sub-standard shipping and monitoring flag state implementation, it is essential that there is wider and more effective implementation and more vigorous enforcement of IMO rules and standards by all states on a global basis. They are convinced that urgent action is now essential if sub-standard shipping is to be tackled effectively and this statement contains proposals for a programme of action.

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(1) Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States. The Commission of the European Union also subscribes to this statement.