

# **Re-CAAP ISC Piracy and Sea Robbery Conference**

## **Separating fact from fiction**

**23 April 2015**

### **Keynote Address**

Your excellency, Chairman of the Governing Council, Executive Director Endo, distinguished delegates...

It is a great pleasure to be here today to say a few opening remarks at this conference. My thanks to the Governing Council of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP from now on) for the invitation and to the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, which has brought me to Singapore on its Maritime Visitors' Programme and has graciously given me the opportunity to take some time out from that Programme to speak here today.

The Conference is sub-titled: separating fact from fiction and I think it appropriate to start with some welcome facts about the work of ReCAAP and its Information Sharing Centre. IMO has a very strong relationship with ReCAAP and I take this opportunity to thank Mr. Endo and all ReCAAP staff for the information they provide, including results of investigations.

I do not need to go into detail about the history of this regional agreement as I am sure most of you here are very familiar with the establishment of the Organization since its early beginnings at the 30<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Ministerial meeting in Malaysia in 1997 – through the negotiations on the Co-operation Agreement in the early 2000's to its entry into force in September 2006: nearly 9 years ago. The Information Sharing Centre (the ISC) quickly followed and is at the heart of enhanced regional cooperation in the fight against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. The fact that the original States' membership of 14 has expanded since its inception, beyond countries in the region, to 20 today speaks well of the aims of ReCAAP and also its performance and activities to date. A little more on this later.

Staying with the theme of facts: ReCAAP's mission statement identifies three mainstays of activity: Information sharing; Capacity building and Cooperative Arrangements. I would like to take a few moments to highlight some of the positive benefits that have accrued in all three of these areas since ReCAAP was founded.

We often hear that 'information is power' and the ability to share information 24/7 between ReCAAP focal points is a key element in incident reporting and follow-up. The ReCAAP ISC is recognized in IMO recommendations to governments, shipowners, shipmasters and crews on preventing and suppressing piracy and armed robbery against ships. In its 2014 Annual Report, ReCAAP highlighted a 22% increase in the total number of incidents in the region compared to the situation in 2013. This reported increase is, of course, unwelcome but demonstrates the transparency of information needed and is the hallmark of a reputable organization that it can promulgate information that, on the face of it, reflects adversely on its activities. In this regard, I acknowledge the work of Mr. Endo and his colleagues and their composed and balanced reaction in responding to emerging challenges.

But, as with all statistics, a closer study shows that two-thirds of the incidents were in the 'less significant' category. An element of this increase may be due to a higher level of reporting but, whatever the reason for the increase, it is clearly something that ReCAAP was established to address. Aggregated and disaggregated information of this type can be effectively used to identify trends, target resources and raise awareness and ReCAAP has done just that recently with its Special Report on Oil Siphoning Incidents in 2014 – more on this later.

As you will be aware, ReCAAP's reports and statistics are frequently used by the media, both maritime and general, and the ReCAAP model has been promoted by IMO as a model of inter-governmental cooperation that other regions might wish to emulate, as was the case for the foundation of the Djibouti Code of Conduct. By spreading its message in IMO-sponsored activities and in other fora, ReCAAP has been proactive in the fight against piracy and armed robbery against ships and participated regularly in meetings of the IMO Council and Maritime Safety Committee to good effect.

We all understand that countries and organizations all have their own strengths and weaknesses and the work of ReCAAP to build capacity to enhance the network of Focal Points and its capabilities through meetings and workshops is a welcome and much-needed activity. The sharing of best practice and the introduction of standard procedures improves efficiency and effectiveness of the organization and its membership in the fight against piracy and armed robbery and has led to the arrest of at least some of those involved and the recovery of ships and cargoes. ReCAAP best practice and experience has been exported to good effect to assist in the operation of the Sana'a Information Sharing Centre under the IMO Project on the Djibouti Code of Conduct and the training of focal points in the East African region. Thanks are due here to the financial support of some ReCAAP members which enabled the successful conduct of various capacity building activities.

The third pillar of activity: the extensive network of cooperative arrangements, is arguably the key to future success. The MOUs, particularly with industry organizations, provide the basis for collaboration in all areas of ReCAAP's work. From capacity building and training programmes to joint activities aimed at preventing and suppressing piracy attacks, cooperation is the key. Information exchange and mutual support to follow-up on both attempted and successful attacks can only pay dividends in deterring future attacks and apprehending those responsible. This conference, organized in conjunction with industry, is sound evidence of the benefit of working together.

As industry organizations have a significant role in the panel discussions that are shortly to take place, I think it is appropriate for us all to be cognizant of their concerns and for ReCAAP to take all measures necessary and appropriate to try to address them. I mentioned earlier the issue of hi-jacking oil tankers and the related siphoning of fuel and cargo. This is clearly a concern for industry and ReCAAP has highlighted the recent increase in these cases in its recent report. Identifying the issue is one step: the next steps are to identify the modus operandi and the perpetrators so that effective action can be taken to apprehend those involved. In addition, gaining the necessary information to warn tanker operators of the likelihood and danger of becoming a target and to take action accordingly to raise the awareness of seafarers to the risks and of available preventative measures, such as those contained in the Best Management Practices, to help prevent future occurrences.

The recent success of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency in arresting pirates that had hijacked a Malaysian coastal tanker is welcome and more successes of this type would be a very positive message to industry and a deterrent to pirates. There may be some who are advocating the use of armed guards on ships in the region – particularly those who stand to gain from providing them – but this is close to admitting defeat. Much better that all involved work cooperatively together to share information aimed at identifying the

commonalities in these incidents and also take action to help protect ships and their crews from attack by adopting the practices successfully adopted elsewhere.

The Sarawak Sabah Shipowners' Association has been reported as saying that at least some of the siphoning attacks are 'inside jobs' and, if that may be the case, surely there is an opportunity for ReCAAP and its industry partners to inform, educate and advise, in conjunction with other appropriate authorities in the region, on measures to be taken by shipping companies to identify and report suspicious activity that might lead to hi-jackings for the theft of fuel and cargo. As a conduit between law enforcement agencies, shipping companies and IMO Member States in the region – and not restricted to only ReCAAP members – ReCAAP ISC has an important role to play. By leveraging its membership's resources and utilizing its cooperative arrangements, ReCAAP's position as an internationally recognized centre of excellence can be enhanced with an effective response to this problem and future ones. I very much look forward to this materializing in the near future.

But I return briefly to the theme of the conference: separating fact from fiction. I have drawn upon many facts in support of the work of ReCAAP but what about the fiction? One definition of fiction is: an illusion or pretence. The expanding membership of ReCAAP is a fact but, perhaps there is an element of illusion or pretence in that too. Whilst organizations from two IMO Member States in the region support the work of ReCAAP in a number of ways, as I have mentioned, those Member States are not signatories to the Agreement and, with the recent development of the hi-jacking of ships for the siphoning of fuel and cargo, perhaps now is the time for the Governing Council to redouble its efforts towards bringing them into the fold, to the benefit of all Members and the industry that trades in the region.

To close....ReCAAP will celebrate its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year and, based on its past achievement and its current activities, is set for future success in all that it is tasked to do. The welcome financial support from its membership; the secondment of staff and the work of the members of the Governing Council all point to continued success.

I wish ReCAAP well in all its endeavours and the rest of this conference every success.

Thank you.

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1595 words  
13 minutes