



International Transport Workers' Federation

Press area

'Time to beat piracy' campaign announced

17 March 2010

Union representatives meeting in Berlin have voted to launch a new campaign to persuade all governments to commit the resources necessary to end the increasing problem of Somalia-based piracy.

Seafarers' delegates at ITF meetings in Germany authorised the Federation to build a campaign that is hoped to deliver half a million signatures to governments by World Maritime Day, September 23rd. The campaign will call on them to close the circle on protection of ships, and for those states now ducking their responsibilities to stand up and follow the example of those which are actively involved in combating the threat.

The petition will call on nations to:

- Dedicate significant resources and work to find real solutions to the growing piracy problem.
- Take immediate steps to secure the release and safe return of kidnapped seafarers to their families
- Work within the international community to secure a stable and peaceful future for Somalia and its people

Speaking from Berlin, ITF Maritime Coordinator Steve Cotton said: "This decision has empowered us to build a worldwide campaign to put pressure on all governments to close the gap in their anti-piracy efforts. At the end of last year we warned that a point had been reached where the affected area had become too dangerous to enter, except in exceptional circumstances. We also highlighted the scandalous negligence of countries making billions from ships they are doing nothing to protect. There has been no improvement since then."

He continued: "The reality is that seafarers are risking their lives transporting the world's goods through areas that are daily growing more dangerous. That situation is not going to change without dramatic efforts to address the problems of Somalia and its people and grasp the nettle of confronting and prosecuting piracy."

The ITF is gravely concerned by attempts to prevent the payment of ransoms and considers that it is the duty of shipowners and flag states to take all necessary measures to swiftly reunite seafarers with their families when they are held hostage. The ITF also stated that it is unforgiveable that the major flag of convenience states have done little more to fight piracy than sign pieces of paper. They have taken no other concrete action, nor have they used their flag state jurisdiction to enable the prosecution of any pirates.

The ITF will now work on an e-petition website and a cross-industry international campaign intended to deliver a powerful message to governments on World Maritime Day.

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