



MARITIME SAFETY COMMITTEE
75th session
Agenda item 5

MSC 75/5/4
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BULK CARRIER SAFETY

Precautions against flooding of forward spaces and improved life-saving appliances

Submitted by the ICFTU

SUMMARY

Executive summary: This paper addresses the need for the urgent implementation of a number of previously made recommendations to enhance bulk carrier safety. Specifically for an early warning for crew of flooding of forward spaces and the installation of a fast, efficient and safe means of evacuation of the vessel.

Action to be taken: Paragraphs 6, 7 and 8

Related documents: MSC 74/5/4, MSC 74/5/5, MSC 74/5/6

Background

1 Whilst FSA studies and related investigations continue to identify possible improvements and formulate recommendations to advance bulk carrier safety there exists a number of indisputable facts which have been identified in papers previously considered by the MSC:

- .1 the vulnerability of bulk carriers to water entering forward spaces and in particular the No.1 cargo space; and
- .2 the rapid sinking in many cases where these areas are flooded with a resultant loss of crew.

2 A recent improvement in the bulk trade has seen the recommissioning of many older vessels. The possibility of vessels sinking due to structural failure has been shown to increase with age and clearly points to the need for urgent measures to be taken for existing vessels so as to increase the safety of the crew. Unfortunately, the majority of improvements being investigated and reviewed through the Formal Safety Assessment process will take some time before coming to fruition and will therefore do little to improve the safety for seafarers today or for the foreseeable future. Recent information suggest that the problem may be much greater than previously thought. Existing standards are now being questioned in the wake of the findings which have followed the decision by Cyprus to institute longitudinal strength assessments of

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designated bulk carriers. This has resulted in the scrapping of at least one vessel which had, under current conventions requirements, previously been considered seaworthy.

Measures

3 In the paper submitted by Norway and the ICFTU, MSC 74/5/5, it was noted that for a safe evacuation of the crew there were two primary requirements:

- .1 much greater notice of the flooding of any substantial forward area; and
- .2 an efficient, safe and fast method of evacuation of the sinking vessel.

The paper identified two cost-effective measures to achieve these objectives, namely the installation of water ingress alarms in all substantial forward spaces that can be monitored from the bridge and the retrofitting of freefall enclosed lifeboats to enable a more rapid and safer evacuation of the crew in all conditions. The need for earlier warning of forward flooding was also identified in a number of other papers including MSC 74/5/6 by the United Kingdom and MSC 74/5/4 by IACS, whilst a number of papers submitted identified in their Hazard Evaluation the high risk of a rapid sinking in these circumstances.

4 The reports of MSC 74 noted that work on these recommendations should not be delayed and the ICFTU is concerned that a decision to reconsider these proposals in future studies will delay their possible implementation until all other measures have been fully considered and investigated. Meanwhile seafarers lives will continue to be at risk and will in fact be lost, as illustrated in the recent tragedy which resulted in the demise of 18 crew members serving on the **MV Christopher**.

5 The ICFTU considers that it is essential to adopt interim measures which will go some way to mitigate the risks to seafarers lives on existing and future vessels.

Action requested of the Committee

6 It is clear that there are substantial problems with the current design of bulk carriers and that they constitute an unacceptable risk to the safety of the life at sea. The ICFTU strongly urges the Committee to agree to take urgent action to address the problem and to adopt mandatory requirements which will, in the interim period pending the completion of the FSA's and other related studies, help mitigate the risks to the safety of life at sea.

7 The Committee is therefore requested to instruct the Bulk Carrier Safety Working Group to prepare draft amendments to:

- .1 SOLAS chapter II-1 part B requiring the fitting of alarms which will provide notice to the bridge of an ingress of water to forward spaces, to both new and existing bulk carriers; and
- .2 SOLAS chapter III part B providing for the fitting of freefall enclosed lifeboats, to both new and existing bulk carriers.

8 The Committee is also requested to continue to consider the other options identified in paper MSC 74/5/5.