

COUNCIL
35th extraordinary session
Agenda item 3

C/ES.35/3
3 March 2022
Original: ENGLISH
Pre-session public release:

**IMPACTS ON SHIPPING AND SEAFARERS OF THE SITUATION IN THE BLACK SEA
AND THE SEA OF AZOV**

**Proposal to establish a blue safe maritime corridor to allow the safe evacuation of
seafarers and ships stuck in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov**

**Submitted by Bahamas, Brazil, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, France,
Greece, Jamaica, Liberia, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Palau, Panama,
Philippines, Singapore, Spain, Thailand, Vanuatu, ICS and ITF**

SUMMARY

<i>Executive summary:</i>	In this document, the co-sponsors highlight the need to establish a blue safe maritime corridor or window to allow the safe evacuation of seafarers and ships stuck in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov resulting from the unprecedented hostile situation
<i>Strategic direction, if applicable:</i>	5
<i>Output:</i>	Not applicable
<i>Action to be taken:</i>	Paragraph 8
<i>Related document:</i>	Circular Letter No.4516/Rev.1

Background

1 Arising from the unprecedented hostile situation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov that started on 24th February 2022, the life of seafarers on board merchant ships sailing near and in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov waters has been subject to heightened risks. Therefore, in accordance with rule 2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Council, which have made possible holding this thirty-fifth extraordinary session of the IMO Council, the co-sponsors wish to thank all Member States of the Council that have submitted requests for the convening of this meeting to address the negative impacts on the maritime transport and seafarers in view of the current situation in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, as announced in Note Verbale NV.044 and Circular Letter No.4516/Rev.1.

Analysis

2 Over the past weeks, it has been reported that some merchant ships under various nationalities have been hit by missiles and mines. In the area, there are around 106 vessels of different flags with hundreds of crew members. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, at least one seafarer died due to this unprecedented hostile situation. Also, a few vessels sank in front of the Port of Odessa, resulting in the damage of several vessels of different flags.

3 The safety of seafarers is also a matter of grave concern for the co-sponsors and the international maritime community. At present, there are reports of seafarers from different nationalities including Ukraine, Turkey, Philippines, Jamaica, Syria, Egypt, Russia, Greece, Lebanon, Azerbaijan and Georgia that are stranded on merchant ships in the affected areas. Due to the constant attacks in these zones, some seafarers have suffered injuries from the missile strikes and unfortunately at least one casualty has been reported as a consequence of this conflict.

4 Additionally, the global shipping industry is being disrupted by these military attacks in numerous ways such as ships stranded at ports, cargo delays, spiking fuel costs, etc., all of which will have adverse impacts on the world's economies and global supply chains in the coming months.

5 The co-sponsors recall that the International Maritime Organization, as a specialized agency of the United Nations, is the global standard-setting authority for the safety, security, and environmental performance of international shipping. As the global shipping regulator, IMO should treat this situation with the utmost "urgency".

6 In view of the above, the co-sponsors would like to draw the attention of the Council to encourage all Member States to take immediate actions to protect seafarers and ensure the safety of the navigation and to protect the marine environment. It is the understanding of the co-sponsors that flag registries such as Liberia, Barbados, Belize, Cameroon, Cyprus, Comoros, Greece, Jamaica, Denmark, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Malta, Moldova, Turkey, Palau, Tanzania, Ukraine and the Marshall Islands also have ships with seafarers on board that are exposed in these affected areas. The urgent development of this blue safe maritime corridor would facilitate the safe evacuation of seafarers and ships stranded in these affected zones and allow them to continue their voyages, protecting the lives of the seafarers and ensuring a safe return home.

Proposal

7 Taking into account the high number of merchant vessels stranded in the area, it is proposed that the Council encourage the establishment, as a provisional and urgent measure, of a blue safe maritime corridor which allows the safe evacuation of merchant ships from the high-risk and affected areas, particularly ships anchored and/or docked in the ports located around the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, to a safe place in order to protect the life of seafarers, ensure the mobilization and commercial navigation of vessels intending to use this corridor by avoiding military attacks and protecting and securing the marine domain.

Action requested of the Council

8 The Council is invited to take note of the information provided in this document and, in particular, to examine the proposal in paragraph 7 and take action as appropriate.