



Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme - India

PSG General Meeting- Minutes

Date: 21 October 2013

Venue: INSA, Maker Tower, Cuffe Parade, Mumbai

Time: 1100-1300 hrs

In attendance:

1. Shri M.P.Pinto (in the Chair)
2. Capt Ajay Achuthan (MASSA)
3. Capt A. Kumar (INSA)
4. Mr. B.K. Saxena (IMEI)
5. Mr. Chirag Bahri (RD)
6. Mr. S. Dhuri (MUI)
7. Mr. Hormaz Bharucha (MUI)
8. Mr Maruti (NUSI)
9. Mr Sunil Nair (NUSI)
10. Dr. Suresh Idnani (ISWAN)
11. Mr. Piyush Raj (GL)
12. Mr. Sushil Deorukhkar (FSUI)
13. Toon van de Sande (MPHRP)

Apologies: Capt S C Sood (FOSMA)

Chair welcomed all participants and expressed the hope that deliberations of the meeting would be fruitful. The Chair then invited Chirag Bahri (RD) to present the regional report to the partners.

While thanking INSA for hosting the meeting, RD briefed the meeting on the status of hostages from South Asia region in Somalia . As many as 7 Indian Seafarers of Asphalt Venture have completed more than 3 years in captivity and that their families are in deep trauma as they hear repeated threatening calls from pirates. MPHRP is in regular touch with all families, had visited 2 of them in Kerala in August 2013, tried to raise their hopes and provided moral support. MPHRP is planning for counselling session for families in November and is also assisting with humanitarian support to them. RD highlighted and praised the role of MUI in assisting the families of Asphalt Venture by reimbursing the medical bills of one family.

Nigerian piracy: RD then briefed the members on the recent attacks in Nigeria affecting Indian Seafarers. He said that the threat is more in Gulf of Guinea area and pirates are very aggressive during the attack.

Ocean centurion case which was attacked and pirated by Nigerian based pirates was then discussed. The vessel was released and later 3 Indian Seafarers were held by Nigerian Police on charges of abetting piracy. They are still in Togo jail and have been shifted to a special prison lately. MPHRP is in regular touch with families and manning agents in India. Mr Dhuri also briefed that MUI has also taken this with Itf -Togo. They are in regular touch with the company and families.

Chairman stated that MPHRP South Asia is a humanitarian agency which will never support any Seafarer or any other organisation involved in unlawful activities. Capt Achuthan reiterated that MASSA has always supported Seafarers but if they are involved in any criminal activities, this will affect jobs of other Indian Seafarers. Chair emphasised that we must try to find out the facts on the case through our international group of partners. Chair requested union partners to try to find out the facts from ITF. He also urged MASSA to use their own contacts to get at the truth. MPHRP can take it up with DGS and others in London. It was also suggested that Seafarers who have returned from Ocean Centurion should be contacted to find out more details.

RD then briefed on the “MV Matrix 1” hijack and subsequent kidnap of 4 Indian Seafarers from the vessel. Chair expressed his deep concern that Nigerian piracy is affecting many Indian Seafarers and their families. It was pointed out that the pirates attacks normally Oil tankers, product carriers and have lately captured crew from offshore vessels and demanded ransom from owners.

The next topic on agenda was brief status report on MV Albedo. 11 Seafarers of South Asia region including 1 Indian are still in captivity of Somali pirates since 26 Nov 2010. The captive ship had capsized off the coast of Somalia in July 2013 and 4 SL based crew have been reported as missing since then. MPHRP is also in regular contact with UN hostage release programme in Somalia which is in contact with pirates and crew on regular basis. The programme is trying to explain to the pirates that release can only be possible on humanitarian basis. He added that MPHRP had visited and met with families in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in Sept and provided humanitarian support to them.

The Chair hoped that a solution can be reached at earliest and the Seafarers be released by pirates. He appealed to Indian regional partners to try to work out and find a possibility of discreetly collecting some money for release of these innocent lives. Toon said that every company has Corporate social responsibility budgets and that this can be used to pay expenses of pirates during last 3 yrs. Dr Idnani also said that using force will not be fruitful and peaceful resolution of this issue should be considered.

Capt Achuthan said that MPHRP should also take it with SL and Bangladesh based organisations to assist with collecting such money. The idea was widely welcomed especially in view of the fact that many seafarers from these countries are currently being held captive. It was agreed that MPHRP would make special efforts in this regard. Dr Idnani said that Haque and Sons shipping company in Bangladesh can be approached as they are quite influential and can be useful. He also stated that both the Chairman and he had excellent contacts with the company as a result of their close association in another ITF sponsored initiative for seafarers' welfare in this region.

RD further briefed on the various activities of MPHRP and that the programme has been assisting Seafarers released from captivity with future job opportunities. He thanked Dynacom Tankers for their very valuable support to Seafarers rescued from MT Smyrni. He also thanked DGS , INSA, ICCSA and Anglo Eastern ship Management for all their support to the released seafarers of Royal Grace and Iceberg1 by providing them with job opportunities on board their vessels.

MPHRP was represented at Kerala Sea and trade conference in Kerala where RD spoke on the importance of the human element in maritime education and in enriching maritime careers at Sea. He also stated that DG Shipping has kindly accepted the recommendations of MPHRP training advisory committee to include elements of MPHRP Seafarers Pre departure piracy awareness course in mandatory STSDSD course. The Chair, MPHRP and all partners thanked DGS for his kind gesture which will benefit the Seafarers by increasing their awareness of the dangers posed by piracy.

Capt Achuthan reiterated his concern that those seafarers who have already completed 1.5 day course should not be asked to do the 2 day course again. Dr Saxena then suggested that circular can be issued by DGS on the new course with the caveat that the same is mandatory from a particular date. In that case, the Seafarers who have already completed 1.5 day course need not do the 2 day course again.

RD briefed the members on the Train the trainer course for MPHRP Pre departure piracy awareness course and said that it would be conducted in Mumbai, Chennai and Delhi in Oct on the below mentioned dates.

Chennai: 16-17 Oct 2013

Mumbai : 19-20 Oct 2013

Delhi : 22-23 Oct 2013

Toon then briefed the participants on Train the Trainer course conducted in India between 16-23 Oct 2013 at Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi. The participants were trained on MPHRP Seafarers Pre departure Piracy awareness training course and were also provided with extra information on piracy issues, initiatives taken by IMO, IMB , latest trends of piracy etc. The participants voiced the need to have such a course for all Seafarers and requested MPHRP to provide a course for Senior officers and manning agents. He concluded that MPHRP have trained 118 trainers in India till date.

Chair then suggested that MPHRP should also train trainers in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to which RD clarified that MPHRP have already conducted one session in Bangladesh and plan to organise another in Sri Lanka in Dec 2013. RD expressed that it was a tough task for him to convince participants to attend Train the trainer sessions in India due to lack of motivation. Capt Achuthan said that MPHRP should also approach DGS to accredit the MPHRP Train the Trainer course.

RD briefed the members on his presentation at WISTA conference in Sept during London Shipping week. Capt Achuthan suggested that WISTA could be consulted to address issues of piracy concerning Women Seafarers. He also offered to assist those Seafarers who have returned from captivity and are looking for job opportunities and that MASSA would be pleased to assist them with same.

Awareness programme on piracy in India: While briefing the participants on the concern of Seafarers on escalating Nigerian piracy and their reluctance to go in such waters, RD proposed that MPHRP should assist partners to create awareness among seafarers which will motivate them to join ships that transit such waters.

Capt Achuthan said that stakeholders should have a strategic group meeting to discuss on the crucial issues of piracy concerning Industry, unions, Seafarers. Toon offered that MPHRP has 4 hr table talk exercise for manning agents to brief them on piracy awareness and humanitarian response.

Chair concluded that the strategic group meeting should focus on decision makers in the industry, who should be sensitised on the widespread threat of piracy and the need for all companies to be prepared for such eventualities.

Mr Sunil Nair then recommended that a chain of programmes could be linked together with the strategic meeting and be held as a residential one which includes important stakeholders. The meeting can be held outside Mumbai.

Chair then invited partners to volunteer for a group to work out the elements of strategic meetings.

Capt Achuthan would be convenor of the group with members included Dr BK Saxena, Dr Piyush Raj, Mr Sunil . RD will be in regular touch with the group to formalise the strategic meeting.

RD then invited members to assist with funding MPHRF –It is a MPHRP fund which is been used to provide monetary , humanitarian assistance to affected Seafarers and family all over the world.

The partners suggested that MPHRP should register in India as to avoid tax issues due to fund account being based in London. RD assured that same will be discussed with MPHRP board in London and partners will be kept informed of the developments.

RD then stated that some companies are lowering their guard by decreasing the number of armed guards on their vessel and reducing the speed of their vessels on the assumption that Somali piracy is over. He said that as per latest reports, incidents on piracy attacks have been reported and companies and seafarers should be alert and all precautions related with BMP4 should be implemented.

Capt Achuthan while responding on way forward, suggested that some form of counselling awareness meeting should be organised for families of Seafarers . Toon replied that MPHRP will never organise awareness programme for families as all Seafarers should be responsible to brief their families on their own.

RD briefed the partners on MARAD conference held in Manila in Sept. MPHRP invited 20 cadets from Expanded ASEAN countries of which 6 were from India. All cadets were sponsored by the Teekay Foundation fund. The cadets attended a week long programme on piracy awareness along with practical training sessions of basic survival techniques held at Maritime Academy in Philippines.

There being no other items the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chair.