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Circular Letter No.4382
10 February 2021

To: All IMO Member States
United Nations and specialized agencies
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO

Subject: **Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea**

1 The illicit incidents in the Gulf of Guinea currently present a serious and immediate threat to the safety and security of crews and vessels operating in the region. The urgency of the situation was further underlined by the attack on the container ship **Mozart** on 23 January 2021, which resulted in a fatality and the kidnapping of 15 seafarers.

2 The Secretary-General wishes to express his deep concern about the escalation in the number and severity of attacks in the Gulf of Guinea region which threaten the lives of our seafarers and the safety of shipping in the region. IMO is taking action to enhance the coordination of initiatives among stakeholders, including facilitating meetings with representatives of the industry, the Nigeria Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) and the Interregional Coordination Centre (ICC).

3 IMO continues to provide technical assistance to Member States in the region regarding the implementation of maritime security measures, and to support regional initiatives such as ICC. The Organization is currently working with ICC to assist with the implementation of the Yaoundé Code of Conduct (YCC) and to facilitate discussions with regional entities and existing centres under the YCC architecture with a view to assess the implementation of the Code and the sustainability of its current framework.

4 A maritime security working group focusing on the Gulf of Guinea is expected to be convened at the next session of the Maritime Safety Committee, MSC 103, scheduled to take place in May 2021. This will provide an opportunity for Member States and international organizations to discuss further collaboration and possible action to address the matter. The Secretary-General would, therefore, encourage all interested parties to participate in this working group.

5 In view of the current threats to shipping operating in the Gulf of Guinea region, effective implementation of Best Management Practices (BMP) West Africa (WA) remains essential to avoid, deter, delay and report attacks. BMP WA provides guidance to assist companies and seafarers to assess the risks associated with voyages through the Gulf of Guinea and mitigate any potential threats to their safety. The guidance can be downloaded here:

<https://wwwcdn.imo.org/localresources/en/OurWork/Security/Documents/BMP%20West%20Africa.pdf>

6 A comprehensive list of recommendations and guidance adopted/approved by the Maritime Safety Committee on the prevention and response to acts of piracy and armed robbery against ships can be found in the "Guidance on piracy" section of IMO's maritime security webpage at: <https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Security/Pages/Piracy-Guidance-Default.aspx>

7 The Secretary-General would also like to draw the attention of all Member States to Assembly resolution A.1069(28) on *Prevention and suppression of piracy, armed robbery against ships and illicit maritime activity in the Gulf of Guinea*. The resolution urges Governments to cooperate with and assist States in the Gulf of Guinea region to enhance their national and regional capabilities to improve maritime governance in waters under their jurisdiction, while reiterating full respect for the sovereignty, sovereign rights, jurisdiction and territorial integrity of all States and the relevant provisions of international law, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The resolution also calls upon Governments to consider making financial contributions to the IMO West and Central Africa Maritime Security Trust Fund, which remains open to support the Organization's maritime security capacity-building programme to assist Gulf of Guinea coastal States as well as regional centres under the YCC architecture.

8 Finally, the Secretary-General would like to reiterate his call for enhanced cooperation and collaboration of States in the region, international partners and all relevant stakeholders to bring this unacceptable situation to an end and restore security in the waters of the Gulf of Guinea.
