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## **UN maritime agency dedicates 2010 to the world's 1.5 million seafarers**



31 December 2009 – As merchant sailors around the world face the perils of pirate-infested waters off Somalia, the risks of accidents at sea or abandonment in port, the United Nations agency entrusted with setting comprehensive regulations for shipping is dedicating next year to the 1.5 million seafarers who serving the daily needs of more than 6.5 billion citizens of Planet Earth.

“Our intention is to pay tribute to you, the world’s 1.5 million seafarers – men and women from all over the globe – for the unique, and all too often over-looked, contribution you make to the wellbeing of all of us,” UN International Maritime Organization (**IMO**) Secretary-General Efthimios E. Mitropoulos said in a **message** announcing the decision.

“We will do so with deep appreciation, in recognition of the extraordinary service you render every day of your professional life, frequently under dangerous circumstances, in delivering, to the more than 6.5 billion people of the world, the wheat that makes our daily bread, the gas and oil that warms our homes or moves our vehicles and the gifts we will share and enjoy with our families and friends over this Festive Season.”

He stressed the important role seafarers play in helping to achieve safe, secure and efficient shipping on clean oceans and reassured them “at the ‘sharp end’ of the industry, that we,

who are responsible for the international regulatory regime and who serve shipping from ashore, do understand the extreme pressures that you face and that, as a result, we approach our own tasks with a genuine sympathy for the work that you carry out."

He underscored the efforts IMO makes to ensure that "you are fairly treated when ships on which you serve become involved in accidents; are looked after when you are abandoned in ports; are not refused shore leave for security purposes; are protected when your work takes you into piracy-infested areas; and are not left unaided when you are in distress at sea...

1.5 million seafarers serving the daily needs of more than 6.5 billion citizens of the world! It is a fact that goes unnoticed or is taken for granted by most, but one that should be trumpeted loud and clear," he concluded.

"For seafarers the world over deserve our respect, recognition and gratitude and, during 2010, we at IMO are resolved to ensure that the world does take notice of your exceptional role and contribution and of the special debt that all of us owe to you."

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