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EU MARITIME POLICY REVIEW – ‘BLUE PAPER’

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On behalf of the International Chamber Shipping (ICS) and the International Shipping Federation (ISF), I would like to convey some preliminary comments on the Commission's 'Blue Paper' from the perspective of the international shipping industry.

I am sure that you are very pleased by the widespread attention that the review exercise has achieved, and we welcome the impact that it has had in highlighting the importance of maritime issues and of the shipping industry in particular.

ICS and ISF are encouraged by the emphasis in the Blue Paper given to the importance of international maritime regulation and support for finding solutions to regulatory challenges at international bodies, such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO). We welcome the Commission's recognition of the necessity for global rules for a global industry.

We note, however, that the door is left open for possible unilateral EU action, on issues such as classical air emissions, Green House Gases, and ship recycling if IMO proves unable to deliver, in a timely fashion, the 'bankable' solutions which the Commission is seeking. We are working hard to ensure that IMO does indeed successfully deliver global solutions on these issues, so that regional regulatory actions, with their negative impact on the smooth flow of world trade, will be avoided.

Given that by its nature the Blue Paper is relatively short on details, which to a large extent will not be addressed until the Action Plan is taken forward by the relevant Directorates General, we look forward to giving further input when individual subjects are developed. In particular, we note that DG TREN intends to issue, in October 2008, a Communication on EU Maritime Transport Policy for the following 10 years. In view of the global character of international shipping, we wish to register the importance of continuing consultation and dialogue with ICS and ISF, and indeed the shipping industry in general, as this important Communication is developed.

We also note the launch of the new consultation exercise concerning the concept of what is now called a 'European Space for Maritime Transport without barriers'. Although detail is lacking at this stage, we are pleased that the paper appears to stress that the concept is only meant to be concerned with improving customs and trade facilitation in

the context of the single EU market. However, as the concept is developed it will remain important to avoid any measures which - if not now then perhaps at some time in the future - might have potential implications for market access enjoyed by non-EU operators.

We also are pleased to see the proposals to bring about the rapid implementation in Europe of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006. ISF was of course the official ILO 'Social Partner' with responsibility for negotiating the Convention at ILO on behalf of maritime employers, and we continue to support ECSA in their capacity as Social Partners in the EU discussions.

We reiterate that we wish to see the worldwide implementation of maritime labour standards in accordance with the ILO MLC as soon as possible. ISF, as the international organisation for maritime employers, also has a close interest in any reassessment of exclusions of seafarers from EU social legislation, to which the level playing field established by the ILO MLC is also relevant.

Given that ISF is representing maritime employers in the current IMO review of the IMO STCW Convention governing global training and certification standards, we would also wish to be involved in the development highlighted in the Action Plan on the qualification of EU seafarers, to ensure that any proposal will be consistent with the IMO regime.

Amongst the many other issues to be taken forward as part of the Action Plan, we also wish to highlight ICS's interest in the proposals regarding EU maritime surveillance activities in view of our close involvement in the development of IMO security measures including Long Range Information and Tracking (LRIT) of ships.

We also note that the Blue Paper talks about the possibility of a 'universal implementing agreement' protecting the environment in 'Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction' under UNCLOS. ICS, which represents the global industry at the United Nations Inter-Consultative Process (ICP) on the Law of the Sea, would like to be consulted on any proposals that may be developed.

We recognise that the Commission acknowledges the importance of consultation with industry stakeholders, including representatives of the international shipping industry, something which you will recall we stressed during the consultation phase. Both ICS and ISF therefore look forward to being consulted together with our industry colleagues, both formally and informally as appropriate, as the Action Plan is developed.

I am most grateful for this opportunity to present our views on the Blue Paper, and we look forward to working with the Commission as the Action Plan is developed.