

## **INTERTANKO Statement Places Of Refuge**

Thank you Mr Chairman

The Prestige incident is yet another example of the URGENT need for speedy action to be taken to ensure that plans are drawn up for places of refuge. We note that the issue has been under consideration in IMO for quite some time, but we believe this has taken too long to resolve.

It is imperative that the work is finalised with no further delay, and there is no longer any excuse for governments not to have made the required plans. When ships are refused such refuge, the potential for a serious accident is increased and the safety of the crew jeopardised.

The emergency transfer of cargo and other measures to aid the stricken vessel will be similarly hindered with a consequent increased threat to the environment.

We recognise that this is not an easy topic, but that cannot and should not be allowed to be used as an excuse for not finalising this work.

The Prestige accident happened after the issue was first brought up in IMO and before the work had finished. The IMO Secretary-General said in the aftermath of the Castor incident in December 2000 that the time had come for IMO to undertake, as a matter of priority a global consideration of the problem of places of refuge for disabled vessels and adopt any measures required to ensure that in the interest of safety of life at sea and environmental protection, coastal States reviewed their contingency arrangement, so that such ships are provided with assistance and facilities as might be required in the circumstances.

That was two years ago - The Prestige accident shows us that the need to get these contingency arrangements in place is more urgent than the speed with which this issue has been dealt with to date.

A number of incidences, including Erika, Castor and now of late, Prestige, underline the urgency for the appropriate authorities to have drawn up plans for places of refuge.

The opportunity for a ship in need to be permitted into sheltered waters can be the difference between being given the opportunity to safely transfer cargo from the stricken ship to an other ship, and also to undertake emergency repairs, and safeguard the integrity of the vessel and the safety of those onboard

We recognise that pre-identified places of refuge would greatly enhance the saving of life at sea and pollution prevention, and therefore encourage the IMO member states to ensure that the appropriate rules will soon be adopted, and more importantly, that all coastal states ensure that they have relevant plans in place so that ships in need will have safe havens in which they can genuinely seek safe refuge.

It is too late to start such considerations once the accident has happened. It is essential that the appropriate authorities have the plans prepared, resources identified and protected waters designated in advance in order that decisions can be taken and implemented swiftly and effectively

It is not acceptable in today's world to decline an urgent request for permission to bring a stricken tanker to sheltered waters.

While INTERTANKO represents the interests of tanker owners this issue goes much wider - all types of ships may need a place of refuge – not just tankers.

The planning and facilitation needs to consider – in addition to the location of a Place of refuge other aspects such as:

- The salvage & Lightering facilities, and resources available
- The availability of technical and operational expertise and advice
- But also importantly, the financial protection and compensation schemes available,

In the case of tankers the CLC and Fund Convention Funds are in place for the participating countries to provide compensation for oil pollution from any spill of the cargo and bunkers. In the case of other ships the situation is different and needs further speedy consideration.

Mr Chairman we need immediate action – there is no longer any excuse for inaction.

Thank you