



International Chamber of Commerce

*The world business organization*

## MEDIA RELEASE

**\*\*\*EMBARGOED until Tuesday 18 January at 7:00 GMT\*\*\***

### Hostage-taking at sea rises to record levels, says IMB

London, 18 January 2011 – More people were taken hostage at sea in 2010 than in any year on record, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) global piracy report disclosed today. Pirates captured 1,181 seafarers and killed eight. A total of 53 ships were hijacked.

The number of pirate attacks against ships has risen every year for the last four years, IMB revealed. Ships reported 445 attacks in 2010, up 10% from 2009. While 188 crew members were taken hostage in 2006, 1,050 were taken in 2009 and 1,181 in 2010.

"These figures for the number of hostages and vessels taken are the highest we have ever seen," said Captain Pottengal Mukundan, Director of the IMB's Piracy Reporting Centre, which has monitored piracy worldwide since 1991. "The continued increase in these numbers is alarming.

"As a percentage of global incidents, piracy on the high seas has increased dramatically over armed robbery in territorial waters," said Captain Mukundan. "On the high seas off Somalia, heavily armed pirates are overpowering ocean-going fishing or merchant vessels to use as a base for further attacks. They capture the crew and force them to sail to within attacking distance of other unsuspecting vessels."

According to IMB, hijackings off the coast of Somalia accounted for 92% of all ship seizures last year with 49 vessels hijacked and 1,016 crew members taken hostage. A total of 28 vessels and 638 hostages were still being held for ransom by Somali pirates as of 31 December 2010.

While attacks off the coast of Somalia remain high, the number of incidents in the Gulf of Aden more than halved last year, with 53 attacks in 2010 down from 117 in 2009. IMB attributes this reduction to the deterrence work of naval forces from around the world that have been patrolling the area since 2008 and to ships' application of self-protection measures recommended in *Best Management Practices, version 3 (BMP 3)*, a booklet published last year by the shipping industry and navies.

"The naval units in the seas off the Horn of Africa should be applauded for preventing a huge number of piracy attacks in the region," said Captain Mukundan. "The continued presence of international navies is vital in protecting merchant ships along these important trade routes.

But Somali pirates are travelling further afield. In December 2010, they reached as far south as the Mozambique Channel and as far east as 72° East longitude in the Indian Ocean, an operating range IMB says is unprecedented.

What can be done to stop the surge of piracy on the high seas? Captain Mukundan said the answer lies primarily onshore in South Central Somalia. "There is a desperate need for a stable infrastructure in this area," he said. "It is vital that governments and the United Nations devote resources to developing workable administrative infrastructures to prevent criminals from exploiting the vacuum left from years of failed local government. All measures taken at sea to limit the activities of the pirates are undermined because of a lack of responsible authority back in Somalia from where the pirates begin their voyages and return with hijacked vessels."

### International Chamber of Commerce

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Elsewhere, violent attacks continued around Nigeria, with incidents concentrated near the port of Lagos. Overall, 13 vessels were boarded, four vessels fired upon and there were two attempted attacks.

In Bangladesh, the number of armed robbery incidents rose for the second successive year. Twenty-one vessels were boarded, mainly by attackers armed with knives. Almost all were anchored in the port of Chittagong.

Indonesia saw its highest levels of armed robbery against ships since 2007. Thirty vessels were boarded, nine attacks were thwarted and one vessel was hijacked. Vessels were underway in 15 of the attacks. The South China Seas recorded 31 incidents, more than double the previous year. Twenty-one vessels were boarded, seven attacks attempted, two vessels were fired upon and one was hijacked. The last quarter of 2010 was quiet, with only one reported incident.

The IMB Piracy Reporting Centre is the world's only manned centre to receive reports of pirate attacks 24 hours a day from across the globe. IMB strongly urges all shipmasters and owners to report all actual, attempted and suspicious piracy and armed robbery incidents to the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre. This first step in the response chain is vital in ensuring that adequate resources are allocated by authorities to tackle piracy. Transparent statistics from an independent, non-political, international organization can act as a catalyst to achieve this goal.

IMB offers the latest piracy reports free of charge. To request a PDF version of the report by email, please visit: <http://www.icc-ccs.org/requestreport>

Latest attacks may also be viewed on the IMB Live Piracy Map at: <http://www.icc-ccs.org/livepiracymap>

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### **About ICC**

The International Chamber of Commerce is the largest, most representative business organization in the world. Its hundreds of thousands of member companies in over 120 countries have interests spanning every sector of private enterprise.

A world network of national committees keeps the ICC International Secretariat in Paris informed about national and regional business priorities. More than 2,000 experts drawn from ICC's member companies feed their knowledge and experience into crafting the ICC stance on specific business issues.

The United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the G20 and many other intergovernmental bodies, both international and regional, are kept in touch with the views of international business through ICC.

For more information please visit: [www.iccwbo.org](http://www.iccwbo.org)