

Lloyd's List

IUMI urges swift end to threat facing crew

Governments accused of not taking urgent action to ensure crew safety

Christopher Munro - Thursday 27 January 2011

INTERNATIONAL Union of Marine Insurance president Ole Wikborg has accused the governments of maritime nations of prevaricating too long over the the threat of piracy, *writes Christopher Munro.*

Mr Wikborg, who is also a director at the Norwegian Hull Club, urged governments to take urgent action to remove the threat of piracy from the seas.

“Those who suffer the most are the seafarers and efforts must be increased to ensure their safety,” he said. “Politicians and bureaucrats seem to care little about the unrelenting increase in pirate activity and the threat faced by crews when their ships pass through the piracy-infested areas, most notably the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.”

While this is obviously horrendous for the crew and their families, shipowners and insurers are also suffering. Shipowners, cargo owners and insurers are all paying the price due to ransom costs and loss of trade and profits.

The past 12 months has seen the pirate gangs extend their area of operations even further — and at the end of last year, the Joint War Committee responded by extending the area around Somalia at increased threat from attack to include almost the entire Indian Ocean.

Official figures show some 1,200 seafarers were taken hostage by pirates last year, with the pirates' tactics and weaponry also evolving.

The costs associated with dealing with piracy are also increasing, with some \$238m spent last year — and marine underwriters bearing the brunt. *ends*