

Piracy problems have not gone away

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Piracy is still a major risk for the maritime industry, despite a recent reduction in attacks.

The International Union of Marine Insurance (IUMI) is providing charitable support during its annual conference in London to the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme (MPHRP).

Dr Peter Swift, chairman of the MPHRP, told delegates that since 2007, 4000 seafarers have been taken hostage around the world and 70 have lost their lives as a result of piracy.



"Fortunately attacks are down this year, but that trend could be reversible," he said. "Around the world every day we estimate that 100,000 seafarers are sailing in or to piracy affected areas."

These words of warning were echoed by Richard Neylon, partner at Holman Fenwick Willan LLP.

"My fear is that as the risks are perceived to be reducing, ship owners will start letting their guard down and we risk further attacks," he said. "There are still attacks happening."

The MPHRP provides training programmes for victims of piracy, a 24 hour helpline for family members and other support services.

Many victims return home with health problems and massive debts have not been paid during their time in captivity, explained Dr Swift.

"We used to think that when the event was over it was great," he said. "Bad times yes, torture, maybe - but now they were going home."

"For many it was ok, but for several it was not."