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Circular Letter No.4550
11 April 2022

To: All IMO Members
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **Communication from the Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica**

The Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica has sent the attached communication, dated 8 April 2022, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.



Commonwealth of Dominica
Office of Maritime Affairs and Marine Personnel

8 April 2022

To: All IMO Members
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **Importance of safeguarding seafarer safety by describing the results of the attack and destruction on a merchant vessel in Ukraine.**

The Commonwealth of Dominica Maritime Administration reported on 5 April 2022 that motor vessel AZBURG IMO number 9102899 Call Sign J7BG6 MMSI number 325116200 was indiscriminately attacked, sank and completely destroyed while at berth in Mariupol, Ukraine.

Mv AZBURG was not able to leave the port of Mariupol where she has remained since arriving 23 February 2022, due to the ongoing armed attack of the Russian Federation on Ukraine. The vessel was struck by two missile shells while at berth in the port of Mariupol, Ukraine on 3rd of April 2022 at 11:36 UTC. On 4th April 2022, around 22:40 LT the vessel was heavily fired upon by Russian armed forces. Specific characteristics of firing on the vessel remains unknown, crew reported shelling, bombing and repeated hits by missiles, causing a fire in engine room. Further reports described heavy fighting and intensive shelling in the port area by Russian armed forces. On 4th April 2022, the Commonwealth of Dominica Maritime Administration received information that as a result of the attack and spreading fire, m.v. AZBURG sank at berth 16 in the port of Mariupol Port, Ukraine.

The crew managed to evacuate and found refuge on board of neighboring vessels. One person was found wounded and received medical assistance from Ukrainian border guards.

Dominica Maritime Administration is deeply concerned about the fate, health and safety of mariners and other people in the port area of Mariupol, Ukraine. Limited means of communication makes communication with people in the area close to impossible. There are limited resources of food and water available on board, and evacuation is not possible due to the highly unsafe situation due to continuous shooting and fighting.

The Administration received reports of ongoing heavy fighting and intense battles near the ships where the crew members are refuge. M.v. AZBURG was completely destroyed, other ships in the port are being seriously damaged continuously.

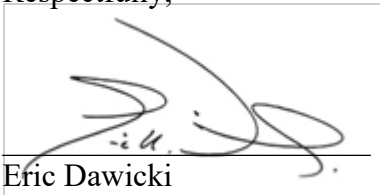
The people working on m.v. AZBURG have been stuck on board in Mariupol for 42 days hiding out on board of the vessel in a constant state of terror, until their vessel was attacked, set on fire and brought to sinking. These seafarers, who are currently hiding out in the accommodation of other vessels in the port area, find themselves under an immense amount of intense fear and distress. The constant and immediate threat of death and/or serious injury leaves people victimized of the situation, with no prospect of improvement. Seafarers remain uncertain of their fate and are deeply traumatized. The lives and wellbeing of individual mariners and their families are more than likely going to be impacted by these events. This might include physical and mental health issues, lost potential for future job perspectives and other serious long-term damaging effects.

People are in dire need of humanitarian emergency response services and secure exits taking them to safety. The Commonwealth of Dominica Maritime Administration calls upon all IMO Member States, Intergovernmental organizations and Non-governmental organizations to find a way to work collectively, in order to expedite the rendering of such humanitarian assistance.

We urgently call upon all relevant UN, governmental and industry bodies to take immediate and direct action to address this serious issue for health and wellbeing of humans, the safety and security of shipping and the prevention of marine and atmospheric pollution by ships. All efforts to speed up establishing humanitarian corridors, as decided upon during the thirty-fifth extraordinary session of the IMO Council, should be taken and executed without delay in order to ensure the safety of seafarers by allowing them to leave the conflict zone immediately.

Lastly, the Commonwealth of Dominica Maritime Administration urges the Russian Federation to withdraw its forces from Ukraine and respect its obligations under relevant international treaties and conventions. The immediate evacuation of all civilians from the port of Mariupol, including the entire crew of mv AZBURG, should be organized with the highest degree of priority and urgency.

Respectfully,



Eric Dawicki
Deputy Maritime Administrator
Commonwealth of Dominica

