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Circular Letter No.4387  
17 February 2021

To: All IMO Member States

Subject: **Ratification of the Cape Town Agreement of 2012**

1 The Cape Town Agreement of 2012 on the Implementation of the Provisions of the Torremolinos Protocol of 1993 relating to the Torremolinos International Convention for the Safety of Fishing Vessels, 1977 (the Cape Town Agreement) provides globally applicable mandatory requirements for the design, construction and equipment of fishing vessels. It also provides for the establishment of a port State mechanism to monitor illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing activities, which in turn will protect markets from being flooded with illegally caught fish, avoid depletion of world fish stocks, protect fishers from human rights abuse and provide the basis for tackling abandoned, lost or otherwise discarded fishing gear problems. However, this global instrument, the only one that will regulate the safety of fishing vessels, has not yet entered into force.

2 To that end, a Ministerial Conference on Fishing Vessel Safety and IUU Fishing was organized by IMO in Torremolinos, Spain, in October 2019, in collaboration with FAO, Spain and the Pew Charitable Trusts. The Conference was attended by over 125 States, some 70 ministerial and Ambassador-level representatives, and 30 international organizations. At the Conference, 48 States signed the [Torremolinos Declaration](#), which has now been signed by 51 States, to indicate their determination to ratify the Cape Town Agreement by the tenth anniversary of its adoption (i.e. 11 October 2022), thereby moving a significant step closer to bringing into force a global regime setting out much-needed safety standards for fishing vessels and their crew.

3 Additionally, the Ministerial Conference adopted the [Torremolinos Statement on the Cape Town Agreement of 2012 and combating illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing](#), highlighting the importance of the Agreement and the need to combat IUU fishing. The resolution calls on States to ratify the Cape Town Agreement; urges States to take actions to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU fishing; encourages States to ratify and promote the STCW-F Convention on training of fishing vessel personnel; calls upon FAO, ILO and IMO to continue to work together in the fishing sector; and requests IMO to continue to provide technical assistance to States who request it in order to accede to and implement the Agreement.

4 In order to promote the delivery of the ambitious goals set out to achieve the entry into force criteria of the Agreement by the target date of 11 October 2022, IMO, in cooperation with other UN organizations, notably FAO and ILO, and non-governmental organizations, in particular, the Pew Charitable Trusts, has recently been organizing [a series of regional webinars](#) within the Organization's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP) to further promote the ratification and implementation of the Cape Town Agreement. The ITCP

provides technical and legal assistance to Member States in building human and institutional capacities for uniform and effective compliance with the Organization's regulatory framework, including the Cape Town Agreement. The first webinar was held in November 2020, covering Latin America and the Caribbean, and bringing together a wide range of stakeholders from transport and fisheries agencies. More webinars, to take place in 2021, are currently being arranged for other regions of the globe.

5 Additionally, IMO has launched a new [easy guide to the Cape Town Agreement of 2012](#) on fishing vessel safety, which provides a plethora of valuable information resources, including informative videos.

6 In addition to the above efforts, the Secretariat is offering to hold bilateral online meetings with interested States to discuss the current status of their ratification efforts and any other relevant issues that the Secretariat could assist with, to facilitate preparations of those States that are planning to ratify the Agreement. These meetings could be held with interpretation if needed and participation of both maritime and fishery agencies is encouraged.

7 In order to follow-up on the current progress of ratification and to determine any need for technical cooperation assistance, Member States are invited to fill in a short online questionnaire (see link below), preferably not later than **1 April 2021**.

**Questionnaire link:**

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=OHM9rD1gZ0WZHcirS4nCE0QIlflIJF5Hn1-NpxctdpdUNERZV1RLVjBBUDBWSTc3MVVG0E83WUw5WS4u>

8 The questionnaire should be filled in by **just one official** per State from the most relevant Government agency to avoid multiple submissions. In the case of interest in bilateral discussions with the Secretariat pertaining to the technical and legal aspects of the Agreement or becoming a party, this should be indicated in the questionnaire.

9 To bring the voyage towards a global regime on fishing vessel safety, that started over 44 years ago, to a successful conclusion, Member States are encouraged to ratify the Agreement as soon as possible. This would finally bring into force an internationally binding safety regime for fishing vessels, contributing to a significant reduction of the exploitation of both the oceans and the people who depend on them.

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