APPLYING THE ISM CODE TO ENHANCE MARITIME SAFETY

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ABSTRACT

Maritime Safety Committee of the IMO at its 84th session in May 2008 adopted a new code of international standards and Recommended Practices for a safety Investigation into a Marine Casualty or Marine Incident (the casualty Investigation code). The Relevant amendments to SOLAS chapter XI-1 were adopted to give the code a mandatory status. The code requires that safety investigation should be conducted into each very serious marine casualty, which is defined as a casualty involving a total loss of ship or a death or severe damage to the environment (IMO, 2008). Main purpose of the new code is for the administrators to obtain and disseminate information that could be used to prevent future accidents. The new regulations expand on SOLAS regulations I/21, requiring each administration to investigate any casualty occurring to any of its ship ‘’when it judges that such an investigation may assist in determining what changes in the presents regulations might be desirable” (SOLAS, 2004).

Safety measures based on the outcomes of the investigations of accidents and the lessons learnt from them have been the cornerstone of IMO’s rule making process. International safety conventions under aegis of the IMO and those prior to its establishment were mainly developed and adopted in response to accidents and disasters of high consequential loss of life, property or damage to the marine environment, with an objective of implementing design and operation standards for preventing reoccurrence of similar diastases. It is a common saying in the maritime sectors that:

Titanic created the SOLAS:

Torrey Canyon created the MARPOL:

Amoco Cadiz created the MARPOL amendments and STCW:

Exxon Valdez gave us the OPA 90 (USA)

Herald of Free Enterprise created the ISM Code. (Sagen, 1999)

Since the establishment of the IMO fifty years ago, over fifty international conventions have been developed and adopted by its member states. In addition to these conventions hundreds of other measures such as protocols, codes , guidelines and recommended practices have been developed that influence practically every aspect of shipping and shipping and ship operation, including ship design, construction, maintenance manning and eventual disposal—literally from the drawing board to the scrap yard. (IMO, 2008). These concerted efforts of the international maritime fraternity under the auspices of the IMO and other international organizations have met with

remarkable success in promoting maritime safety. Over the past 35 years the number of significant oil spills has been reduced from over 25 per annum to less than four per annum (ITOPF,2006). During the years 2005 and 2006 there has been, though insignificant increases in the tanker incidents since the year 2004 when they were the least, they are now less than 20% of what they were in 198, (INTERTANKO, 2007 weekly news 27/2007). In terms of total loses there are 13% lesser number of ships and 25% lesser tonnage lost over a period of last ten years (ISL, 2003).

Notwithstanding such commendable achievements in maritime safety we are still faced with, though lesser in number, maritime disasters of high magnitude claiming valuable lives, damage to property and the marine environments. According to the casualty reports from Lloyds Register of Shipping on an average nearly a hundred ships, and valuable lives, are still being lost annually. Within the period between 1987 and 1996 just thirteen ship casualties accounted for 7299 lives and ingress of over half a million tones of crude oil from ships into the sea (Mejia 2005).Such lesser than desired achievements from the globally accepted regulatory regimes, notwithstanding the shortcomings and lacuna in their own inadequate implementation, culminate from number of widely diversified technical as well as non –technical, socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-technical reasons (Prasad,2007).

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