

2 February 2015

Patrizia Heidegger
Executive Director
NGO Shipbreaking Platform
Rue de la Linière 11
1060 Brussels
Belgium

Subject: Current situation in the shipbreaking yards in Chittagong, Bangladesh

Dear Ms. Heidegger,

On behalf of the Secretary-General, I acknowledge with thanks your letter of 26 January 2015 in respect of the current situation in the shipbreaking yards in Chittagong, Bangladesh.

While noting your concerns regarding the working conditions in ship breaking yards, you will agree that ship recycling is of a multi-faceted nature, involving issues of environment, safety and occupational health under the auspices of different organizations. The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the specialized UN agency mandated to set standards for occupational safety and health (OSH) for all workers, the Basel Convention covers the environmentally sound management (ESM) of hazardous wastes, while the role of IMO is to set standards for ships concerning maritime safety, efficiency of navigation and prevention and control of marine pollution. The three Organizations are cooperating to minimize the environmental, safety and occupational health risks related to the ship recycling process, in their respective fields of competence.

The Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships was unanimously adopted on 15 May 2009, at a diplomatic conference convened by IMO in Hong Kong, China, involving a concerted effort by the Member States, relevant industries, the ILO, the Basel Convention and others. The Hong Kong Convention aims at ensuring the safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships by setting universal standards, dealing with the responsibilities of both the shipping industry and the recycling industry. Accordingly, it addresses the environmental, occupational health and safety issues related to ship recycling, taking into account the particular characteristics of maritime transport as a globalized industry. Since its adoption, IMO has worked expeditiously and has adopted all six sets of guidelines required under the Convention, which means that the whole package to facilitate its entry into force and uniform implementation is now in place. It is also notable that revised guidance for the Inventory of Hazardous Materials, an important requirement of the Hong Kong Convention, was agreed by the Sub-Committee on Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR) at its 2nd session in January 2015. To date, three States, the Congo, France and Norway, have ratified or acceded to the Convention and we look forward to further ratifications.

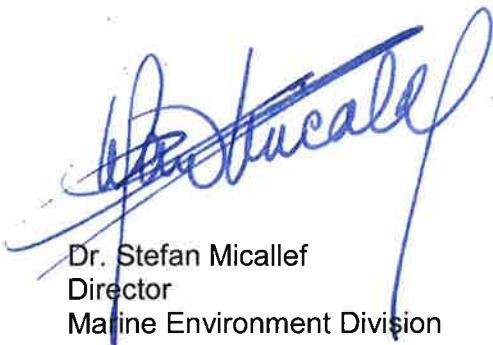
Ship recycling contributes to sustainable development because virtually every part of the hull, machinery, equipment, fittings and even furniture of a ship is recycled for reuse in many different sectors. This is especially the case in the South Asian countries, where the recycling

industry creates economic development for local and regional communities, generating large-scale direct employment as well as additional employment and economic activity from its associated industries, including extensive trading in second-hand equipment and machinery.

IMO has always attached great importance to the sustainable development of the ship recycling industry and to technical cooperation among developing countries. As you are probably aware, IMO and Bangladesh have signed and are jointly implementing a project on safe and environmentally sound ship recycling in Bangladesh, to promote best practices and compliance with international standards in the country's ship recycling industry, while the ILO and the Basel Convention are also working together according to their respective mandates, namely on OSH and ESM of hazardous wastes.

We look forward to a continued dialogue with a view of exploring ways on how civil society organizations like yours can make a positive contribution to reaching the aims set out by the Convention.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Stefan Micallef
Director
Marine Environment Division