CCAMLR XXVII Briefing on Antarctic Vessel-Related Issues

I. Introduction

Traffic has increased significantly in the Antarctic over the past decade both in terms of overall numbers and the different types of vessels operating in the area. ASOC is concerned that the increasing number of vessels, their concentrations in particular seasons and areas, and the fact that many are not ice-strengthened, raises a number of intrinsic environmental and marine safety issues, particularly given the extreme remoteness of the region, the sensitivity of Antarctic ecosystems and the vulnerability of marine wildlife and habitats to threats from shipping activities.

The increased risks are highlighted by the number of recent shipping incidents in the Southern Ocean, which demonstrate the potential for serious loss of life and adverse impacts on the highly sensitive and vulnerable marine environment. Likewise, operational impacts of shipping, such as ballast water, sewage and garbage discharges and air emissions, have the potential to be equally destructive to Antarctic ecosystems.

**ASOC’s Vision** is for the highest standards and a legally binding instrument for vessels operating in the Antarctic region, to protect the sensitive and increasingly vulnerable environment and to avoid loss of human life.

Towards this end, ASOC is calling for greater efforts to protect one of the planet’s last wildernesses and agreement to greater collaborative working between the technical expertise of IMO delegates and the regional knowledge and expertise of ATCM and CCAMLR delegates to improve shipping standards and operations in this remote and potentially hazardous region.

II. Summary of papers relating to vessels operating in the Southern Ocean

At CCAMLR XXVII, there are four papers of relevance to shipping in Antarctic waters:

1. **Practical Guidelines for Ballast Water Exchange** in the Convention Area (CCAMLR-XXVII/29) from the UK, which proposes a CCAMLR Resolution to adopt the IMO guidelines so that they are explicitly implemented for application to vessels engaged in CCAMLR activities.
**Recommendation:** The proposal for a CCAMLR Resolution to adopt the IMO Guidelines should be supported.

2. **Report of the Main Engine Failure of FV Argos Georgia** in the Ross Sea on 24 December 2007 (CCAMLR-XXVII/BG/32) submitted by the UK. This report is submitted for consideration by CCAMLR and was also submitted to ATCM earlier this year.

**Recommendation:** No action is proposed at CCAMLR XXVII, however current efforts to assess the risk of shipping in the Antarctic area should be extended to include fishing vessels, and efforts to extend the Arctic Guidelines for Ships operating in ice-covered waters should be extended to address fishing vessels.

In addition, in respect of assessing the risks associated with fishing vessels in the Southern Ocean:

**Recommendation:** CCAMLR Members should actively consider strengthening the regulation of fishing vessels with respect to environmental impact and safety of life at sea, including adopting a new Conservation Measure on ice-strengthening of fishing vessels.

3. **Topic Summary of CEP Discussions on Non-Native Species (NNS) in Antarctica** (CCAMLR-XXVII/BG/19 Rev.1) - a summary of discussions at CEP on non-native species in Antarctica, which is presented for consideration by CCAMLR. It largely addresses land-based issues although there is some reference to ballast water exchange and hull fouling, and mention of the ballast water guidelines referred to above.

**Recommendation:** See proposal for CCAMLR Resolution on IMO Ballast Water Guidelines.

4. A **paper from the International Maritime Organization** (IMO), which forwards for consideration information on activities of potential interest to CCAMLR (CCAMLR-XVII/BG/40). The paper includes the ASOC (FOEI, GP, IFAW, WWF) paper on **Antarctic Shipping** submitted to the last meeting of IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee and a paper from the US on the development of a guidance document for **minimizing the risk of ship strikes with cetaceans**. It was agreed at MEPC that the US paper would be issued as interim guidance on avoiding ship strikes pending further refinement in light of submissions at the next MEPC meeting (July 2009).

ASOC’s proposal for a Joint Working Group between IMO and the ATCM to consider and collaborate on solutions to shipping threats in the Antarctic Treaty Area was not supported by all those delegations which spoke, although there was considerable support and everyone who spoke supported the overall direction of the ASOC paper. ASOC recognizes that a number of new initiatives are currently under consideration by the IMO’s Committees and Sub-Committees, and that some of these issues are being discussed in the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting and new measures are likely to be agreed. However there remains no
comprehensive effort to address the threat to this Special Area from the full range of vessels active in the region, including fishing vessels\textsuperscript{iii}.

The Antarctic area south of 60\textdegree S latitude is recognized as sensitive and vulnerable to the impacts of pollution and has been designated as a Special Area. ASOC considers that a comprehensive assessment of the potential impacts to the area from all vessels is necessary, plus an assessment of the presence or absence of a measure to address those impacts, and whether a measure exists and has not been ratified or effectively implemented, and whether further action is needed.

**Recommendation:** CCAMLR should recognize the interim guidance on avoiding ship strikes.

**Recommendation:** CCAMLR should identify methods for cooperative working with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the UN body responsible for regulation of international shipping, to strengthen standards and practices for fishing vessels in the region.

### III. Other vessel issues

Fishing vessels participating in the CCAMLR toothfish catch documentation system have to have an IMO / Lloyds number, but they are not required to supply the IMO number when notifying.

**Recommendation:** CCAMLR Members should agree that fishing vessels be required to include a IMO / Lloyds Number and declare beneficial owners when notifying for any fisheries.

\textsuperscript{1} Types of vessels include large and small commercial tourism vessels, private yachts, fishing vessels (both legal and illegal), whaling fleets (catcher, processing and refueling vessels), research vessels, and vessels supplying scientific research stations.

\textsuperscript{ii} Recent incidents include the sinking of the M/S Explorer, a commercial tourism vessel in November 2007, the grounding of two cruise ships: the M/V Lybov Orlova and the M/V Nordkapp at Deception Island in the South Shetland Islands in November 2006 and January 2007 respectively, the cruise ship M/S Fram losing power on December 30 2007 along the Antarctic Peninsula and drifting into an iceberg, the trawler Argos Georgia adrift for 15 days after losing power while fishing in the Ross Sea off Antarctica’s northern coast on December 23 2007, and the explosion and fire on the Nisshin Maru, a Japanese whale processing ship in February 2007, which resulted in the loss of life and loss of power for several days.

\textsuperscript{iii} In addition to risks to human safety and of oil spills associated with shipping in remote and frequently hazardous waters, operational threats to the environment and wildlife of the Antarctic area include legal and illegal discharges of oils, chemicals, treated and untreated sewage and grey water, garbage, and other substances; leaks from refueling operations; introductions of alien species through ballast water discharges and on ships’ hulls; damage caused by leaching from anti-fouling systems; air emissions; underwater noise and ship strikes.