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Shipping Industry Urges the IMO to Approve Container Weight Verification Requirement

For Immediate Release

Misdeclared container cargo weights have been a long-standing problem for the transportation industry and for governments. The problem is significant and arises in almost every trade.¹ Misdeclared container weights present safety hazards for ships, their crews, other cargo on board, workers in the port facilities handling containers, and on roads. Incorrectly declared weights lead to incorrect ship stowage and accidents. Misdeclared container weights facilitate unlawful evasion of Customs tariffs and duties, while also impairing Customs authorities' ability to perform accurate cargo security risk assessment.²

The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is on the verge of addressing this recognized and documented safety problem. The collective work and agreement of 15 governments and 13 industry groups have forged a compromise solution for the IMO's consideration in mid-September (DSC 18).³ This compromise should be adopted as a long-needed improvement to maritime safety.

¹ For examples, see the IMO submission from various governments and industry organizations at: http://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/Verification_of_container_weights_DSC_17-INF_5_-_Examples.pdf

² For example, such concerns prompted Ukrainian Customs over a two week period in October 2012 to weigh all packed containers discharged in Ukrainian ports. 56% of the containers had an actual weight greater than the weight stated in the manifest based on the shipper's declared weight as provided in the shipping instructions. This has prompted Ukrainian Customs to now require that all import containers be weighed at discharge. Similar concerns have lead Indian Customs to require that all packed containers discharged or to be loaded in Indian ports be weighed; this requirement is in the process of being implemented.

³ The following Member States and Non-Governmental Organizations in consultative status participated in the Correspondence Group's development of its proposals and recommendations: Belgium, Brazil, China, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Russian Federation, Singapore, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, BIC, BIMCO, CEFIC, DGAC, IAPH, ICHCA, ICS, IICL, IMCA, ISO, IUMI, P & I Clubs, and WSC. The full report of the Correspondence Group is available at: http://www.worldshipping.org/public-statements/regulatory-comments/DSC_18-5_-_Report_of_the_Correspondence_Group_-the_United_States_-1-.pdf

The facts are:

1. **Existing IMO requirements are deficient. The SOLAS Convention already requires shippers to provide a correct cargo weight declaration, but the existing provisions are not enforced and are ineffective.**
2. **IMO member governments participating in the IMO correspondence group, shippers, and maritime industry organizations agree that the way to solve this problem is to require a packed container's weight to be verified before the container is loaded onto a ship.**
3. **The technology exists to verify container weights without delays or significant costs to commerce.**
4. **The IMO instructed a special Correspondence Group to develop an amendment to the SOLAS Convention for the "mandatory verification of gross weight of containers" and Guidelines for the implementation of such requirements. This has been done with extensive input and support of 15 governments and 13 industry representatives. At the request of shippers and several governments, the final compromise proposal allows for two methods to verify containers' weights, but all methods used must provide reliable weight verification. The compromise has facilitated agreement across the widest possible group of governments and industry participants.**
5. **The responsible IMO Subcommittee is scheduled to consider these recommended changes to the SOLAS Convention in London in mid-September.**
6. **Recent container ship casualties vividly demonstrate the importance of properly declared containerized goods shipments. Responsible shippers recognize the problem of misdeclared container weights and agree with the proposed solution at the IMO.⁴**
7. **If the safety and Customs problems associated with misdeclared container weights are to be solved, it is imperative that the IMO adopt the proposed container weight verification requirement without further delay.⁵**

The IMO has recognized and discussed the problem of incorrect container weights for over six years. With the input of many governments and industry organizations, the IMO now has before it an openly and carefully negotiated and crafted compromise proposal for addressing this recognized and documented safety

⁴ The Global Shippers' Forum (GSF) actively participated in the IMO Correspondence Group's efforts as a member of ICHCA, consulted with its shipper member organizations in Asia, Africa, Australasia, Europe, North America and South America, and fully supports the Correspondence Group's proposed SOLAS Amendments and Guidelines. See: <http://www.globalshippersforum.com/Media/>

⁵ If the relevant IMO Subcommittee approves the proposed SOLAS amendment and guidelines at its next meeting in mid-September (DSC 18), they must then be "approved" at the next IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) meeting (MSC 93 in May 2014), and then officially "adopted" by a subsequent MSC. The formal adoption cannot take place earlier than 12 months after the MSC meeting where the proposals were agreed, i.e., MSC 95 in May 2015. Upon adoption, there is typically a 24 months "waiting period" before the SOLAS amendments take effect, which would be May 2017. This very lengthy process would ensure more than ample time for shippers and the industry to easily adapt to the new rules.

and Customs problem. That proposal also includes carefully considered implementation guidelines as requested by DSC 17.

It is time to solve the problem. It is time for the IMO to adopt the solution that is before it.

For additional information, including a chronological description of the IMO's extensive, six year consideration of the solution to the curse of misdeclared container weights, see: http://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/History_of_IMO_Effort_to_Improve_Container_Safety_Final_Aug_2013.pdf

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ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF PORTS AND HARBORS (IAPH): IAPH is a global alliance of ports, representing some 230 ports in about 90 countries. Together, the IAPH member ports handle well over 60 percent of the world's sea-borne trade and nearly 80 percent of the world's container traffic. For more information about the International Association of Ports and Harbors, visit www.iaphworldports.org.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CHAMBER OF SHIPPING (ICS): The International Chamber of Shipping is the representative body for the global shipping industry. Its member national shipowner associations operate about 80 percent of the world merchant fleet. For more information about the International Chamber of Shipping, visit www.ics-shipping.org.

ABOUT THE WORLD SHIPPING COUNCIL (WSC): The World Shipping Council is an association of liner shipping companies with offices in Brussels and Washington, D.C. Its members operate approximately 90 percent of the global liner ship capacity, providing more than 400 regularly scheduled services linking the continents of the world. Collectively, these services transport about 60 percent of the value of global seaborne trade, or more than US\$ 4 trillion worth of goods annually. For more information about the World Shipping Council, visit www.worldshipping.org.

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