

**IAATO Follow-Up on Liberian Flag State Report  
Regarding the Sinking of the *MV Explorer* in Antarctic Waters**

*For additional information, contact:*  
Steve Wellmeier, IAATO Executive Director  
401-272-2152  
[Swellmeier@iaato.org](mailto:Swellmeier@iaato.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE...

*April 14, 2009 – Baltimore, MD.* The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) provided additional comments today on the final report from The Republic of Liberia, Bureau of Maritime Affairs on the sinking of the *MV Explorer*. The comments were made during the report's discussion at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting XXXII, being held in Baltimore, MD.

“For all those involved in Antarctic shipping operations – especially passenger shipping operations – the *Decision of the Commissioner of Maritime Affairs and the Report of Investigation in the Matter of Sinking of Passenger Vessel MV Explorer* makes for very sober reading,” noted Steve Wellmeier, executive director of IAATO.

“When serious incidents such as this occur, the industry cannot deal with speculation. It needs facts to ensure that appropriate amendments in both technological and operational practices and requirements can be achieved. And so, in the absence of the final report, IAATO has otherwise been satisfied with the progress made since the November 2007 incident, particularly in terms of improving response actions and in vessel tracking. The recent arrival of the Liberian investigative report is a welcome and, indeed, crucial source of information on which to base further decisions and actions,” he noted.

The facts, conclusions and recommendations of the report will be pivotal in discussions with ship owners, vessel operators, flag states, classification societies and national authorities, and IAATO will take steps to initiate, facilitate and take part in these discussions as appropriate.

IAATO notes that many of the conclusions and recommendations will require careful deliberation from a number of international bodies. For example, IAATO suggests that, should the justification for a new work item in the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to develop a Mandatory Polar Shipping Code be accepted, this would be an appropriate place for several of these recommendations.

“In the interim, however, IAATO's Marine Committee will be studying the report carefully to assess what specific advice can be put in place as Industry Best Practice prior to the upcoming 2009-2010 season,” added Wellmeier. “For example, consideration of recommendations 6, 7 and 11 of the Report, noted below, may very well be appropriate. These will be discussed during our next Annual Meeting in June of this year, and we will keep Treaty Parties fully informed of those recommendations that IAATO is in a position to implement.”

Recommendations from the Liberian Flag State Report:

6) The Liberian Administration should require G.A.P. Shipping Co. Limited sign on the Expedition Group as documented/trained crew members and should use its influence at the IMO to recommend that all vessels be required.

7) The Liberian Administration should required Liberian flag vessels traveling to Antarctic Region be members of IAATO and comply with all IAATO procedures and should use its influence at the IMO to recommend that all vessels be required.

11) The Liberian Administration should inform G.A.P. Shipping Co. Limited that they reassess their procedures for review of:

- Abandon Ship Procedures including the assignment of crew and passengers to lifeboats,
- Crowd Control Procedures,
- Drilling and training in lifeboat engines,
- Procedures for Emergency Briefings including discussion of equipment in lifeboats,
- Develop procedures for VDR recovery,
- Develop Crisis Management Plans.

###

IAATO is a member organization founded in 1991 to advocate, promote and practice safe and environmentally responsible private-sector travel to the Antarctic. IAATO currently has 108 members worldwide. Members work together to develop, adopt and implement operational standards that mitigate potential environmental impacts. Numerous operating procedures and guidelines have been adopted over the last 18 years that have proven to be successful methods for avoiding impacts, including site-specific guidelines, site selection criteria, passengers-to-staff ratios, limiting numbers of passengers ashore, boot-washing guidelines and the prevention of the transmission of alien organisms, wilderness etiquette, garbage policy, ship scheduling and vessel communications procedures, emergency medical evacuation procedures, emergency contingency plans, reporting procedures, marine wildlife watching guides, station visitation policies and more.

**International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO)**

Mailing address: 11 S. Angell St., #302, Providence, RI 02906

Office address: 179 Wayland Avenue, Providence, RI 02906

(401) 272-2152 phone

(401) 27202154 fax