

6th March 2024

CIRCULAR

TO MEMBERS WHOSE VESSELS CALL AT THE PORT OF LOME, TOGO.

The Association has recently become aware of an unfortunate development at the Port of Lome, Togo in West Africa.

Vessels lying at anchor off Lome have been approached by local people, mostly fishermen, in small boats with offers to barter various simple items such as bottles of water and scrap for sim cards and seafood. It might all seem entirely innocent but upon their return to port the fisherman have been arrested for smuggling. More important, the vessels involved have been detained and very large fines of between US\$65 million and US\$130 million have been imposed by the local customs. The crews of the vessels who were involved in the barter have also been threatened with jail sentences of up to one year.

Negotiations to reduce the fines and obtain the release of detained vessels have proved very difficult due to the attitude of the customs, resulting in the vessels concerned remaining under detention for long periods.

In the circumstances members whose vessels trade to Lome are strongly recommended to instruct their crews that on no account should they agree to barter items with local people. It is best that their crews refuse to engage in any way with persons approaching them in small boats.