



## NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre and Philippine Coast Guard Jointly Convene Meeting with Regional Maritime Authorities, Shipping Industry and Diplomatic Community to Assess Evolution of Piracy and Sea Robbery in Asia**

Maritime law enforcement and regulatory agencies from China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam as well as members from the shipping industry and diplomatic community in Manila today began a two-day meeting jointly organised by ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) and ReCAAP Philippine Focal Point (Philippine Coast Guard) to assess the evolution of piracy and sea robbery in Asia.

Addressing the delegates in his welcome remarks, Director General Alex Paul I Monteagudo, National Intelligence Coordinating Council, representing the Guest-of-Honour, Senator Christopher Lawrence Tesoro Go of the Republic of the Philippines, welcomed greater cooperation among Asian countries to keep sea lanes safe and secure for the free and open passage of commercial vessels so that economies in the region can continue to develop and thrive without the threat of piracy and armed robbery against ships at sea.

In addition to an update of the latest situation of piracy and sea robbery in Asia, the meeting will also take stock of the evolving situation in the Sulu-Celebes Seas and waters of Eastern Sabah, which has seen 30 incidents of abduction of crew (19 actual and 11 attempted) between March 2016 to November 2019, with the two most recent incidents occurring in June and September 2019.

The meeting will also examine the evolving nature of piracy and sea robbery, using the Sulu Sea as a case study, where most of the incidents of the abduction of crew for ransom were claimed by the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), an Islamic extremist group based in southern Philippines.

The meeting will close with an assessment of the efforts and progress made by the Philippine Government in addressing the piracy and sea robbery situation in the southern Philippines and chart the way forward.

“The maritime safety and security situation in the Sulu-Celebes Seas is dynamic and evolving. While the stakeholders have made much efforts to address the threats, more can be done, especially in examining the underlying causes driving the incidents of

abduction of crew for ransom claimed by the Abu Sayyaf Group," said Admiral Joel S. Garcia, Commandant of the Philippine Coast Guard.

"This meeting is hence timely as it presents an opportunity to raise the awareness and share perspectives on the emergent nexus between maritime terrorism and piracy and armed robbery against ships. This is an area I encourage ReCAAP ISC to further study, as it may potentially add a new complexion to piracy and sea robbery in the future," continued Admiral Garcia, who is also Chairperson of the ReCAAP ISC Governing Council.

"While the overall number of incidents of piracy and sea robbery in Asia has been decreasing, with 70 incidents from January to November 2019, we cannot afford to operate in a 'business as usual' mode," said Mr. Masafumi Kuroki, Executive Director of ReCAAP ISC.

"The situation always has the potential to change, as new modus operandi emerge. ReCAAP ISC and Focal Points, the shipping industry and other stakeholders must stay vigilant and be keen to the evolving threats. This meeting co-organised with ReCAAP Philippine Focal Point is thus designed to assess the progress of efforts, consider further measures, and raise awareness on emerging threats to the safety and security of our seas," continued Mr. Kuroki.



Admiral Joel S. Garcia, Commandant of the Philippine Coast Guard and Chairperson of ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre Governing Council welcomed participants from the diplomatic community, ReCAAP Focal Points, regional law enforcement authorities and the shipping industry to the opening of the Cluster Meeting in Manila



Mr. Masafumi Kuroki, Executive Director of ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre, noted that one of the key objectives of the Cluster Meeting in Manila was to chart the next course of actions to be taken to further reduce the risks faced by the shipping industry when operating in the Sulu Celebes Seas and waters off Eastern Sabah



Director General Alex Paul I Monteagudo, National Intelligence Coordinating Council, representing the Guest-of-Honour, Senator Christopher Lawrence Tesoro Go of the Republic of the Philippines, noted the importance of information sharing in the mission to combat piracy and armed robbery against ships at sea

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## **About ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ReCAAP ISC)**

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is the first regional government-to-government agreement to promote and enhance cooperation against piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia. The Agreement entered into force on September 4, 2006 with 14 Asian countries as Contracting Parties, and the Information Sharing Centre was established on November 29, 2006. To date, 20 States (14 Asian countries, 4 European countries, Australia, the USA) have become Contracting Parties to ReCAAP. To fulfil its vision as the Information Hub for combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia, ReCAAP ISC enhances regional cooperation through information sharing, capacity building and cooperative arrangements. At the 12<sup>th</sup> Governing Council Meeting in 2018, the Council announced that ReCAAP ISC has met the criteria to be a Centre of Excellence for information sharing in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships at sea. For more information about ReCAAP ISC, please visit <http://www.recaap.org>

## **About the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG)**

The Philippine Coast Guard is mandated and responsible to perform maritime search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, maritime safety, marine environmental protection and maritime security. For more information about the Philippine Coast Guard, please visit <http://www.coastguard.gov.ph/>