NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre Conducts Cluster Meeting in Sri Lanka
- Meeting aims to enhance cooperation between Focal Points and strengthen capabilities to fight piracy and sea robbery in the Indian Ocean Region

The ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre (ISC) today concluded a three-day cluster meeting from 23-25 July 2024, co-organised with the Sri Lanka Navy (ReCAAP Focal Point), in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The meeting brought together senior officers from three ReCAAP Focal Points - Sri Lanka Navy, Indian Coast Guard and Bangladesh Department of Shipping - as well as representatives from Sri Lanka's relevant maritime related agencies.

The Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Vice Admiral Priyantha Perera, in his keynote address, highlighted the importance of information sharing in enhancing maritime domain awareness. He also praised the role played by ReCAAP ISC in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in Asia, and elaborated on the initiatives taken by the Sri Lanka Navy to ensure safe and secure seas in the region.

During the meeting, participants deliberated on ways to strengthen the existing mechanisms of cooperation, collaboration, coordination and communication to prevent maritime crimes. Participants also discussed the increase in sea robbery and petty theft in ports and anchorages, and how law enforcement agencies and shipping companies can collaborate more closely to prevent these incidents.

Mr Krishnaswamy Natarajan, Executive Director, ReCAAP ISC, said, "The Indian Ocean Region is critical to the security and stability of shipping lanes and trade routes, as over one-third of the world's bulk cargo traffic and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments passes through this region[1]. With increased economic growth, more ships are calling on regional ports. I would like to urge the government authorities to commit adequate law enforcement resources to protect seafarers and cargo from opportunistic criminals, and implement tougher maritime laws to deter piracy and armed robbery against ships."

He added, "Ship masters and crew should exercise enhanced vigilance and report immediately all incidents and suspicious boats to the coastal State authorities. Local

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[1] Data from Carnegie Endowment for International Peace-
https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2023/06/mapping-the-indian-ocean-region?lang=en

ship agents can play a more active role in the follow-on investigation of incidents, to avoid delaying the ship in her continued voyage."

In addition to various presentations, participants discussed challenges in combating piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Indian Ocean Region. The meeting also discussed the need for ships to comply with the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, and for shipmasters to maintain communication with port control and law enforcement agencies over the designated communication network when entering ports and at anchorages.

Rear Admiral Nishantha Peiris, Director General of Naval Operations, Sri Lanka Navy and ReCAAP ISC Governor for Sri Lanka, said "We have successfully co-hosted the annual ReCAAP ISC cluster meeting. The meeting has provided a platform for ReCAAP Focal Points to share case studies and exchange best practices, and enhanced communication and understanding between ReCAAP Focal Points in the region. It has also allowed the shipping industry to share their feedback and concerns with maritime law enforcement agencies, and jointly explore ways to deter piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Indian Ocean Region."

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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, 21 States (14 Asian countries, 5 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 12th 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 at sea. For more information about ReCAAP ISC, please visit http://www.recaap.org