

CAPITAL SHIP MANAGEMENT CORP  
3, Iasonos Street, 185 37 Piraeus  
Greece

23 July 2024

By email: [capital@capitalship.gr](mailto:capital@capitalship.gr)

To Whom It May Concern,

### **Appreciation for rescue in the central Mediterranean Sea – AVAX**

On behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee Agency (UNHCR), please accept our great appreciation for your contribution to safeguarding the lives and human rights of persons in distress at sea. Our recognition stems from the assistance provided on 15 May 2024 by Merchant Vessel oil tanker AVAX [IMO 9953420] sailing under the flag of Marshall Islands under your responsibility, to some 63 persons from Syria, Bangladesh, Sudan, Egypt and Palestine, in distress in the Maltese Search and Rescue Region (SRR).

UNHCR wishes to extend special thanks and to commend the prompt and decisive actions taken by the Shipmaster and crew of the AVAX in responding to the distress signal and for rescuing these 63 people who were safely transhipped to an Italian Coast Guard vessel and disembarked in Lampedusa on 16 May. The group had departed from Tajoura, Libya in a wooden boat and were in a situation of distress at the time of rescue.

The actions of the **AVAX** are a testament to the dedication of her Shipmaster and crew to selfless service and respect for the fundamental values and principles of the tradition of seafaring to assist those in distress at sea; principles which are also enshrined as legal duties in the search and rescue regime under international law.

UNHCR recognizes the complexities involved in conducting rescue operations in the central Mediterranean Sea. We understand that weaknesses in the coordination of search and rescue responses by Mediterranean coastal States often leave shipmasters faced with difficult choices. Responding to distress signals and rendering assistance to persons in distress at sea are great humanitarian acts and demonstrate a keen sense of responsibility and respect for international law.

We hope that the actions of the **AVAX** will be duly recognized and regarded as an example of best practice by other private vessels, shipping companies and the industry more broadly in rescuing and rendering assistance to persons in distress at sea, and in ensuring they are disembarked in ports which offer a “place of safety”.

Here, and by way of express message to Shipmasters and crews in the industry, UNHCR would like to take the opportunity to highlight that Libya is not a place of safety for the disembarkation of those rescued at sea, and urges all vessels involved in search and rescue in the Central Mediterranean Sea not to disembark or facilitate the disembarkation of rescued persons in Libya.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR Position On The Designations Of Libya As A Safe Third Country And As A Place Of Safety For The Purpose Of Disembarkation Following Rescue At Sea, September 2020, available at: [Refworld | UNHCR Position on the Designations of Libya as a Safe Third Country and as a Place of Safety for the Purpose of Disembarkation Following Rescue at Sea](#)

UNHCR commends the AVAX for her actions.

Yours sincerely,



**Vincent Cochetel**

Special Envoy for the Central & Western Mediterranean Situation  
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)  
La Rive Business Centre, Rue du Lac Biwa, Lac 1, PC 1053 Tunis, Tunisia  
[cochetel@unhcr.org](mailto:cochetel@unhcr.org) | +41794465544 | +21621335965

cc'  
International Maritime Organization  
4 Albert Embankment  
London SE1 7SR  
UNITED KINGDOM

International Chamber of Shipping  
7th Floor, Walsingham House  
35 Seething Lane  
London EC3N 4AH  
UNITED KINGDOM