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Circular Letter No.4731
14 June 2023

To: All IMO Members
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **Communication from the Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America**

The Governments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America have sent the attached communication, dated 25 May 2023, with the request that it be circulated by the Organization.



Maritime &
Coastguard
Agency



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Permanent Representative
of the UK to the IMO

Maritime & Coastguard Agency

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105 Commercial Road
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Permanent Representative of the
United States of America to the IMO

U.S. Embassy
33 Nine Elms Lane
London SW11 7US

Secretary-General

26 May 2023

International Maritime Organization
4 Albert Embankment
London
SE1 7SR

Dear Secretary-General,

Agreement concerning the Shipwrecked Vessel RMS Titanic

The UK and the United States, France and Canada developed the **Agreement concerning the Shipwrecked Vessel RMS Titanic** and it entered into force for the UK and the US in 2019. Since then, the UK and US have worked together to encourage other nations to sign the Agreement to ensure a standardised, international approach to preserving the wreck site.

The RMS Titanic sank on 15 April 1912 during its maiden voyage in the waters of the northwest Atlantic Ocean after colliding with an iceberg, about 375 nm southeast of Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The tragedy resulted in the deaths of over 1,500 passengers and crew and the wreck is therefore a gravesite for all those souls from many different nations.

The vessel became a turning point in the history of navigation. Discovered on 1 September 1985, the Titanic is arguably the most famous shipwreck in the world. The Titanic is inextricably linked to the IMO as the tragedy of its sinking led to the creation of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS), which is still the fundamental basis for ship safety today.

2012 marked the 100th anniversary of the disaster and consequently the wreck site became protected under the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH Convention). This is a vital part of the continued preservation and heritage of the wreck site but, because this protection is limited only to the basic principles stipulated in the UCH Convention, the UK and the US continue to believe that stronger legal protection is warranted given the historic, cultural and societal significance of the Titanic.

Such additional protections are afforded by the **Agreement concerning the Shipwrecked Vessel RMS Titanic**, which can be found at [this link](#). The **Agreement** has been ratified by the UK and US, with the purpose of ensuring the continued preservation of and respect for the resting site of more than 1,500 people aboard when it sank. Under the **Agreement**, the UK and US must each, with respect to their nationals and vessels flying their flag, regulate entry into the hull of RMS Titanic and activities aimed at the artefacts from RMS Titanic found outside the hull, so that such activities are conducted in accordance with the **Agreement** and its Rules.

Although the wreck is located at a very great depth, the sophisticated equipment used to visit the wreck site is becoming more commonplace, which could detrimentally affect the preservation of the wreck site as more people visit. The **Agreement** recognises that *in-situ* preservation is the 'most effective way to ensure such protection, unless otherwise justified by educational, scientific or cultural interests'.

The **Agreement** is already in force for the UK and the US, but it will grow stronger as more States join. We would therefore urge other governments to consider becoming a party to the **Agreement**.

The UK and US stand ready to provide guidance and assistance to any government with an interest in acceding to the **Agreement**.

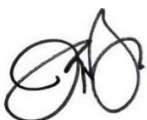
Whilst the sinking of the Titanic was undoubtedly a human tragedy, all nations have benefitted from the safety improvements which arose from the aftermath and we owe it to those who gave their lives to ensure that their memory is not forgotten and that the wreck is protected and preserved for future generations.

Yours sincerely,



Katy Ware

Permanent Representative of the UK to the IMO
Director of UK Maritime Services



Jared Banks

Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the IMO
Science and Technology Counselor | U.S. Embassy London