



Industry and unions set out a 12-step solution for governments to free seafarers from COVID-19 lockdown

- **Comprehensive ‘roadmap’ developed by a supply chain coalition led by industry and unions in cooperation with UN agencies**
- **12-step plan issued by International Maritime Organization provides a route forward for governments on how to facilitate ship crew change during the pandemic**
- **Failure to relieve crews risks the wellbeing of seafarers, maritime safety, and the critical supply chains the world relies on.**

Tuesday, 5 May: To assist governments to put in place coordinated procedures to facilitate the safe movement of seafarers, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) today issued a 12-step plan to 174 member states, providing them with a roadmap to free seafarers from their COVID-19 lockdown and allow appropriate exemptions for them to join or leave ships.

The 55-page roadmap has been advanced by a broad coalition of seafarer unions, and international shipping industry associations, with input from airline industry representatives, international organisations, and the insurance sector, to provide a comprehensive blueprint of how governments can facilitate crew changeovers and resolve safety concerns throughout the entire process.

In two weeks’ time, approximately 150,000 merchant seafarers will need to be changed over to ensure compliance with international maritime regulations, with tens of thousands currently trapped onboard ships across the globe due to the continuing imposition of travel restrictions. Failure to do so risks the wellbeing of seafarers, maritime safety, as well as the supply chains that the world relies on.

Last Friday on International Workers’ Day, ships across the world sounded their horns as part of the #HeroesAtSeaShoutout initiative, aimed at reminding governments of the plight and sacrifice of the world’s 1.2 million seafarers who are keeping the world supplied during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Guy Platten, Secretary General of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) said:

“We have seen from the heroes at sea shoutout that seafarers are doing their bit to keep trade flowing. We stand ready to support our seafarers and we are working with political leaders so that they can steer a steady course and allow safe crew changes to take place.

“The problem is simplistic, but the solution is complex. So, we have stepped up and done the homework and developed the protocols. We are now working with governments to implement this roadmap.

“Seafarers continue to work really hard, day-in, day-out and far away from loved ones, but if we are not able to free our seafarers from their COVID-19 lockdown we could start to see disruption to trade and more importantly we increase the risk of accident and occurrences of mental health issues. Putting this off is no longer an option.”

The protocols clearly set out the responsibility of governments, shipowners, transport providers and seafarers. The protocols also provide a framework to develop robust procedures that can be adopted worldwide to ensure that trade can keep flowing and seafarers can be relieved.

Stephen Cotton, General Secretary, International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) said:

“Today seafarers’ unions, industry and the ILO and IMO are jointly calling on governments worldwide to put an end to hardships faced by the 150,000 seafarers currently stranded and pave a way for them to return home.

“This is about governments recognising the critical role that seafarers play in global supply chains, recognising them as key workers, and providing immediate and consistent exceptions from COVID-19 restrictions to allow crew changeovers.

“International seafarers are bearing the burden first-hand as governments turn a blind eye to the ‘forgotten sector’. The ITF, ICS and IMO have a clear message, governments cannot continue with a mentality of out of sight, out of mind, and we strongly urge governments to use this roadmap to act now before we suffer more serious consequences.”

This critical issue is increasingly taking on a humanitarian dimension for those crews which have already spent many months at sea, and which urgently need to be repatriated to their home countries and to be replaced. Apart from the need for shipping companies to comply with international regulations and contractual obligations, service periods on board ships cannot be extended indefinitely due to the dangerous impacts this has for the health and well-being of ship crew and, most importantly, safe ship operations.

The 12-step solution provides governments with the global framework to facilitate changeovers of ships’ crews, including the lack of available flights. In view of the importance of international maritime transport to the resilience of the global economy at this critical time, the recommendations have been produced in record time to enable governments to take the urgent action needed to address this issue.

--- END ---

Notes to Editors

The 12-step plan entitled “Recommended Framework of Protocols for Ensuring Safe Ship Crew Changes and Travel during the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”, as circulated by IMO, can be found here:

[http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/COVID%20CL%204204%20add/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204-Add.14%20-%20Coronavirus%20\(Covid-19\)%20-%20Recommended%20Framework%20Of%20Protocols.pdf](http://www.imo.org/en/MediaCentre/HotTopics/Documents/COVID%20CL%204204%20add/Circular%20Letter%20No.4204-Add.14%20-%20Coronavirus%20(Covid-19)%20-%20Recommended%20Framework%20Of%20Protocols.pdf)

The Protocols were jointly developed by the following global associations representing the maritime transportation sector: ICS, ITF, BIMCO, CLIA, FONASBA, IAPH, IFSMA, IMCA, IMEC, INTERCARGO, INTERFERRY, InterManager, INTERTANKO, IPTA, IG P&I Clubs and WSC, with input from the International Air Transport Association (IATA). ILO and WHO also provided vital input into the document, along with ICS national shipowner associations and ITF affiliated seafarers’ unions.

About ICS

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) is the principal international trade association for merchant shipowners and operators, representing all sectors and trades and over 80% of the world merchant fleet.

About ITF

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is a democratic global union federation of nearly 700 transport workers trade unions representing 20 million workers, 216 of which represent over 650,000 seafarers spread across the world.

Contact

ICS:

Duncan Bray

Tel.: +44 797 222 4445 in UK office hours or +44 (0) 208 638 8753 out of office hours

Email: ICS@woodrowcommunications.com

ITF:

Luke Menzies

Tel.: +61 433 889 844

Email: media@itf.org.uk