Overcoming the Seafarer Crisis: Enabling Crew Changes and Repatriation

The Covid-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented crew change crisis which has led to hundreds of thousands of seafarers being impacted and in many instances left stranded on ships, beyond the expiry of their contracts. Despite significant efforts by international organizations, governments, industry associations, labor unions, NGOs and individual companies including the adoption on 1 December 2020 by the UN General Assembly of a resolution on International cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to support global supply chains, the issue is still far from resolved.

This is not an acceptable way to treat seafarers, who are the frontline workers of the maritime industry carrying 90% of global trade. Fatigue after extended periods at sea has significant consequences on the physical and mental wellbeing of seafarers. It also increases the risk of maritime incidents and environmental disasters, and poses a wider threat to the integrity of global supply chains, which depend on safe and reliable maritime transport.

This is why a taskforce of stakeholders from across the maritime value chain has identified the following key issues preventing crew changes, that require urgent action:

- While high-quality health protocols have been adopted internationally, they have not been consistently implemented in practice. This has led authorities to perceive seafarers as a Covid-19 risk, which has limited the possibilities of crew changes.
- Implementing high-quality crew change protocols will reduce the economic risk of disrupted supply chains but will lead to increased short-term costs.
- The disruption of international air travel has reduced the number of flights, causing connectivity issues between major crew change hubs and major seafaring nations, which has complicated crew changeovers.

Taking action to deliver on our shared responsibility

We, the signatories to The Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change, recognize that we have a shared responsibility to ensure that the current crew change crisis is resolved as soon as possible and to use the learnings from the crisis as an opportunity to build a more resilient maritime supply chain.

We believe that the most effective way of addressing the crew change challenge and building a more resilient maritime logistics chain, is by working together across the value chain with industry stakeholders, organizations and with governments to implement solutions that work in practice.

Therefore, we commit to take action to resolve the crew change crisis, based on our position and role in the value-chain, thereby ensuring the rights and wellbeing of the seafarers supporting global supply chains. We call on our peers and other stakeholders, in particular relevant government bodies, to join us in our efforts.

---

To make tangible improvements, the following actions should be implemented:

• **Recognize seafarers as key workers and give them priority access to Covid-19 vaccines**
  Seafarers should be recognized as key workers by all governments in line with the UN General Assembly resolution adopted on 1 December 2020 and the transition of seafarers across borders should be facilitated based on internationally agreed, high-quality health protocols.
  Governments and other stakeholders should work together with the maritime industry to ensure that seafarers, irrespective of their nationality, get priority access to Covid-19 vaccines alongside other key workers and health care professionals in recognition of their critical role in global supply chains and trade. This should include developing protocols that ensure vaccinations are correctly certified and effectively administered to seafarers as well as establishing a standardized format for health passes that contain tamper proof information about vaccination and testing status to facilitate crew changes.

• **Establish and implement gold standard health protocols based on existing best practice**
  The maritime industry and governments should implement The Recommended Framework of Protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which has been recognized by the International Maritime Organization.
  To minimize the risk of Covid-19, to build trust that crew changes can be carried out in a safe manner, and to ensure that the measures taken can be universally accepted, the implementation of the Framework of Protocols should be based on the highest practicable standards. The STAR Crew Change Protocols, which are based on existing best practice, are thus recommended for industry-wide adoption.

• **Increase collaboration between ship operators and charterers to facilitate crew changes**
  Facilitating crew changes based on high-quality health protocols is a shared responsibility which will create benefits for all by minimizing the risk of Covid-19 spread on vessels, minimizing the risk of disruptions to global supply chains, while contributing to maritime safety and the wellbeing of seafarers.
  Ship owners and charterers should share relevant information transparently and collaborate to ensure that necessary crew changes can be carried out with the least impact possible in terms of cost and delays. The owner should provide the charterer with as much notice as possible on intended crew changes, while the charterer should make all reasonable efforts to accommodate crew changes including when the vessel has to make a reasonable deviation.
  No charter contracts should contain clauses preventing necessary crew changes from being carried out, as the aggregate effect of such clauses could be a serious obstacle to the safe operation of maritime trade and the protection of the wellbeing and rights of seafarers.
  By implementing high-quality health protocols, ship owners can reduce the risk of trade disruption due to Covid-19, which also creates benefits to charterers. These benefits should be reflected in chartering decisions to create incentives for shipowners to implement high-quality health protocols and be transparent about actions taken as well as costs incurred.

• **Ensure air connectivity between key maritime hubs for seafarers**
  The aviation industry should work together with the maritime industry to ensure that airlift capacity is established between major crew changing hubs and seafaring nations.
  Additionally, the aviation and maritime industries as well as governments – involving all relevant ministries and agencies – should work together to establish a universally accepted and harmonized framework of standards for the validation of trusted health data for seafarers to facilitate border crossing and ensure the long-term resilience of air connectivity.


4 [http://www.globalmaritimeforum.org/content/2020/12/The-Neptune-Declaration-STAR-protocols.pdf](http://www.globalmaritimeforum.org/content/2020/12/The-Neptune-Declaration-STAR-protocols.pdf)
Signatories

A
A. M. Nomikos Transworld Maritime Agencies
A. P. Møller-Mærsk
ADNOC Logistics & Services
Advent International
Airports Council International (ACI) World
Asahi Shipping
Alfa Laval
Alfa Ship & Crew Management
Anchor SM (Singapore)
Anglo-American
Anglo-Eastern Univan Group
Anglo International Shipping Operations
Anthony Veder Group
Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America
Ardmore Shipping
Asiatic/Atlantic Lloyd Group
Atlantska Plovidba
Avance Gas Holding

B
Bahri Ship Management
BAO-NYK Shipping
BEMAC Corporation
Berge Bulk
Bibby Marine
BIMCO
Borealis Maritime
BP
BW Group

C
Camellia Line
Cape Shipping
Caravel Group
Cargill Ocean Transportation
Carisbrooke Shipping
Celsius Shipping
CMA CGM Group
Columbia Shipmanagement
Concordia Maritime
Contships Management
CPO Containerschifffreederei
COSCO SHIPPING Lines
Crowley Maritime Corporation
CSM Baltija
Charles Taylor Investment Management Company
China Merchants Energy Shipping (Singapore)
Chugoku Marine Paints

D
d’Amico Soc. di Navigazione
D. Oltmann Reederei
Daikin MR Engineering
Daiwa Kisen
Danaos Shipping
Danica Crewing Specialists
Denholm Group
DFDS
Dorian LPG Management
Doun Kisen

E
Eagle Bulk Shipping
Eagle Industry
Eastern Pacific Shipping
Emirates Ship Investment Company
ESGPlus
Euronav
Evergreen Marina Corp
Executive Ship Management

F
F. Laeisz
Fednav
Fidelity International
Filipino Association for Mariners’ Employment (FAME)
Filipino Shipowners’ Association (FSA)
Fleet Management
FLEX LNG
Foremost Group
Foresight Group
Frontline
France LNG Shipping
Fukujin Kisen
FUKUSHIMA
FURUNO ELECTRIC
G
G2 Ocean
Gac
GasLog
Gazocean
Gearbulk Norway
Global Maritime Forum
Gram Car Carriers
Golden Ocean
Grieg Star
Grieg Maritime Group
Grimaldi Group
Gunvor

H
Hachiuma Steamship
Hafnia Pools
Halcyon Recruitment
Hamanaka Chain Manufacturing
Hapag-Lloyd
Harren & Partner
Hempel
HMM
Honda Heavy Industries
Hong-Kong Maritime Museum
Human Rights at Sea

I
Ignazio Messina & C.
IHI Power Systems
IMC Shipping
ING
Indian Maritime Foundation
Intercargo
Signatories

InterManager - International Association of Ship and Crew Managers
International Association of Ports and Harbours
International Chamber of Shipping
International Christian Maritime Association
International Federation of Shipmasters’ Associations
International Harbour Masters’ Association
International Maritime Association of the Philippines (INTERMAP)
International Maritime Employers’ Council
International Seaways
International Transport Workers’ Federation
International Union of Marine Insurance (IUMI)
INTERTANKO
Ionic
IQrew Management (IQM)
IS Container
ISGAM
ITF Seafarers’ Trust

J
J&J Denholm
Japan Marine United Corporation
Japan Radio
JCRS
Jebsen PTC
Jebsen PTC Maritime
John T. Essberger
Joint Ship Manning Group (JMG)

K
K Line Ship Management (Singapore)
Kaptanoglu Shipping
Kawasaki Heavy Industries
Kawasaki Kisenn Kaisa ("K" LINE)
Kylklades Maritime
Kyoei Tanker

L
LADOL Free Zone
Lauritzen Kosan
Lighthouse Shipmanagement Phils LLC Novikontas Kaliningrad
Lloyds’ Register
Logbridge (UK Southampton)
Louis Dreyfus Company
Lubeca Marine Management

M
M.T. Maritime Management (USA)
Mærsk Tankers
Magsaysay MOL Ship Management
Magsaysay People Resources Corporation (MPRC) / Magsaysay Maritime Corporation (MMC)
Manabe Zoki
MarCoPay
Marine & Offshore Div., Bureau Veritas Japan
Maritime Association of Shipowners, Shipmanagers & Agents
McNeal Law Firm
HURTWORKINGOFFSHORE.com
Merchant Navy Welfare Board
MINSHIP Shipmanagement
MISC Group comprising MISC Bhd, AET and Eaglestar Marine Holdings (L)
Mitsubishi Ore Transport
Mitsubishi Shipbuilding
Mitsui E&S Shipbuilding Company
Mitsui O.S.K. Lines
MK Centennial Maritime (Netherlands)
MK Centennial Maritime (Singapore)
MM Marine
MOL Energy Transport
MOL LNG Transport
MOL LNG Transport (Europe)
MOL LNG Transport (Asia)
MOL Ship Management
MOL Ship Management (S)
MOL Tankship Management
MPC Container Ships
MSC Crewing Services Philippines
MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company
MSea Mediterranean Shipping
MTM Management

N
Naftomar Shipping and Trading
Nagasaki Sempaku Sobi
Nakakita Seisakusho
Namura Shipbuilding
Nippon Kaiji Kyokai (ClassNK)
Nippon Pusnes
Nissen Kaiun
Nitta Kisen Kaisha
Norden
Nordic Bulk Carriers
Nordic Hamburg Shipmanagement
Norse Shipholding
North American Maritime Ministry Association
Northern Marine Group
Norwegian Shipowners’ Association
NYK Bulk & Projects Carriers
NYK Bulkship [Asia]
NYK Bulkship (ATLANTIC)
NYK Bulkship (Korea)
NYK Cruises
NYK Energy Transport (Atlantic)
NYK Energy Transport (USA)
NYK FIL Maritime E-Training
NYK Line
NYK LNG Shipmanagement (UK)
NYK LNG Shipment Management
NYK Shipmanagement
NYK-FIL Ship Management
NYK-TDG Maritime Academy
Signatories

O
Odfjell SE
Oman Shipping Company
Ocean Networks Express
ORION Reederei
Oshima Shipbuilding
OSM Maritime

P
Pacific Basin Shipping
Pacific Carriers
Pacific International Lines
Pangaea Logistics Solutions
Petredec
Philippine Association of Manning Agencies and Ship Managers (PAMAS)
Philippine Transmarine Carriers
Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC)
Pleiades Shipping Agents
Port Arthur International Seafarers’ Center
Precious Shipping PCL
Promar
PSA International

Q
Qatar Gas Transport (Nakilat)

R
“Reederei Nord Shipmanagement on behalf of REEDEREI NORD Group”
Ridgebury Tankers
Rio Tinto

S
Saga Shipholding (Norway)
Saga Welco
Samudera Indonesia
Santoku Senpaku
Seamen’s Church Institute
SeaTankers Services (UK)
Seanergy
Senator Crewing (Manila)
SFL Corporation
Shell Shipping & Maritime
Shin Kurushima Dockyard
Shinko
Shinkoh
Shipping Australia
Shunzan Kaiun
Sirius Ship Management
Sitara Shipping
Sonangol Marine Services
South32
Southfield Agencies
Starbulk Carriers
Stealth Maritime
Stella Maris
Stella Maris - Catholic Diocese of Beaumont, Texas USA
Stena Bulk
Stena Shipping and Ferries
Sunrui Marine Environment Engineering
Sustainable Shipping Initiative
Swire Pacific Offshore
Swire Shipping
Swiss Ocean Yacht Management
Swiss Reinsurance Company
Synergy Marine Group
Tagashira Kaiun
Taiheiyo Kisen Kaisa
Taihua Ship Management
TAIKO KIKAI INDUSTRIES
Tankerska plovdiva
Tata NYK Shipping
Team Tankers International
Technomar Shipping
Teekay Group
The China Navigation Company
The CSL Group
The Dow Chemical Company
The Mission to Seafarers
The Nautical Institute - US Gulf Branch
The Shipping Corporation of India
The Standard Club
Thomas Miller Holdings
Thome Group
Tohmei Shipping
Tokyo Keiki Inc. Marine Systems Company
Tomini Shipping
Torm
Tortoise Engineering
Torvald Klaveness
Trafigura
Transocean Shipmanagement (Phils)
Tsuneishi shipbuilding

U
U Ming Marine Transport
UK Club
Unicrew Management
Unifeeder
Unilever
United European Car Carriers

V
V. Group
Vale
Vanmar Shipping
Vitol

W
Wallem Group
Wallenius Wilhelmsen
Wan Hai Lines
Western Shipping
Wilhelmsen Ahrenkiel Ship Management
Wilhelmsen Ship Management
Windward
World Economic Forum
World Fuel Services Corporation
Signatories

X
X-Press Feeders
XT Management

Y
YANMAR POWER TECHNOLOGY
YDK Technologies
Yokogawa Electric Corporation

Z
Zeaborn Ship Management
ZIM Integrated Shipping Services
Zodiac Maritime