



Over 300 companies and organizations join forces to help resolve a humanitarian crisis on the world's ocean

Global industry and human rights leaders, including A.P. Møller - Mærsk, BP, BW, Cargill, COSCO, DOW, Euronav, MISC Group, NYK, Rio Tinto, Shell, Trafigura, Unilever and Vale, sign the Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change in a worldwide call to action to end the unprecedented crew change crisis caused by Covid-19.

Hundreds of thousands of seafarers from across the globe have been left stranded working aboard ships beyond the expiry of their initial contracts and are unable to be relieved since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Fatigue after long 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 threat to the integrity of maritime supply chains, which carry 90% of global trade.

Despite significant efforts by international organizations, unions, companies and some governments to resolve this untenable crew change crisis we are starting to see the situation getting worse as governments bring in more travel bans in response to the new strains of the Covid-19 virus. A number of key issues leave this critical situation unresolved: national authorities around the world continue to see crew changes and international travel as a Covid-19 risk; high-quality health protocols are not being consistently implemented by ship operators; and the disruption of international air travel has reduced the number of flights between traditional crew change hubs and major seafaring nations.

*"We are witnessing a humanitarian crisis at sea. Throughout the coronavirus pandemic, seafarers have kept the world supplied with food, energy and other vital goods, with no line of sight of when to go home to their families. They have become hostage of the situation and unable to disembark from their ships. Yet, we can put an end to the crew change crisis without any risk to the general public health," says **Jeremy Nixon, CEO of ONE.***

More than 300 companies and organizations recognize that they have a shared responsibility based on their roles across the entire maritime value chain, and beyond, to ensure that the crew change crisis is resolved as soon as possible. They have signed the [Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change](#) that defines four main actions to facilitate crew changes and keep global supply chains functioning:

- Recognize seafarers as key workers and give them priority access to Covid-19 vaccines
- Establish and implement gold standard health protocols based on existing best practice
- Increase collaboration between ship operators and charterers to facilitate crew changes
- Ensure air connectivity between key maritime hubs for seafarers

*"Seafarers play a significant role in the global race to halt the coronavirus pandemic by providing critical medical medical supplies to the world's population, particularly in developing economies. They are crucial to millions of peoples' wellbeing. We call on our peers, government bodies and other stakeholders to join us in our efforts to ensure that the rights and wellbeing of the frontline workers of global supply chains are respected," says **Graham Westgarth, Chairman of V. Group.***

The Neptune Declaration has been developed by a taskforce of stakeholders from across the maritime value chain including A. M. Nomikos, Cargill, Dorian LPG, GasLog, Global Maritime Forum, International Chamber of Shipping, International Maritime Employers' Council, International Transport Workers' Federation, ONE, Philippine Transmarine Carriers, Sustainable Shipping Initiative, Synergy Group, V. Group, and World Economic Forum.

Learn more about the Neptune Declaration and see the full list of undersigning companies and organizations [here](#).

For further information: Head of Communications, Torben Vemmelund at tve@globalmaritimeforum.org or +45 2224 1446.

Members of the taskforce behind the Neptune Declaration comment:

Cargill

"We believe it is essential that all parties in the supply chain—industry, government and non-governmental organizations—work together to find solutions that support the wellbeing of seafarers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Neptune Declaration is an encouraging step forward, bringing together leading industry leaders who are committed to taking action. Our top priority remains not only getting crews off board but also ensuring they are able to travel home safely."

Jan Dieleman, President, Cargill Ocean Transportation

GasLog

"Through the Neptune Declarations I am so pleased to see the whole maritime logistics chain coming together to support our seafarers and to recognize them as key workers. It is a recognition of the vital role seafarers play in keeping the world economy moving and never more so than today as we continue to battle through the Covid pandemic."

Paul Wogan, CEO, Gaslog

Global Maritime Forum

"Seafarers are the key workers that allow vital global supply chains to continue to operate even during a pandemic. I am delighted to see how stakeholders from across the entire maritime value chain recognize that they have a shared responsibility to ensure that seafarers can do this safely."

Johannah Christensen, Managing Director, Head of Projects & Programmes, Global Maritime Forum

International Chamber of Shipping

"Seafarers are the unacceptable collateral damage on the war on COVID-19 and this must stop. If we want to maintain global trade seafarers must not be put to the back of the vaccine queue. You can't inject a global population without the shipping industry and most importantly our seafarers. We are calling on the supply chain to take action to support seafarers now."

Guy Platten, Secretary General, International Chamber of Shipping

International Maritime Employers' Council

"From the onset of the pandemic, an unprecedented tripartite cooperation between IMEC, ITF, ICS has resulted in ensuring governments and global maritime regulatory bodies focus on the plight of seafarers. Though the crisis and the difficulties remain, the industry was able to reduce the level of humanitarian crisis on board. Continued efforts are needed to ensure the four key actions raised in the Neptune Declaration are addressed by all stakeholders in the industry. Our thanks to the Global Maritime Forum and the Maritime Industry Crew Change Taskforce, for the great effort to bring all sectors of the industry together to commit to the Neptune Declaration. Let us hope, our combined effort will ease the suffering of our Seafarers."

Capt. **Belal Ahmed**, Chairman, International Maritime Employers' Council

International Transport Workers' Federation

"With the rise of new variants of Covid, we are sadly seeing governments backsliding from progress that was made last year and increasing their restrictions again. Let's be honest here, the locking of borders to seafarers by governments is directly resulting in the forced labour of the world's seafarers. Leaving the human indignity aside, this poses an incredibly dangerous risk to the supply chains of the global economy. Right now is the time for every CEO, every Board member, of every company that relies on global shipping, to recognise their responsibility to use their leverage to demand that governments unblock borders to seafarers before this crisis gets worse – it can't be ignored anymore."

Stephen Cotton, General Secretary, International Transport Workers' Federation

Philippine Transmarine Carriers

"We have a unique opportunity to make a difference, coming together to resolve the humanitarian concerns of our seafarers - they are the "heart and soul" of a ship who enable this industry to "move the world."

Gerardo A. Borromeo, Vice-Chairman & CEO, Philippine Transmarine Carriers

Sustainable Shipping Initiative

"The Covid-19 pandemic has thrust the human and labour rights risks faced by seafarers into the spotlight. As the world continues to rely on seafarers to keep our hospitals, pharmacies and supermarkets stocked, there is an urgent need to tackle the systemic challenges that have allowed the crew change crisis to continue. We join our industry peers today in calling for collaborative and coordinated action to bring this crisis to an end, and meet our collective responsibility to our seafarers."

Andrew Stephens, Executive Director, Sustainable Shipping Initiative

Synergy Group

"Travel restrictions, despite the numerous efforts to ease them, have taken a devastating toll on the physical and mental wellbeing of the world's seafarers. A majority of them onboard are still unsure on when they might return home even as they continue altruistically to play a critical role in the Vaccine and PPE supply chains. It's a cruel paradox that is leaving their families in a constant state of despair and worry about their loved ones. The fact that many countries are still not giving the seafarers their deserved recognition is unacceptable. It is our collective responsibility to have all seafarers be truly recognized and treated as key workers with vaccinations a priority and travel restrictions lifted for them immediately."

Rajesh Unni, CEO, Synergy Group

World Economic Forum

"Keeping people safe while keeping food, material for the manufacture and administering of vaccines, and other essential goods moving efficiently is key for global supply chain continuity, trade and our everyday lives. By granting stranded seafarers key worker status, and by prioritizing vaccine allocation for transport crew, we can prevent a deepening humanitarian and economic crisis. Unified, prompt action from governments and other key stakeholders is needed to protect the lives and livelihoods of the 1.4 million seafaring men and women who serve us all across the seas, and who continue to face extreme risk to their safety and earnings."

Margi Van Gogh, Head of Supply Chain and Transport, Shaping the Future of Mobility, World Economic Forum.

Fact sheet

According to the latest [Manpower Report](#) from ICS and BIMCO, the worldwide population of seafarers serving on internationally trading merchant ships is estimated at **1,647,500 seafarers**, of which 774,000 are officers and 873,500 are ratings.

China, the Philippines, Indonesia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine are estimated to be the **five largest supply countries for all seafarers** (officers and ratings).

During normal circumstances, ICS estimates around **100,000 seafarers are rotated every month**, with 50,000 disembarking and 50,000 embarking ships to comply with relevant international maritime regulations, governing safe working hours and crew welfare, so that they can continue to transport global trade safely.

At the height of the crew change crisis in the autumn of 2020, the UN International Maritime Organization estimated that around **400.000 seafarers** were on their ships beyond the expiry of their contract, while another 400.000 seafarers were unable to get to work.

Fatigue after long periods at sea has significant consequences on the physical and mental wellbeing of these seafarers. Physically, **seafarers can often work 7 days a week and 10-12 hours shifts** to man ships, performing tasks that require constant professional attention. They also typically work between four and six months on ships, followed by a period of leave. However, extensive periods at sea, in some cases, **over 17 months**, have become routine as a result of Covid-19 and increase the risk of accidents onboard.

On 1 December 2020 **United Nations General Assembly** adopted a resolution calling for all countries around the world to designate seafarers as key workers and implement crew change protocols.

Progress on addressing the crew change crisis has been made through significant efforts by individual companies, international organizations, industry associations, labor unions, NGOs and some governments, but the situation is still not resolved as many seafarers remain stranded on vessels beyond the expiry of their contracts.

With the new Covid-19 mutations that spread more easily, some **governments are introducing stricter measures** on travelers in general and on seafarers and crew changes specifically, which can lead to a return to the untenable situation we saw last year.

Inability to crew change poses a significant threat to the integrity of maritime supply chains. Around **90% of global trade is transported by commercial shipping**, which moves the world's food, energy and raw materials, as well as manufactured goods and components – including vital medical supplies and many products sold in supermarkets.