



## JOINT STATEMENT IBF v7 - #ISupplyTheWorld

MARITIME UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS CALL ON GOVERNMENTS TO ENSURE THAT SEAFARERS ARE IDENTIFIED AS KEY WORKERS AND THAT PROVISIONS ARE IN PLACE TO FACILITATE CREW CHANGE

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention issued a statement last week that accurately frames the current situation:

*“The global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is creating dire circumstances for the shipping industry and seafarers. Daily life in many countries has been heavily restricted, yet societies still need their supplies of food, medicine and everyday goods, and factories require materials and logistics to ship their products. This underlines the need for robust international supply chains and emphasizes the critical importance of maritime trade to the global economy, which relies on shipping for 90 percent of all goods.”*

As responsible social partners, the International Bargaining Forum (IBF) constituents, comprising of the Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) are in constant communication and discussion about how Covid-19 is affecting seafarers and what employers could do to mitigate the negative impact. The social partners have focused on finding solutions to the seafarers' current contractual rights and the employers' obligations. However, the increasing challenge with growing travel restrictions being imposed by most countries and the virtual collapse of scheduled air travel is preventing regular crew changes and repatriations in general.

All over the world, countries are introducing lockdowns, limiting people's ability to move freely and meet family and friends. In comparison, seafarers in international shipping normally work and live onboard a ship for up to 10 months at a time, but now due to the restrictions being introduced by many countries, these seafarers are forced to stay even longer because the majority of maritime employers are having to introduce a temporary freeze of crew changes.

As social partners we are extremely proud of and grateful for the way our seafarers have embraced the challenge of having to extend their contracts. They have continued to professionally perform their essential work in order to keep the world's supply chain moving so that vital goods continue to reach those that need it. We are acutely aware that where circumstances require extending maximum tour lengths for seafarers, this is only an emergency temporary solution that is acceptable only for a limited amount of time. We wish to reassure seafarers that the maritime industry is working hard to find solutions so that seafarers can be relieved and repatriated.

The JNG, representing employers, and the ITF, representing seafarers unions, wish to formally acknowledge the seafarers invaluable contribution to world trade and express our deep appreciation for the critical services the seafarers provide in these unprecedented times. We call on governments to do so as well.

Governments must urgently put in place processes and procedures to ensure seafarers are not only defined as key workers, but that they are exempt from the normal travel restrictions so that crew change can take place. If solutions are not identified soon, then governments will be responsible for jeopardising the supply chain and the safety and wellbeing of the world's seafarers. Ultimately this will threaten the supply of the essential goods including medicines that their citizens desperately need.

**Seafarers = #ISupplyTheWorld**