



Ministry of Transport  
80 Tran Hung Dao Street.  
Hoan Kiem Dist.  
Hanoi, Vietnam

Singapore, 7 December 2020

To Your Excellency Mr. Nguyen Nhat, Vice Minister of Transport

**Subject: Crew changes in Covid-19 times – Appreciation for your action**

Dear Sir,

We, the Asian and International social partners for maritime transport together with our maritime partners, would like to thank you for being one of the countries to facilitate crew changes.

For the last six months or more, we recognised that the Vietnam Maritime Administration, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Health, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and other concerning parties had been actively rectifying the issues related to seafarers and the crew changes protocols. We are extremely appreciative for your assistance and guidance on crew changes both domestically and internationally.

However, some 400,000 seafarers still need to be relieved and some of these seafarers have spent 15 months or more continuously on board and equal number are awaiting to join ships. This is a humanitarian crisis that must be solved as soon as possible to protect seafarers that have been on ships for far too long. We are also concerned that any interruption to the flow of trade could have devastating consequences for our continuing fight against COVID-19 pandemic.

We acknowledge that all stakeholders in the industry, as well as the IMO, ILO and Asian countries, have been working ceaselessly over the past months to enable smooth crew changes to happen and we greatly appreciate all these efforts. Vietnam is one of the large seafarers supplying countries in the world and making it an important sea and airport hub for crew changes.

The smooth facilitation of crew changes in Asia, is prevented by, amongst other things, the difficulties of seafarers in obtaining visas. The current practice in most countries, of issuing visas in their missions in third countries and on arrival in sea and air ports, is not functioning efficiently and will clearly not cope with the further increase in demand for visas per month in the future, in view of the backlog of crew changes. We are therefore calling upon Vietnam to introduce temporary visa waivers for crew changes through appropriate means, to be implemented nationally for seafarers holding a seafarer's identity document issued in accordance with the ILO Conventions No 108 or No 185, or the IMO Convention on Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, or a valid ticket or booking with the ships' agents as the guarantors of their bona fide identities. Moreover, given territorial limitation of such waiver to the State granting it, we also call for cooperation between Asian countries to temporarily allow for a visa free transit area in Asia for seafarers.

Furthermore, the limited availability of flight connections between world seaport hubs and the Asian seafarers supplying countries in order to effect crew changes is another major impediment to crew changes globally. We therefore call on Vietnam to create, in consultation with the aviation industry and other countries, the necessary conditions for seafarer air corridors between crew supply countries and major seaport countries in the world so as to increase access, as soon as possible, to commercial flights. The limited flight options also cause difficulties in aligning flights with vessel embarkation and disembarkation times. Consequently, we encourage Vietnam for allowing seafarers of any nationality to stay in the country until the arrival of the flight or ship without restricting the amount of days.

We call on Vietnam to urge other governments to remove national restrictions and to allow for seafarers to stay in their countries for at least 10 days for the purposes of on-signing and repatriating albeit restricting seafarer movement. In your position, you can make a difference in practice by using your diplomatic influence and importance as a major seafarer supply country to raise this matter at the highest level in meetings with other governments around the world. This will be extremely important to ensure seafarers, as essential workers for the global trade and economy, can be relieved without any further delay.

On behalf of all the signatories of this letter, we are always ready to be in contact with your office to set up a meeting with you to discuss this urgent topic and how the actions can be facilitated further.

Yours respectfully,



Mr. Yuichi Sonoda  
Secretary General  
ASA



Claes Berglund  
President ECSA



Guy Platten  
Secretary General ICS



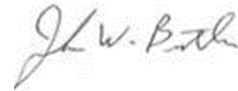
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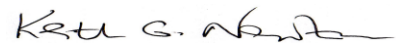
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