



Seafarers' Bulletin

English | no.28/2014

International Transport Workers' Federation

A photograph of three seafarers standing on a ship's deck. The man in the foreground is wearing a red cap and an orange high-visibility jacket. Behind him are two other men in dark blue jackets and caps. They are all looking towards the camera.

Maritime Labour Convention: so far so good?

In this issue:

Stories from the frontline

Black Sea laid bare

Your pullout guide to getting help



Contents

pages 4-5 FOC statistics The flag of convenience campaign in numbers	6-9 Life at sea Stories from the frontline	10-11 Black Sea laid bare New film exposes shocking conditions	12-15 Seafarers' bill of rights MLC: so far so good?
16-18 Piracy 10 things you need to know	Pullout directory Eight pages of contact details and advice	19 Inspector profile Our man in Incheon	20-23 Dockers Campaign for container weight regulation
24 Maritime women Winning a better deal for women	25 Trade unions Standing up for your rights	26-27 Training and careers Investing in new seafarers	28 Offshore taskforce Increasing union influence
29 HIV/AIDS Information and understanding	30-31 Legal Advice when you need a lawyer	32-33 Industry developments A writer's view of life at sea	34 Fishers Towards decent work

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is an international trade union federation of transport trade unions, representing around 4.5 million transport workers in some 150 countries. It is organised in eight industrial sections: seafarers, fisheries, inland navigation, dockers, railways, road transport, civil aviation and tourism services. It represents transport workers at world level and promotes their interests through global campaigning and solidarity.

ITF SEAFARERS' BULLETIN no.28/2014

Published in 2014 by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), 49/60 Borough Road, London SE1 1DR, United Kingdom. Further copies of Seafarers' Bulletin (published in English, Arabic, Chinese, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish) are available from the ITF at the above address.

Web: www.itfseafarers.org | **Email:** mail@itf.org.uk | **Tel:** +44 (20) 7403 2733 | **Fax:** +44 (20) 7357 7871

Cover photo: Christian Roos, ITF inspector, Belgium

Welcome



Welcome to the Seafarers' Bulletin for 2014 – the first full year in force of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), which touches the lives of seafarers across the world. That's why in this issue we ask what is the verdict on the convention so far. Is it the effective tool we have fought to build? In a special four page report we look at how it is performing, what it means for seafarers, and find out how ITF inspectors have used it to secure justice for ships' crews.

One of the biggest issues facing seafarers in recent years has been the daily menace of attacks by Somali pirates. Finally we can report good news on this problem. The threat to seafarers has been made a public issue, the campaigning has paid off, and the number of attacks has fallen. But there's no room for complacency, and on pages 16 to 18 we round up the latest developments, including the cases of piracy in other areas.

Life at sea should be rewarding and as safe as possible – we know that for many seafarers it is neither. Underpayment of crews, injury and loss of life can never be acceptable. We all have a duty to fight those outrages, and there is no more powerful way to do that than through trade union strength. Unions are the pathway for change. The ITF and its unions are policing shipowners and applying pressure on governments to guard the welfare of seafarers and their families. To see concrete examples of that strength look at the reduction in piracy and the creation of the MLC, and visit Stories from the frontline in this magazine. And if you're still not convinced have a look at Trade unions: what's the point? (page 25).

Our strength is built on the foundation of seafarers and dockers working together. They have always looked out for one another in good times and bad, and always will. See pages 20 to 23 for news from portside, including why cargo handling is dockers' work.

2014 is an important year in many sectors. We are building workers' representation and union strength in the offshore oil and gas industries. And we are continuing to push for ratification of ILO convention 188, the Work in Fishing Convention. The fisheries sector is home to some of the most appalling conditions to be found anywhere at sea – everything from unsafe vessels to illegal fishing and people trafficking. We are working tirelessly with fishers to fight these abuses. You can read about our work in fisheries and the offshore sectors on pages 28 and 34.

Alongside the latest figures on the ITF's flags of convenience campaign, these are just some of the topics you'll find in this edition of Seafarers' Bulletin. And for when things go wrong, don't forget that it also includes an eight page pullout guide with advice on getting hired, avoiding recruitment rip-offs, and pointing you to where to go when you need help.

The ITF's ability to fight for seafarers' rights comes from the collective strength of transport workers and their trade unions. Those unions need you, and we're convinced that you need those unions. Nothing less will secure well-paid and safe seafaring.

Steve Cotton
ITF acting general secretary

The ITF FOC campaign in numbers

ITF INFORMATION

VESSELS AND SEAFARERS COVERED BY ITF AGREEMENTS

(at time of going to press)

TOTAL NUMBER OF LIVE ITF AGREEMENTS 11,470
COVERING 204,981 positions

ITF INSPECTIONS (2013)

Total number of vessels inspected broken down into number without problems and number with problems.



TOP FIVE PROBLEMS BY TYPE FOUND DURING ITF INSPECTIONS (2013)



BACKPAY RECOVERED (2013)

TOTAL BACKPAY RECOVERED USD38,285,290

TOP FIVE FLAGS FOR PROBLEMS FOUND DURING ITF INSPECTIONS (2013)



Countries shown in blue have ratified the Maritime Labour Convention at time of going to press

- | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| * Antigua & Barbuda | * Croatia | * Germany | * Lebanon | * Nicaragua | * St Vincent & Grenadines | * Switzerland |
| * Australia | * Cyprus | * Ghana | * Liberia | * Nigeria | * Samoa | * Togo |
| * Bahamas | * Denmark | * Greece | * Lithuania | * Norway | * Serbia | * Tuvalu |
| * Barbados | * Faeroe Islands | * Hungary | * Luxembourg | * Palau | * Seychelles | * UK |
| * Belgium | * Fiji | * Italy | * Malaysia | * Panama | * Singapore | * Cayman Islands |
| * Benin | * Finland | * Japan | * Malta | * Philippines | * South Africa | * Gibraltar |
| * Bosnia & Herzegovina | * France | * Kiribati | * Marshall Islands | * Poland | * Spain | * Isle of Man |
| * Bulgaria | * New Caledonia | * Rep of Korea | * Morocco | * Russian Federation | * Sweden | * Vietnam |
| * Canada | * Gabon | * Latvia | * Netherlands | * Saint Kitts & Nevis | | |



Top five flags by DWT:



Top five beneficial ownership countries by DWT:

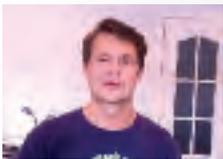


Major countries supplying seafarers:



Source UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport 2013

Stories from the frontline



Empty promises

Vadim Mamontov, ITF inspector at the port of Kaliningrad, Russia, recounts how a small crew were duped by a shipowner they were too willing to trust

After four continuous months without pay, the six-person crew of a small, Russian-flagged vessel, MV Maks, declared a strike while docked at the port of Kaliningrad. They had tried for months to complain to their employer, a St Petersburg-based company called Alien Shipping Ltd, but finally they ran out of patience. It looked like a fairly common and straightforward dispute, but so often things can be more complicated in the event.

According to the Russian Federation's Labour Code: 'If an employer does not fulfill its obligations, the employee has a right to do the same.' Accordingly, lawyers from the local department of my union, the Seafarers' Union of Russia, began preparations for a legal claim to support these seafarers. Sadly, however, their initial enquiries didn't get very far.

St Petersburg, cultural capital of the Baltic, has become an oasis for dodgy shipowners, where cases of abuse by employers are disregarded by law-enforcement authorities: everyone from state labour inspection officers to prosecutors. Complainants are referred to shipowners' legal addresses, even while their real-life representatives are sitting under the prosecutor's nose in St Petersburg.

In fact, the St Petersburg situation has reached a point where, having exhausted their supply of trusting seafarers in this region, the 'crimps' (as recruiters are known to seafarers) are now touting among the long-suffering people of Ukraine, from the estuary of the Azov Sea and the Caspian Sea.

Imaginary money
Disregarding the ILO minimum recommended wage for an AB

the official rate on board the Maks, was declared in the contract as approximately USD200. However, the rate paid under the table, according to an unofficial bonus payroll – is about USD1700. Of course, the crew considers the bonus a solid part of their wage and it turns out this is what has not been paid.

The only evidence of the promised bonus is an informal 'payroll information' paper. It contains nothing more than an abstract example of how this amount is added to an official wage. As far as the shipowner is concerned, everything is as per their contract, the seafarers have been getting their paychecks, even in advance!

So the dispute turned into a sluggish strike — not so much an action as a declaration. As a result, the crew members finally received additional wages, but

these turned out to be only half of the owed sum. The shipowner promised to pay the full amount on delivery of the freight, but in the meantime, the debt has not been officially acknowledged.

Following the 'protest action', which lasted several hours, the crew (with the exception of the captain), signed up to the following statement: "We will try to trust you one more time and we're stopping the strike. However, we reserve our right to call a strike, if you deceive us again".

The crew had the option of taking their protest further; they could have filed an official claim to the law enforcement authorities of Kaliningrad, St Petersburg; or they could have signed the power of attorney over to a trade union lawyer. But they decided to put their faith in the shipowner. ■

Corrupt crewing agent caught stealing from seafarers

Ulf Christiansen, ITF inspector in the port of Hamburg, recounts how he challenged a case of double bookkeeping that was cheating seafarers out of their full wages



In mid-July 2013 the German ITF inspectorate received notification from our Finnish colleague that three seafarers from the vessel *Herm Kiepe* had been in touch to inform him they had not received any wages for a month. They also reported that for the last few months they had been asked to sign twice for each payment received.

as I had done in 2011, to terminate dealings with the crewing agent forthwith. After some negotiation, and after the charterers had been informed of the situation, the shipowner finally agreed to disburse the full USD14,936 owing to the three seafarers who had made a claim, the next time the vessel docked in Hamburg. This happened in July, and the sum demanded was paid to the three seafarers in my presence.

“St Petersburg... has become as oasis for dodgy shipowners”



I had had similar dealings with this ship before, two years earlier. In Hamburg, I went aboard and spoke to the three Filipino seafarers. They had received no money for the month of June. Moreover, in the preceding months, the Philippine crewing agent had regularly been presenting them with two different wage accounts to sign: the ‘official’ account, in accordance with the ITF agreement, and the ‘unofficial’ account, which was a good USD600 lower per man, and which they were in fact paid.

On the same day, the men left the vessel and flew from Hamburg to Manila at the expense of the shipowner. For safety’s sake, however, they first visited the Hamburg seamen’s club to make a remittance home of a large part of the money. I then accompanied them to the airport, just to make sure the crewing agent did not get a chance to relieve them of any remaining pay before the flight.

I called an onboard meeting with all nine of the crew members, but only the three who had already come forward were prepared to talk. It seemed clear that their crewing agent, who had been living in Germany for some years, and working for this German shipowner for many years, had put the other six men under such pressure that they were afraid to provide me with any information.

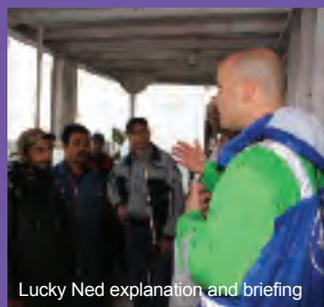
Since this case had involved continued fraud on the part of the crewing agent, I alerted the harbour police in Hamburg, who dispatched an investigator. He was present when the money was paid to the three seafarers on board and took statements from them, as well as from the shipowner, with regard to the circumstances of the double accounting. The investigation proceedings against the crewing agent by the Hamburg harbour police were forwarded to the police authorities at his place of residence. It is much to be hoped that this trafficker in human beings will at last get his just desserts for his crimes against seafarers — and even against his own countrymen. ■

During my visit onboard, I contacted the shipowner and informed him that there would be a fresh claim forthcoming for wages in arrears with regard to this vessel. I also urged him, just



A call in time

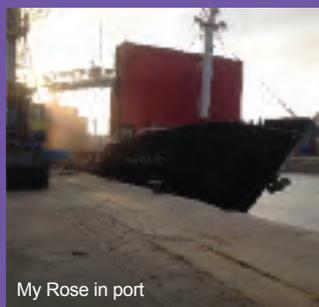
ITF inspector Romano Perić recalls how the ITF came to the aid of two beleaguered crews at once off the coast of Croatia



Lucky Ned explanation and briefing



Lucky Ned food and water delivery



My Rose in port



My Rose money onboard

In October 2013 we dealt with two problem ships anchored in Croatian waters. The crews' difficulties were parallel in many ways, yet it soon became clear that one case would be resolved more easily than the other.

The seriousness of the situation facing the crew of Lucky Ned, a Greek-owned, St Vincent and Grenadines-flagged vessel, anchored four nautical miles in front of the port of Ploče, was immediately apparent to us.

After the cargo had been unloaded on 4 October, the owner instructed the master of the ship to proceed to anchor, explaining that this was due to financial difficulties and a risk of bankruptcy. At this point (unfortunately a little too late) the master realised that he would need to call the ITF inspectorate to give him further instructions.

I went on board and assessed the situation. Both water and food reserves were very low, with no fresh fruit or vegetables, and supplies of fuel were also low. The crew was nervous, and the captain was losing his authority, due in large part to the crew's concerns over food, owed wages of USD103,500, and their insecurity about what would happen next.

We informed the port authorities about the case, but they

unofficially told us berthing the ship would be difficult, due to the high operational costs involved and the busy schedule of working berths.

I delivered SIM cards to the master and the crew in order to relieve stress a bit, and in order to ensure I could communicate with the ship. I tried repeatedly to contact the owner by phone, e-mail and fax, but received no answer.

Indeed during the first 10 days this ship was anchored, the owner made no communication whatsoever. Water supplies on board began to run out and the ship was at risk of black-out – something that could have meant danger for ships navigating in the area. At this point in the crisis, I began to coordinate solidarity action, getting supplies of food and 70 tonnes of water out to the crew, with a tugboat taking garbage from the ship. Red Cross representatives, the citizens of Ploče, our union members and port services all participated in this action. We worked against heavy wind and rain but the actions were carried out without problems and the crew (17 of them from Ukraine and Pakistan) were more than grateful.

Higher stakes

Even as we were tackling the problems on the Lucky Ned, we received a call for help from

another ship, this one in the port of Split. It was the Cook Island-flagged My Rose, owned by Tower Shipping Ltd, with 11 crew members of Ukrainian, Azerbaijani and Georgian nationality on board.

The crew in this case knew the right moment to call the ITF inspectors. The ship was ready for departure and full of cargo, giving them much more leverage than the Lucky Ned crew could muster.

Although they had been owed wages for less than a month (an amount of USD32,000) I found very poor living conditions on board. The crew was using and drinking contaminated water; insects were causing infections; the food was insufficient; documentation was incorrect and aspects of security were at risk.

I reported the situation to port state control (PSC), who then also ordered a sanitary inspection. Everyone coordinated their inspections well and, armed with their reports, I was able to inform the shipping company that the vessel would be detained in the port. With some urgency, the company sent a negotiator to Croatia who — under pressure from the ITF and PSC, and due to the pressure of having cargo on board — agreed to: pay all owed wages in cash onboard; repatriate seven crew members at their insistence; present a plan for fixing all

significant deficiencies, and fix some on the spot.

In this second case, the crew were well informed, united and asked the ITF for help at the right time. The owner immediately recognised the seriousness of the situation and accepted almost all the conditions I imposed.

In the case of the Lucky Ned, the claims were similar, but the crew's request for help came only after the departure of the ship, without its cargo, so that the owner had much less at stake. Also, this was a very quiet, fatalistic crew, less aware of their rights, willing to accept my suggestions, but also stating that they were ready to negotiate with the owner after all.

Finally, after 40 days on anchorage, and with the assistance of Greek ITF inspector Stamatias Kourakos, we secured the departure of Lucky Ned for Piraeus, Greece. The crew agreed to sail having accepted a proposal from a bank in Greece which had an interest in their ship. They received one month's salary in cash on board; they also received a letter of guarantee, stating that the balance of their wages would be paid and air tickets and other formalities arranged upon arrival in Greece. The crew later got in touch to thank us, confirming that the guarantees had been met. ■



The Ugly Duckling: a proper Mickey Mouse

Tommy Molloy, ITF inspector for Liverpool and the North West, UK, recalls how the owners and flag state of a rustbucket detained at three different ports turned a blind eye to the suffering of its crew

When a vessel called Donald Duckling turned up in Tyne Port, in the North East of England, it soon became clear that it was about as far removed from Disneyland as you could imagine.

This 37,000GT Panamanian-registered ship is part of the Taiwan-based TMT fleet, a number of whose vessels have hit the headlines for the wrong reasons.

The Donald Duckling had already been detained in Gibraltar by port state control (PSC) for 133 days, with numerous deficiencies, before being released in early October 2013. It then went to Morocco and from there, en route to Las Palmas. The Filipino and Romanian crew were forced to catch fish over the side of the ship in order to survive, as they had run out of provisions. The ship was then detained by PSC in Las Palmas with more than 30 deficiencies, including non-payment of wages.

Released from detention once more, the vessel arrived next in the UK on 9 November. The crew's arrival had coincided with the typhoon that struck the Philippines, so they were desperate for information and contact with their families. The Romanian chief also discovered he had been dismissed by TMT for asking the company to provide spare parts identified as essential by the PSC inspection in Las Palmas. The crew had not been paid since they received their owed wages in Las Palmas.

When I arrived in the port, my first impression was that the ship was just a big bucket of rust. My impressions were reinforced once on board. The ship itself was in an appalling

condition; maintenance was obviously an alien concept to the company.

There were 15 days' worth of food provisions left on board but the fridges had broken down, meaning that most of the food would be spoiled within two days.

I called the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), who have PSC responsibility for the UK and they arrived to carry out an inspection. They quickly established that there were more than enough deficiencies to warrant a detention of the vessel and they put a stop to the loading operation.

I wrote to TMT regarding the many causes for concern but never received a response. During the weeks that followed, the situation for the crew deteriorated rapidly. The local community were providing food and water. The port provided fuel to keep the vessel lit and heated and new mooring ropes to replace the vessel's rotten ones. I wrote to the Panamanian authorities and was asked to send them a crew list. I did so and heard nothing further.

I established contact with both the Romanian and Philippines embassies in the UK to request assistance for the crew. Both were sympathetic but refused to assist with crew repatriation.

TMT eventually sent wages for October and November via the agents, but none of the equipment or work required to address the deficiencies was provided.

By mid-December, TMT were making noises via the Philippines crewing agent that they were about to replace the crew with a Chinese one. The UK Border Force and MCA

advised TMT that unless the vessel was of a decent standard for a crew to live on, and unless TMT started to provide food, water and fuel then any new crew would be turned back at the airport.

On 30 December, the crew were contacted by a Panamanian Register representative asking them to send over their contracts of employment. I wrote to ask why the contracts were needed and to offer my help in resolving the crisis, but was curtly told the Panama Maritime Authority "is in charge of investigating and solving all labour claims".

The MCA also communicated with the flag state, to no avail, though they were able to confirm that Panama had issued a Maritime Labour Convention certificate for the vessel noting its deficiencies.

By Christmas, the Romanian crew had begun leaving the vessel to make their own way home. They were given free passage to Amsterdam on the local DFDS ferry, whose crew, many of them Filipino, had been helping to feed the Donald Duckling seafarers since their arrival.

In early January, the ITF agreed to repatriate the Filipino crew. In some respects I suppose they had been lucky; at least they were in a port where the local community refused to let them starve and even donated money so they could go ashore occasionally to buy essentials.

Where a flag state has issued MLC certification, they have a duty to step in and assist a crew in this situation. Yet despite all the evidence, Panama refused to accept that the crew of the Donald Duckling had been abandoned.

Notwithstanding the best intentions of the Maritime Labour Convention, I don't think ITF inspectors will be left with nothing to do any time soon. ■

Oil tanker returns after crew's detention ordeal

Shri Abdulgani Y Serang, general secretary of the National Union of Seafarers of India, celebrates a homecoming

The crew of the oil tanker *Desh Shanti* returned to the port of Visakhapatnam in September 2013, after enduring 26 days of detention in Iran.

Their vessel, owned by the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), was arrested in the Persian Gulf by members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, amid allegations of pollution. The crew had been carrying crude oil from Iraq, and was put under pressure to admit the charges, but ultimately no pollution could be proved.

During the crew's detention, the National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) and the Maritime Union of India (MUI) held numerous protest actions and sought national and international support for their release. Thousands of petitions under the banner of NUSI and MUI were sent to the Indian prime minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, who added his support to the campaign, alongside that of the SCI, ministry of shipping and ministry of external affairs.

I was very happy to join other leaders of NUSI, the MUI and the SCI at the port to welcome the *Desh Shanti* home. We were proud to know that the entire crew under the leadership of Captain SS Cheema stood solidly together like a rock and were able to safeguard their professional pride as seafarers, their legitimacy as a company and their national pride as Indians during this stressful experience.



“most of the ships looked like they belonged on the scrap heap – to us they seemed like floating coffins”

Black Sea laid bare

Last year director Cihan Hazer and his film crew spent four months making a documentary for the ITF about the plight of seafarers working in the Black Sea. Nothing could have prepared them for the scenes they were to witness

When my team and I agreed to spend four months shooting a documentary about the lives of seafarers working in the Black Sea, we were unsure how much evidence we could expect to see of their hardships.

The idea of the documentary was to support the ITF's Black Sea of Shame campaign to improve working and living conditions in a region known to host many of the least seaworthy ships still on the water. During our time here we visited more than 30 vessels in Turkey and Georgia and got a chance to meet nearly 400 seafarers. We also interviewed numerous lawyers, port state controllers and union leaders and activists. We learned what working conditions for seafarers should be like – and discovered a vast difference between normal standards and the reality in the Black Sea.

Of course, in order to achieve our objectives, we deliberately

set out to visit substandard vessels. But it must be said, there were plenty to choose from. At least a third of the Black Sea fleet is aged 30 years plus. And on many of these vessels, as we discovered, seafarers struggle to cope with dreadful living conditions and other serious problems. In fact, the Turkish union DAD-DER had to take us outside of the region to visit a decent vessel, in order to show us that life onboard is not always that bad. It was like comparing pigsties with a palace, but worse.

Floating coffins

On every Black Sea vessel we visited, seafarers' working and living conditions fell far short of global standards. Indeed most of the ships looked like they belonged on the scrap heap – to us they seemed like floating coffins, and we learned that the reality can be as deadly as that.

The Volgo-Balt 199 is one such example. On 4 December 2012 this 1976-built St Kitts & Nevis-

flagged river ship sank in stormy conditions in the Black Sea off the coast of Sile, near Istanbul, while transporting coal from Russia to the Turkish port of Antalya. Only four of the crew of 12 – one Russian and 11 Ukrainians – survived. To add to the tragedy, a rescue boat that went to the aid of the stricken vessel was turned over in huge waves; its captain and three crew members were also lost.

While relatives of the deceased were arranging funerals, the authorities declared: "Seafarers say farewell to each other before sailing and this is the nature of maritime (life)". We do not accept this perspective. An old river ship like this should never have been licensed to operate in the notoriously rough waters of the Black Sea. The people who employ seafarers and send them off in coffins to make money cannot be called employers; they are killers. And the authorities who allow them to operate, the people who support their operations through

offshore companies, those who inspect the vessels and let them go, and any other passive observers – they are all just as responsible for these tragedies as the so-called employer.

We heard of many sea accidents like the Volgo-Balt 199, preventable accidents that leave grieving families without even a body to bury or a grave to visit, since the bodies cannot be found. When there are survivors, seafarers who may have been disabled by their injuries receive no financial support. They have no social security and no right to medical care when they cannot work. There is little provision for old age either, and hence we saw seafarers in their 70s and 80s working on these substandard ships. Both seafarers and their families are abandoned by unjust systems. Government agencies and other institutions are silent.

Seaworthiness is not the only issue for substandard ships.



Mini Star crew

The outdated equipment found on older vessels forces seafarers to expend more energy and work longer hours to keep them running. And when a long day's work is finally done, the often-dire accommodation and recreation facilities on board preclude any notion of rest or relaxation.

Left to starve

The first thing every seafarer we met told us was that they could not get their wages on time, or at all. We met seafarers abandoned to their destiny who waited desperately onboard in the hope of obtaining their outstanding wages. With no drinking water, no clean food and not enough of it.

One of the vessels we visited was the Ataman, the ITF having been alerted to the plight of the seafarers on board.

Approaching the vessel, you could see a placard they had hung over the side reading simply 'Help us'. These Ukrainian and Russian

seafarers had no fuel, no electricity, no food or water; they were trying to survive on handouts from other ships. They couldn't repatriate. They were fishing to survive and cooking their meagre meals over fires they made in a barrel. Among them was a 77-year-old seafarer – it was a miracle he had been able to withstand conditions like these.

The cook, who had received news of a death in his family, had no means of reaching the funeral. The port authorities wouldn't let the seafarers go home for fear of leaving the vessel unmanned; they would not even issue shore passes, in case the seafarers escaped. It was as if these men were convicted criminals. Certainly they felt they were in a jail. Thankfully, the ITF was able to step in, addressing their immediate needs and finally sending them home.

We witnessed similar scenes on the Mini Star, anchored near

Hereke, where abandoned Ukrainian and Russian crew members without any provisions waited six months for unpaid wages and repatriation.

On another vessel, abandoned at the port of Trabzon, Azerbaijani, Turkish, Georgian, and Ukrainian seafarers told us they had not been paid for five months and had not been able to secure basic provisions due to the debts of the operator. The harbour master had provided them with food for a short while but this had now been stopped. Thanks to the ITF, the problem was resolved and the crew obtained their outstanding wages.

The families of seafarers in these circumstances experience mounting debts as wages are delayed or cancelled. They cannot afford to pay rent or send their children to school. The pressures often lead to divorce and the destruction of families.

The Black Sea brings together

seafarers from different nationalities, languages and religions to face a common set of destinies. Some die, some struggle in grim conditions, often just to stay alive. Authorities don't do their jobs; they allow reckless owners to operate, fail to inspect vessels and leave seafarers to drown or starve. Governments, it seems, have no interest in seafarers' problems; seafarers are on their own. Our hope for this film is that the world will hear the cries of seafarers from the Black Sea. We dedicate our documentary to the hundreds of seafarers who have tried to make their livings in the Black Sea and died in terrible conditions.

Cihan Hazer, is a film maker and director of the company CDI Turizm Basim Yayim Bilisim ve Tic Ltd Sti, which produced Karadeniz/Black Sea. The documentary is to be launched at the ITF congress in Sofia, Bulgaria in August 2014. ■



Maritime Labour Convention: so far so good?

The Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC) finally came into force in August 2013. Is it proving to be a useful tool, asks maritime operations' Katie Higginbottom

When the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC) was adopted back in February 2006 there was much back-slapping in the maritime community. Agreement had been reached between governments, shipowners and unions that seafarers have the right to properly-regulated living and working conditions and on what those minimum levels should be.

Hours were spent wrangling over acceptable language to make sure that the convention contained enough compromises

to be widely ratified, as well as provision for consultation between shipowners and seafarer representatives where needed, and strong enforcement mechanisms.

Ratification got off to a good start with all the major FOCs being the first to sign up. Then it all slowed down. The hope for ratification within five years stretched to seven – largely due to changing priorities of governments and the economic downturn.

Now the MLC is finally in force, what's the verdict? Is it an

effective tool or just another layer of bureaucracy? Judging by the accounts of ITF inspectors, there are a number of positive developments and a few unsurprising disappointments.

On the plus side, we have seen port state control officers intervening in cases of dodgy contracts, double bookkeeping and a case of a P&I club covering repatriation costs of a crew abandoned in Italy — all things that would have been unheard of pre-MLC. We are also seeing many more responses to seafarers'

complaints from flag states, though whether these turn into meaningful actions is another matter. On the downside there seem to be a lot of MLC certificates — many issued by reputable classification societies — floating around on vessels that are far from compliant.

It will take some time for the convention to be fully worked out in practice, but it's clear that a shift is taking place. It's up to all of us to make sure it has maximum effect for seafarers all over the world. ■

How to be an MLC inspector

The MLC has changed the role of flag and port state inspectors, giving them new responsibilities for policing seafarers' working and living conditions – but a lot of the changes have to be worked out on the job, believes Neil Atkinson, a marine surveyor of the United Kingdom's Maritime and Coastguard agency

“In August 2013 a major milestone was reached in the shipping world, with the long-awaited ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention.”

In August 2013 a major milestone was reached in the shipping world, with the long-awaited ratification of the Maritime Labour Convention. It took a considerable amount of time and effort to get that far and I did wonder at times whether ratification would actually happen. But it has, and it is in force, and in my eyes it is already having a positive effect on the working and living conditions of the world's seafarers.

Let's make no mistake. The MLC is an excellent starting point for improving seafarers' working and living conditions. These are now considered to be basic rights, like those provided for by other fundamental pieces of legislation such as SOLAS and MARPOL. One of the MLC's main strengths lies in its flexibility — allowing a flag state to achieve its stipulations by means that may be different to those stated so long as the outcome offers an equivalent — and its compliance and enforcement mechanisms. It requires the shipowner to be visible and gives seafarers a strong voice by introducing recognised complaints procedures.

It isn't perfect. It is promoted as a level playing field for shipowners and a bill of rights for seafarers. However, it relies on national laws and legislation for its implementation and this can lead to a degree of variation in requirements from flag state to flag state. In my view, there is potential for shipowners to trade one flag state off against another, possibly resulting in a lowering of standards. They

mustn't forget: the aim of the MLC is to raise standards, not lower them.

Of course, as an inspector, I have had no role in developing this legislation; my role is to help implement it by ensuring I can undertake an effective and efficient MLC inspection. And that has been a most interesting and challenging experience so far, because inspectors have virtually started with a blank sheet of paper.

A new approach to inspections

The MLC is often seen as a 'one size fits all' convention. It is not. It fits very well for container ships, tankers and general cargo ships, but problems have come to light when applying the MLC to vessels such as tugs and workboats. This has required a considerable amount of lateral thinking to resolve problems — which, in my experience at least, are generally concerned with crew accommodation.

This is where substantial equivalences come into their own, allowing room for negotiation over difficult provisions, so long as the outcome is as beneficial for the seafarer as the convention demands. A good example of this is crew accommodation on large commercial yachts. On these vessels, which are generally below 3000GT, it is difficult to apply the floor area requirements for seafarers' accommodation without impinging upon the guest accommodation. We therefore agreed that the floor area could

be reduced provided that ensuite facilities are provided.

Consultation and dialogue with the social partners (shipowners and seafarers' organisations) are also often needed when it comes to defining our terms. It might sound odd, but it isn't always easy to define what is meant by a seafarer or a shipowner in a given case, a crucial starting point for agreeing who is covered by which rights and responsibilities. Other terms may need thrashing out too — a lot could ride on how we agree to interpret the term 'closely adjacent to' for example. It takes a long time to resolve these issues and a good working relationship with the social partners is vital.

Honest, realistic dialogue

Having worked as a surveyor for the MCA, I have undertaken all types of surveys, inspections and audits. In my mind the MLC requires a slightly different approach. We are dealing with some quite sensitive issues, wages being one of them, and we need to be aware of this. Seafarers understandably become nervous when being spoken to by an inspector from the flag state or recognised organisation. I certainly was when I was at sea. Even inspectors are human and I have always tried to put the seafarer at ease when talking to them.

Sometimes seafarers feel more comfortable if they are in a group rather than on their own. The one thing I always ask them is to be honest and please do not give us the answer that you think that we want to hear.

The funny thing is that at the start of an inspection people are quite wary of us. But after the first day, and once word gets around, I have often been approached by seafarers asking if they can have a word. I have even had anonymous notes shoved under my cabin door by seafarers. A word of caution here; if we are not careful an MLC inspection can quite easily become a moaning session for seafarers. And let's face it seafarers are quite good at moaning about the three Ms (meals, mail and money). While we are here to enforce the MLC, our function is not to negotiate pay rises for seafarers.

It is amazing what comes to light when talking to seafarers: poor quality food, inadequate safety equipment, breaches to pay agreements. All these are contrary to the MLC and with its advent and enforcement provisions, many such bad practices have been eradicated.

Other unsatisfactory arrangements take more investigation with reference to the provisions of the convention. For example, where ships are operating on the coast, with frequent port calls and short sea passages, there is an impact on working and resting hours. MLC inspections have identified that under these circumstances seafarers are unable to have adequate rest. Again, the enforcement provisions have resulted in additional seafarers being placed on board for the duration of these short voyages. These are just a few examples of the positive impact that the MLC has already had. ■

Words into action

Two days after the Maritime Labour Convention came into force its powers were used to get a ship's crew the back wages and decent contracts they had been denied, as Pete Lahay, ITF coordinator for Canada, reports



Photograph by Dave Roels

On 22 August 2013 we saw the first ship detention anywhere in the world to take place under the provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention. The Hydra Warrior was detained by Transport Canada port state control at Sept Iles for non-payment of wages, illegal employment contracts and violations of the safety management system certificate. This detention was lifted after the crew received all their backpay and the crew employment contracts were amended to reflect the proper terms and conditions of employment.

Of course, since time began seafarers have often faced tremendous hardship onboard their vessels. Many shipowners do not ensure proper medical care, nutrition, sanitary conditions, or repatriation at the end of a period of employment. Non-payment of wages or overtime and other heavy-handed abuses happen on a regular basis. That is why the ITF and its affiliates, including

my own union, have always stood in solidarity with seafarers and the flag of convenience campaign. Our purpose is to ensure shipowners meet their obligations, and to improve conditions for seafarers who are vital to the global economy.

The case of the Hydra Warrior is one where the shipowner chose to have a collective bargaining agreement to cover his workers, but at the same time he wanted to ignore it and pay them less than the agreement required. In fact, he even made the crew sign employment contracts for lower wages than stipulated in the collective agreement.

Early in August, before entry into force of the MLC, Sven Hemme, an ITF inspector in Germany, caught on and began taking steps to secure back wages for the crew. But the vessel sailed to Sept Iles before everything could be fixed. As the ship came across the Atlantic the convention became enforceable. Even before it arrived we contacted Transport Canada port state control to

advise them of the situation. When the vessel came into port, they investigated and determined that it was not in compliance with the provisions of the MLC; the violations were serious enough to warrant detention until the deficiencies had been corrected.

It didn't take the owners long to fix things up — the crew were back-paid their correct wages (approximately USD65,000) and the employment contracts were amended.

The MLC 2006 is a powerful new tool for seafarers' labour representatives to enforce decent conditions on international ships. I have already been able to use it to persuade another shipowner to cooperate with me to fix similar problems or face a full labour inspection by port state control here in Vancouver. This is what the convention is intended to do: making it possible to monitor seafarers' labour conditions quickly and effectively, and immediately rectify any problems. ■

“Of course, since time began seafarers have often faced tremendous hardship onboard their vessels. Many shipowners do not ensure proper medical care, nutrition, sanitary conditions, or repatriation at the end of a period of employment.”

Detained in Denmark

ITF inspector Morten Bach reports on the first ship to be held at a Danish port for flouting MLC rules

“After the PSC visit and inspection, the ship was held in Esbjerg for 24 hours by the Maritime Authority, until the new employment contracts had been prepared and approved.”



On 2 September 2013, I visited the Liberian-flagged Atlantic Carrier at the port of Esbjerg, having been contacted by the chief officer before its arrival.

No employment agreements had been issued to the 18 crew members, many of whom were Croatians, and the ship had no ITF agreement. The owners had previously been contacted about this, as the ship regularly calls at Danish ports, but they had not responded. The (German) captain was arrogant and dismissive; he refused to talk with the ITF and told the other crew members to do the same.

It was made perfectly clear to him that the ship did not comply with the then new Maritime Labour Convention, which

ensures minimum rights for seafarers on all vessels regardless of the flag they are flying. The new rules are enforced by the port state inspectors, in this case those appointed by the Danish Maritime Authority.

According to the MLC rules, any person (including crew members, dockers, organisations, even port chaplains) who is aware of matters that are not consistent with the convention may report such matters to the port state control (PSC). The maritime authority then has a duty to go on board the ship in question to examine conditions and may in fact hold it back.

After the PSC visit and inspection, the ship was held in Esbjerg for 24 hours by the Maritime Authority, until the new employment contracts had been prepared and approved.

This action was the first inspection in Denmark that led to a ship being detained for breaches of the MLC.

Fortunately, most shipowners have had their ships MLC-certified so that they meet the requirements set out in the convention, but there are still a great many owners who do not comply with the rules. This is true of many ships flying a flag of convenience.

As far as the ITF in Denmark is concerned, there is no doubt that shipowners who fail to comply with the rules will be reported and that we will make sure that the Danish authorities meet their responsibility in this respect.

It should be pointed out that the MLC does not mean ships have signed or are covered by ITF agreements or other agreements. The ITF demands and will continue to work to ensure that shipowners and ships flying a flag of convenience sign an ITF agreement, ensuring decent pay and conditions for crews, if they wish to call at Danish ports.

There should be no doubt about that! ■

At a glance: seafarers' bill of rights

Under the MLC, you have the right to:

- A safe and secure workplace
- Fair terms of employment
- Decent living and working conditions
- Social protection – access to medical care, health protection and welfare
- Freedom of association – to join a trade union of your choice
- Have your union negotiate a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) on your behalf.

If your rights are not respected:

- You can make a complaint on board to a senior officer, the captain or the shipowner, or the flag state.
- If the problem is with a shipowner, you can also raise this with the flag state or the port state.
- If you make a complaint on board, you have the right to be accompanied by a representative or a fellow seafarer – and not to be victimised for making a complaint.
- You can also make a complaint to a port state control (PSC) officer/labour inspector.
- You don't have to make the complaint directly – someone else (such as an ITF inspector or a welfare worker) can make it for you.

To find out more about the MLC visit
www.itfseafarers.org/ILOMLC.cfm



Recent reports suggest that pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea have now outstripped those around Somalia and the notorious Gulf of Aden, which has been the focus of sustained international patrols. What is clear however, is that the waters around both sides of the continent remain dangerous territory for merchant ships and their crews

Piracy: from East to West Africa

SOMALIA

Seafarer attacks: fewer but still too many

Seafarers working in the seas around Somalia and the Gulf of Aden can take some comfort from recent reductions in the level of pirate activity in this region largely thanks to international navy presence. However, there is still a very real threat in the region.

Between 1 January and the end of June 2013 the International Maritime Bureau recorded eight incidents by Somali pirates, including two hijackings and a third attempted hijacking of a ship which was abandoned by the pirates when food and fuel ran out. A total of 34 seafarers were reported as taken hostage at this time.

In 2012, 851 seafarers were on ships that were attacked by Somali pirates with firearms, and 349 seafarers taken hostage.

Continued threat: key facts

- The use of 'motherships' has enabled pirates to extend their geographical reach and power.
- Attacks have extended to beyond the coastlines of Kenya, Tanzania, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mozambique, and in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, around the Gulf of Oman and off the west coast of India and the western Maldives.
- Better-resourced Somali pirates are able to assess the level of onboard defence on the ships they approach.
- At the end of June 2013, Somali pirates were still

holding 57 crew members of different nationalities for ransom on four vessels.

- A further 11 were being held on land, with seven of these seafarers held since September 2010 and four since April 2010.
- The average captivity for nearly 600 seafarers held hostage by Somali pirates in 2012 lasted approximately 11 months.

Recent progress in reducing attacks

The drop in the number of attacks is due to increased military action against suspect skiffs, to military and other land-based anti-piracy operations and to the increased use of armed guards on board ships.

Navies have played a vital role.

The two vessels hijacked in the first half of 2013 were recovered by naval action before the pirates could take them to Somalia.

Violence increases as security tightens

Recent attacks off the Somali coast have prompted calls for a rethink of security by shipowners as pirates appear more prepared to engage in a real firefight with ships they target.

Iceberg crew rescued after two-week ordeal

Just before Christmas 2012 crew members from the Iceberg were finally released after a 13-day battle.

By this time, one seafarer had committed suicide and another was missing. The seafarers

needed psychological support and medical treatment — the chief officer had had his ears hacked off and another crew member needed spinal surgery due to abusive treatment.

'Big Mouth' arrested in Belgian sting operation

An alleged Somali pirate leader was arrested in a sting in Brussels in October 2013 after he accepted an invitation from undercover agents posing as film makers who wanted to make a documentary about his exploits.

Mohamed Abdi Hassan, who was known as Afweyne, or Big Mouth, was detained when he arrived at Brussels airport with another suspect identified as Mohamed MA, or Tiiceey. Hassan was described by the New York Times as having brought 'new sophistication' to the piracy business, raising venture capital as though for a Wall Street start-up company. Tiiceey, who is suspected of having provided support to the business, is a former governor of the Somali region of Himan and Heeb.

Mohammed Abdi Hassan is suspected of being responsible for a series of hijackings from 2008 until the end of 2012, including the seizure of the

Belgian vessel Pompeii, the armament-loaded Ukrainian vessel the Faina and the Sirius Star, a Saudi supertanker carrying two million barrels of crude oil which was released after the payment of a ransom fee of USD6 million.

It is believed that Somali piracy networks reach high into government and military officialdom. Prosecutors said they decided to involve Belgian undercover agents after it became clear that an international arrest warrant would not be successful in capturing the men.

WEST AFRICA

A growing threat

Piracy around West Africa has grown to such an extent that it has overtaken Somali piracy. In 2012, 966 seafarers were attacked in West African waters, compared with 851 off the Somali coast.

The problem in the Gulf of Guinea has escalated, with increased violence, and the pirates have extended their range way beyond the coastlines of West African countries.

Figures tell a worrying story

In 2012 the International Maritime Bureau reported 58

actual and attempted attacks around the Gulf of Guinea, an increase from 48 in 2011. The attacks involved 10 hijackings with 207 crew members being taken hostage; five of them were subsequently killed. At least 37 of the 58 attacks in 2012 involved firearms.

In the first six months of 2013 alone there were 31 actual and attempted attacks on merchant vessels. Tragically one seafarer was killed in a shoot-out, in which guards repelled an attack at Lagos, Nigeria, on the tanker, Pyxis Delta. This was the first case of a crew member being killed on board a ship on which armed guards were present.

Links to oil

It is believed by many leading figures in the tanker industry that the collusion of authorities in Nigeria has meant that some of the stolen cargo from tankers has ended up in petrol stations in Nigeria, which have often been subject to varying supply. The Financial Times newspaper has reported that the theft of oil has grown into a vast and lucrative enterprise involving well-connected Nigerian officials and security personnel.

The increase in large-scale bunkering has occurred at the same time as the rising number

of kidnappings for ransom. Hostages are now commonly taken during oil bunkering, which can last several days as the pirated vessel is taken to another pirate-controlled ship while the fuel is transferred and taken elsewhere for sale.

Efforts to reduce attacks

The Nigerian Navy has significantly increased its presence offshore and stepped up its efforts to tackle the pirates. In August 2013 the Navy killed 18 pirates in a series of battles and arrested five.

There is also a new Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery Against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, signed in June 2013.

However Nigeria is the only country that possesses a frigate, corvette or aerial surveillance capability. The pirates have previously been able to adapt their tactics to succeed. Therefore, other states neighbouring Nigeria will become more vulnerable, as they have limited capacity to protect their coastal waters. It is imperative that regional states adopt a collaborative approach, otherwise the pirates are likely to continue to have success. ■

Ten things you should know about piracy in West Africa

By Jim Mainstone, head of intelligence at Gray Page, a specialist maritime intelligence, investigation and crisis management company

1. There are various types of maritime crime in West Africa, but only two that can be considered piracy – 'hijack for cargo theft' and 'kidnap for ransom'.
2. Hijack for cargo theft has traditionally been concentrated in the Bight of Benin (particularly the Lagos/Cotonou/Lome area) but there are signs that it is migrating further west and further south-east.
3. Kidnap for ransom has traditionally been concentrated in the Bight of Bonny, south of the Niger Delta region. However, some other areas, such as offshore Cameroon, have witnessed maritime kidnapping.
4. Kidnap for ransom pre-dates both hijack for cargo theft (December 2010 onwards) and the upsurge in Somali piracy (end of 2007 onwards). It is a less sophisticated form of piracy, which is typically linked to the criminal gangs that evolved out of militant groups in the Niger Delta. Stationary or slow moving vessels and platforms are at most risk.
5. Pirates who hijack ships to steal their cargo tend to target tankers loaded with petroleum products that can easily be sold in the West African black market, particularly in Nigeria. Prized cargoes are petrol, diesel and aviation fuel, and typically 3-8,000 metric tonnes are stolen (worth about USD1,000 per metric tonne). The pirates themselves are the tip of an iceberg — a sophisticated organised crime network, based in Nigeria, which can leverage maritime expertise, illegal lighter vessels, storage and distribution, and money laundering facilities.
6. In the case of hijack for cargo theft, the pirates and organised criminal networks behind them have access to specific intelligence, including the name and location of the target vessel, and the type of cargo it is loaded with. In some cases it is likely that corrupt individuals, involved with supporting local tanker operations — such as ship-to-ship (STS) transfer of cargo — pass specific intelligence to the pirates. The pirates will usually attack when the vessel is most vulnerable: at night and while drifting, at anchor or conducting STS. The pirates gain access using ladders and

hooked wooden poles, which can also be used to pull away weakly erected razor wire. They sometimes use violence against the crew.

7. West African piracy is different to Somali piracy. For example, the threat to a tanker conducting STS in the Bight of Benin is different to the threat to the same tanker transiting the Indian Ocean, as are the appropriate counter measures. Thus, masters in West Africa need to understand the specific threat(s) faced by their vessel, how their vessel operations might make them vulnerable, and the countermeasures that will actually reduce the risk.

8. Some acts of piracy in West Africa are a mutation of other types of maritime crime. For example, criminals have hijacked crew having originally intended to rob the vessel or steal cargo. Additionally, some vessels might have been hijacked by criminals who were initially engaged in fraud or black market activities with the crew.

9. Armed guarding options available in West Africa are limited and uncertain compared to those available in the Indian Ocean. An

owner has many factors to consider when deciding whether armed guards are appropriate: legal, insurance, flag state, the vulnerability of the vessel and crew, and the quality of the company employed to provide the service, to name but a few. In practical terms, there are concerns over the reliability and capability of some armed guards in the region. Furthermore, given that many of the armed guards would inevitably have to be police or navy personnel, there is some concern about the actions the relevant state might take against the owner, vessel or crew, should it feel that there is a case to answer for any incident that has occurred (for example, if a crew member injures an armed security guard or vice-versa).

10. It is often more difficult to communicate a threat incident to local security forces in the region than it is to naval forces operating against Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden. In some cases, even if the master or CSO (security officer) has contacted local security forces, they have been unwilling or unable to assist (for example, stating that their patrol vessels have limited range or asking for a payment to 'hire' assets, such as a patrol vessel or airplane).

Lifeboat safety

Deadly confusion over lifeboats

When does a lifeboat turn into a deathtrap? When its launch systems create potentially fatal risks for seafarers. John Bainbridge, former ITF permanent representative to the International Maritime Organization and a member of the Industry Lifeboat Group, reports on an ongoing maritime hazard



On 27 March 1980 the Alexander L. Kielland, a semi-submersible rig acting as a floating hotel for workers on the Norwegian continental shelf, collapsed with the subsequent loss of 123 lives. The primary reason given for the disaster was the failure of relatively untrained workers to operate the davit lifeboats and offload release hooks fitted to most lifeboats at the time.

Davit systems allowed lifeboats to be suspended over the side of the vessel and released on the water using a hook and eye system. Tragically however, of the four lifeboats launched from the Alexander L. Kielland that day, crew managed to release only one from the lowering cables.

With some urgency, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) reviewed the problem and introduced legislation requiring the fitting of onload release hooks, which are releasable above the water. Yet the new system brought its own difficulties. It not only

required a much more sophisticated hook compared to its fairly simple and robust predecessor, but also much more precise maintenance and operation.

In 2001 three flag states brought to the attention of the IMO 16 lifeboat accidents that had occurred during practice drills with the new system, over a period of five years. Many of the accidents had resulted in injuries to crew, some fatal. This concern was supported by evidence from various sections of the industry and the IMO maritime safety committee added a new item to its agenda: 'Prevention of accidents on lifeboats'.

The initial reaction of the manufacturers and many flag states was that poor training of crew and lack of maintenance must be primarily to blame. This was not borne out by the evidence. Incident reports indicated that many accidents were on fairly new ships with crew who were well-trained. It emerged also that no international record had been taken of these accidents and there was no system of feedback to ensure manufacturers became aware of and acted to rectify failures with their equipment.

An investigation by the maritime industry revealed around 80 different designs of onload release hooks. Some were so complex as to be totally impossible to operate and maintain, with a multitude of suppliers for the various component

parts, which were often incompatible with each other, and it was left to the shipyard to decide on the ultimate means of assembly. There was no standardised layout or operating procedure and even sister ships within the same company often used totally different systems. While it cannot be denied that ultimately human error has been a factor and good training is essential, it seems clear that many of these hooks were not fail safe and poor hook design was the primary reason for accidents.

At every stage of this long-running debate, the ITF has consistently argued that no seafarer's life should be at risk when training or conducting drills or maintenance. It continues to demand that boats being lowered or raised should have no crew onboard until all safety concerns are resolved.

Branko Berlan, ITF permanent representative to the IMO, explains: "Of course it makes sense to try to improve on designs with a bad track record, but what has happened with lifeboats is that so-called life saving equipment has become deadly. Seafarers are at serious risk from carrying out safety drills. The lack of a uniform approach has led to an unmanageable array of different mechanisms. Until such time as the matter is resolved safeguards must be put in place to protect seafarers from danger."

In order to ensure lifeboat safety for all seafarers, clarity must be brought

to legislation, which has for decades seen a proliferation of confusing guidance and direction to ships' masters.

Efforts are still being made to confront the issue. The Industry Lifeboat Group (ILG) — which represents all parties in the industry from shipowners and managers, to insurance groups, class societies and seafarers' representatives including the ITF — has been successful in forcing a complete review and assessment of different hooks on the market. This process has brought about the removal of many inadequate designs or major modifications to comply with a new set of criteria.

In its determination to put the seafarers' safety first, the ILG is still working on many outstanding issues. It has proposed a raft of measures, including secondary safety systems, standardisation of layout and operation and new maintenance requirements, with worldwide standards for service providers. Ultimately it may be that current technologies must give way to entirely new approaches to escape and survival following accidents on board vessels and rigs. But at the speed the maritime industry embraces change, this may be decades in the future. In the meantime, seafarers should not have to tolerate a situation in which lifeboat systems threaten life instead of sustaining it.

YOUR ITF GUIDE TO GETTING HELP



How to find a seafarers' union or an ITF inspector

Your first point of contact should be your union – if you are not a member, find out how to join one. If you need help straight away, or if you're a union member having difficulty getting hold of your union, contact an ITF inspector – all contact details can be found in this guide.

You can check ITF-affiliated unions on www.itfseafarers.org – click the tab 'Find an Inspector or Union'

If you have a mobile phone or tablet download your FREE app 'ITF Seafarers' now at www.itfseafarers.org/seafarer-apps.cfm

- Find contact details for the nearest ITF inspector, coordinator, or union
- Look up a ship and check conditions on board before you sign on

Download a free QR code on your SmartPhone and then scan this code.



Available on  

How to contact the ITF

The ITF runs a 24 hour global support line. The people answering your calls are multilingual and trained to deal with your issues. They will provide initial advice and refer problems and queries to the

best ITF resource – an inspector for example, or ITF head office.

In office hours, you can contact ITF London on **+44 (0)20 7940 9287**
ITF Seafarers' Support Line (24 hours): **+44 (0)20 7940 9280**

Before you call

Have the relevant information ready using the following checklist:

About You

- Name
- Position on board
- Nationality
- Contact details

About the ship

- Name
- Flag
- IMO number
- Current location
- Number of crew and nationality

About the problem

- Describe the problem
- How long have you been on board?
- Are all the crew experiencing the same problem?

Seafarers' centres

Seafarers' centres provide advice, someone to talk to, facilities to contact home and a place where you can relax away from the ship.

To find a seafarers' centre near you download the FREE app 'Shoreleave' at:

www.itfseafarers.org/seafarer-apps.cfm

Available on   

Getting hired Crewing agents

The Maritime Labour Convention says that private crewing agencies must be regulated. It prohibits: the charging of fees to seafarers for finding positions on board; the making of illegal deductions from wages; and the practice of blacklisting individuals. Shipowners must make sure the crewing agents they use meet these standards. If you have problems with agents, please contact us by email on: CrewingAlert@itf.org.uk

Before you sign a contract ITF advice on your contract to work at sea

The best guarantee of proper conditions of employment at sea is only to sign a contract drawn up in accordance with an ITF-approved collective agreement. Failing that, here is a checklist to follow.

Don't start work on a ship without having a **written contract**.

Never sign a blank contract, or a contract that binds you to any terms and conditions that are **not specified** or that you are not familiar with.

Check if the contract you are signing refers to a **collective bargaining agreement** (CBA). If so, make sure that you are fully aware of the terms of that CBA, and keep a copy of it along with your contract.

Make sure that the **duration of the contract** is clearly stated.

Don't sign a contract that allows for alterations to be made to the **contractual period** at the sole discretion of the shipowner. Any change to the agreed duration of the contract should be by mutual consent.

Always ensure that the contract clearly states the **basic wages** payable and make sure that the **basic working hours** are clearly defined (for example 40, 44 or 48 per week). The International Labour Organization (ILO) states that basic working hours should be a maximum of 48 per week (208 per month).

Make sure that the contract clearly stipulates how **overtime** will be paid and at what rate. There could be a flat hourly rate payable for all hours worked in excess of the basic. Or there may be a monthly fixed amount for a guaranteed number of overtime hours, in which case the rate for any hours worked beyond the

guaranteed overtime should be clearly stated. The ILO states that all overtime hours should be paid at a minimum of 1.25 x the normal hourly rate.

Make sure that the contract clearly states how many days' **paid leave** per month you will get. The ILO states that paid leave should not be less than 30 days per year (2.5 days per calendar month).

Make certain that the payments for basic wages, overtime and leave are clearly and **separately itemised** in the contract.

Check that your contract states that you are entitled to the costs of your **repatriation**. Never sign a contract that contains any clause stating that you are responsible for paying any portion of joining or repatriation expenses.

Don't sign a contract that allows the shipowner to withhold or retain any portion of your wages during the period of the contract. You should be entitled to **full payment of wages** earned at the end of each calendar month.

Be aware that an individual employment contract will not always include details of **additional benefits**. Therefore, try to obtain confirmation (preferably in the form of a written agreement or contractual entitlement) of what compensation will be payable in the event of:

- sickness or injury during the contractual period;
- death (amount payable to next of kin);

- loss of the vessel;
- loss of personal effects resulting from the loss of the vessel;
- premature termination of the contract.

Don't sign a contract that contains any clause that restricts your right to join, contact, consult with or be represented by a **trade union of your choice**.

Ensure that you are given and retain a **copy of the contract** you have signed.

Check the conditions for terminating your contract, including how much **notice** the shipowner must give you to terminate your contract.

Remember... whatever the terms and conditions, any contract/agreement that you enter into voluntarily would, in most jurisdictions, be considered **legally binding**.

To find out if your ship is covered by a ITF-approved agreement, go to itf.seafarers.org and click the tab 'Look Up a Ship'.

Use the new ITF Seafarer App for mobiles and tablets to look up a ship:
www.itfseafarer-apps.org



**International Transport
Workers' Federation**
www.itfseafarers.org

ITF inspectors listings

NAME	ROLE	COUNTRY	PORT	OFFICE PHONE	MOBILE PHONE	E-MAIL
Roberto Jorge Alarcón	Coordinator	Argentina	Rosario	+54(0)341 425 6695	+54(0)9 11 4414 5687	alarcon_roberto@itf.org.uk
Rodolfo Vidal	Inspector	Argentina	Buenos Aires	+54 (11) 4331 4043	+54(0)9 11 4414 5911	vidal_rodolfo@itf.org.uk
Agustin Suarez	Contact	Argentina	Buenos Aires	+54 (0) 11 4300 7852	+54(0)91140704002	suarez_agustin@itf.org.uk
Dean Summers	Coordinator	Australia	Sydney	+61(0)2 9267 9134	+61(0)419 934 648	summers_dean@itf.org.uk
Matt Purcell	Assistant Coordinator	Australia	Melbourne	+61(0)3 9329 5477	+61(0)418 387 966	purcell_matt@itf.org.uk
Graham Bragg	Inspector	Australia	Townsville	+61(0)7 4771 4311	+61(0)419 652 718	bragg_graham@itf.org.uk
Keith McCorriston	Inspector	Australia	Fremantle	+61(0)8 9335 0500	+61(0)422 014 861	mccorriston_keith@itf.org.uk
Ben West	Contact	Australia	Newcastle		+61(0)4 0037 3028	ben.templewest@gmail.com
Brian Gallagher	Contact	Australia	Brisbane	+61(0)7 554 78716	+61(0)414 799134	briangallagher63@hotmail.com
Roger Opdelocht	Coordinator	Belgium	Antwerp	+32(0)3 224 3411	+32 (0) 475 440 088	opdelocht_roger@itf.org.uk
Christian Roos	Inspector	Belgium	Zeebrugge	+32(0)2 549 11 03	+32(0)486 123 890	roos_christian@itf.org.uk
Marc Van-Noten	Inspector	Belgium	Antwerp	+32(0)3 224 3419	+32(0)475 775 700	van-noten_marc@itf.org.uk
Souradjou Foussemi	Contact	Benin	Cotonou	+229(0)97080213	+229(0)95192638	sfoussemi2002@yahoo.fr
Ali Zini	Inspector	Brazil	Paranagua	+55(0)41 34220703	+55(0)41 9998 0008	zini_ali@itf.org.uk
Renialdo de Freitas	Inspector	Brazil	Santos	+55(0)13 3232 2373	+55(0)13 99761 0611	defreitas_renialdo@itf.org.uk
Peter Lahay	Coordinator	Canada	Vancouver	+1(0)604 251 7174	+1(0)604 418 0345	lahay_peter@itf.org.uk
Vincent Giannopoulos	Inspector	Canada	Montreal	+1 514 931 7859	+1 514 970 4201	giannopoulos_vincent@itf.org.uk
Gerard Bradbury	Inspector	Canada	Halifax	+1(0)902 455 9327	+1(0)902 441 2195	bradbury_gerard@itf.org.uk
Juan Villalon Jones	Inspector	Chile	Valparaiso	+56(0)32 2217727	+56(0)992509565	villalon_juan@itf.org.uk
Miguel Sanchez	Inspector	Colombia	Barranquilla	+57(0)5 3795863	+57 (0) 310 657 3399	sanchez_miguel@itf.org.uk
Predrag Brazzoduro	Coordinator	Croatia	Rijeka	+385(0)51 325 343	+385(0)9 821 1960	brazzoduro_predrag@itf.org.uk
Romano Peric	Inspector	Croatia	Dubrovnik	+385 20 418 992	+385 99 266 2885	peric_romano@itf.org.uk
Milko Kronja	Inspector	Croatia	Sibenik	+385(0)22 200 320	+385(0)98 336 590	kronja_milko@itf.org.uk
Morten Bach	Inspector	Denmark	Copenhagen	+45(0)8920355	+45(0)21649562	bach_morten@itf.org.uk
Jens Fage-Pedersen	Inspector	Denmark	Copenhagen	+45(0)36 36 55 94	+45(0)22 808188	fage-pedersen_jens@itf.org.uk
Talaat Elseify	Inspector	Egypt	Port Said	+20(0)66 3324 100	+20(0)10 1638402	elseify_talaat@itf.org.uk
Jaanus Kuiv	Inspector	Estonia	Tallinn	+372(0)6116 392	+372(0)52 37 907	kuiv_jaanus@itf.org.uk
Simo Nurmi	Coordinator	Finland	Helsinki	+358(0)9 615 202 55	+358(0)40 580 3246	nurmi_simo@itf.org.uk
Jan Örn	Assistant Coordinator	Finland	Turku	+358(0)9 613 110	+358(0)40 523 33 86	orn_jan@itf.org.uk
Ilpo Minkkinen	Inspector	Finland	Helsinki	+358(0)9 615 20 253	+358(0)40 7286932	minkkinen_ilpo@itf.org.uk
Kenneth Bengts	Inspector	Finland	Helsinki	+358(0)9 615 20 258	+358(0)40 455 1229	bengts_kenneth@itf.org.uk
Francois Caillou	Coordinator	France	Le Havre	+33(0)2 35 26 63 73	+33(0)6 08 94 87 94	caillou_francois@itf.org.uk
Pascal Pouille	Assistant Coordinator	France	Dunkirk	+33(0)3 28 21 32 89	+33(0)6 80 23 95 86	pouille_pascal@itf.org.uk
Yves Reynaud	Inspector	France	Marseille	+33(0)4 915 499 37	+33(0)6 07 68 16 34	reynaud_yves@itf.org.uk
Geoffroy Lamade	Inspector	France	St Nazaire	+33(0)2 40 22 54 62	+33(0)660 30 12 70	lamade_geoffroy@itf.org.uk
Laure Tallonneau	Inspector	France	Brest	+33(0)2 98 85 21 65	+33(0)6 85 65 52 98	tallonneau_laure@itf.org.uk
Merab Chijavadze	Inspector	Georgia	Batumi	+995(0)5 222 70177	+995(0)5 93 261303	chijavadze_merab@itf.org.uk
Ruud Touwen	Coordinator	Germany	Berlin		+49(0)15161335894	touwen_ruud@itf.org.uk
Susan Linderkamp	Assistant Coordinator	Germany	Bremen	+49(0)421 330 33 33	+49(0)1511 2 666 006	linderkamp_susan@itf.org.uk
Sven Hemme	Inspector	Germany	Bremen	+49 421 330 33 30	+49 1512 7 037 384	hemme_sven@itf.org.uk
Ulf Christiansen	Inspector	Germany	Hamburg	+49(0)40 2800 6811	+49(0)171 64 12 694	christiansen_ulf@itf.org.uk
Karin Friedrich	Inspector	Germany	Hamburg	+49(0)40 2800 6812	+49(0)170 85 08 695	friedrich_karin@itf.org.uk
Hamani Amadou	Inspector	Germany	Rostock	+49(0)381 670 0046	+49(0)170 7603862	amadou_hamani@itf.org.uk
Stamatis Kourakos	Coordinator	Greece	Piraeus	+30(0)210 411 6610 / 6604	+30(0)6 9 77 99 3709	kourakos_stamatis@itf.org.uk
Costas Halas	Inspector	Greece	Piraeus	+30(0)210 411 6610 / 6604	+30(0)6944 297 565	halas_costas@itf.org.uk
Januario Jose Biague	Contact	Guinea-Bissau	Bissau		+245(0)5905895	bia_januar@yahoo.com.br
Yu-Sak Ming	Inspector	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	+852 2541 8133	+852 9352 8651	yu-sak.ming@itf.org.uk
Jason Lam Wai Hong	Contact	Hong Kong	Hong Kong	+852 2541 8133	85297353579	lam_jason@itf.org.uk
Jónas Gardarsson	Inspector	Iceland	Reykjavik	+354(0)551 1915; +354(0)551 4159	+354(0)892 79 22	gardarsson_jonas@itf.org.uk
Louis Gomes	Inspector	India	Mumbai	+91 22 22618368	+91 8080556373	gomes_louis@itf.org.uk
Chinmoy Roy	Inspector	India	Calcutta	+91(0)33 2459 1312	+91(0)98300 43094	roy_chinmoy@itf.org.uk
Narayan Adhikary	Inspector	India	Haldia	+91(0)3224 252203	+91(0)9434517316	naravanhaldiaitf@gmail.com
B V Ratnam	Inspector	India	Visakhapatnam	+91(0)8912 502 695; +91(0)8912 552 592	+91(0)9 8481 980 25	ratnam_bv@itf.org.uk
K Sree Kumar	Inspector	India	Chennai	+91(0)44 2522 3539	+91(0)9381001311	kumar_sree@itf.org.uk
Thomas Sebastian	Inspector	India	Kochi	+91(0)484 2338249; +91(0)484 2338476 +91(0)484 2700503	+91(0)98950 48607	sebastian_thomas@itf.org.uk
Kersi Parekh	Inspector	India	Mumbai	+91(0)22 2261 6951	+91(0)98205 04971	parekh_kersi@itf.org.uk
Mukesh Vasu	Contact	India	Kandla	+91(0)2836 226 581	+91(0)94272 67843	vasu_mukesh@itf.org.uk
Terence Fernando	Contact	India	Tuticorin	+91(0)461 233 9195	+91(0)9940 767323	fernando_terence@itf.org.uk
Michael Shwartzman	Inspector	Israel	Haifa	+972(0)4 8512231	+972(0) 54699282	shwartzman_michael@itf.org.uk
Francesco Di Fiore	Coordinator	Italy	Genoa	+39(0)10 25 18 675	+39(0)33 1670 8367	diore_francesco@itf.org.uk
Gianbattista Leoncini	Inspector	Italy	Taranto	+39(0)99 4707 555	+39(0)335 482 703	leoncini_gianbattista@itf.org.uk
Paolo Serrettiello	Inspector	Italy	Naples	+39(0)81 265021	+39(0)335 482 706	serrettiello_paolo@itf.org.uk
Bruno Nazzari	Inspector	Italy	Livorno	+39(0)586 072379	+39(0)335 612 9643	nazzari_bruno@itf.org.uk
Francesco Saitta	Inspector	Italy (Sicily)	Palermo	+39(0)91 321 745	+39(0)338 698 4978	saitta_francesco@itf.org.uk
Paolo Siligato	Inspector	Italy	Trieste		+39(0)3484454343	siligato_paolo@itf.org.uk
Joachim Mel Djedje-Li	Contact	Ivory Coast	Abidjan	+225(0)21 35 72 17	+225 07 88 00 83	dmjoachim@yahoo.fr
Calixte Kodjara	Contact	Ivory Coast	San Pedro		+225(0)08 17 60 65	calixtekodjara@yahoo.fr
Kape Hie	Contact	Ivory Coast	San Pedro		+225(0)44 25 43 01	kapehie5@gmail.com
Fusao Ohoi	Coordinator	Japan	Tokyo	+81(0)3 5410 8320	+81(0)90 6949 5469	ohoi_fusao@itf.org.uk
Shigeru Fujiki	Inspector	Japan	Chiba	+81(0)3 3735 0392	+81(0)90 9826 9411	fujiki_shigeru@itf.org.uk
Toshihiro Ame	Inspector	Japan	Osaka	+81(0)6 6616 5116	+81(0)90 4673 5671	ame_toshihiro@itf.org.uk
Betty Makena Mutugi	Inspector	Kenya	Mombasa	+254(0)41 2491974	+254(0)721 425828	mutugi_betty@itf.org.uk
Hye Kyung Kim	Coordinator	Korea	Seoul	+82(0)2 716 2764	+82(0)10 5441 1232	kim_hk@itf.org.uk
Bae Jung Ho	Inspector	Korea	Pusan	+82(0)51 463 4828	+82(0)10 3832 4628	bae_jh@itf.org.uk
Kyoung-Woo Jang	Inspector	Korea	Incheon	+82(0)32 881 9880	+82(0)10 5268 9346	jang_kw@itf.org.uk
Norbert Petrovskis	Inspector	Latvia	Riga	+371(0)67709242	+371(0)29215136	petrovskis_norbert@itf.org.uk



ITF inspectors

Helping seafarers around the world



For full contact details of ITF inspectors go to www.itfglobal.org/seafarers/msg-contacts.cfm

International Transport Workers' Federation



ITF AFRICA

NAIROBI, KENYA
 Tel: +254 20 374 2774/5
 Email: nairobi@itf.org.uk

ITF AFRICA (FRANCOPHONE)

OUAGADOUGOU
 Tel: +226 (0) 50 301 979
 Email: itfwak@fasonet.bf

ITF ARAB WORLD

AMMAN, JORDAN
 Tel: +962(0)6 5821366
 Email: arab-world@itf.org.uk

ITF ASIA PACIFIC

DELHI OFFICE
 Tel:+91 (0) 11 2335 4408 / 7423
 or 11 2373 1669
 Email: itfindia@vsnl.com
 TOKYO OFFICE
 Tel:+81 (0) 337 982 770
 Email: mail@itftokyo.org
 ITF SYDNEY OFFICE
 Tel:+61 420 928 780
 Tel: +64 21 227 1519

ITF ASIA PACIFIC (SYDNEY)

Townsville
 Brisbane
 Newcastle
 Melbourne
 Wellington

ITF inspectors listings continued

NAME	ROLE	COUNTRY	PORT	OFFICE PHONE	MOBILE PHONE	E-MAIL
Andrey Chernov	Inspector	Lithuania	Klaipeda	+370(0)46 410447	+370(0)699 28198	chernov_andrey@itf.org.uk
Paul Falzon	Contact	Malta	Valletta	+356 79969670	+356 79969670	falzon_paul@itf.org.uk
Honorio Alberto Galvan Aguilar	Inspector	Mexico	Manzanillo	+52(0)314 332 8834	+52(0)1 314 122 9212	galvan_honorio@itf.org.uk
Enrique Lozano	Inspector	Mexico	Veracruz	+52(0)229 932 1367 / 3023	+52(0)1 229 161 0700	lozano_enrique@itf.org.uk
Tomislav Markolovic	Contact	Montenegro	Bar	+382(0)30 341 818	+382(0)69 032 257	markolovic_tomislav@itf.org.uk
Ruud Touwen	Coordinator	Netherlands	Rotterdam		+31(0)6 533 15072	touwen_ruud@itf.org.uk
Debbie Klein	Inspector	Netherlands	Rotterdam		+31(0)6 53 182 734	klein_debbie@itf.org.uk
Aswin Noordermeer	Inspector	Netherlands	Rotterdam		+31(0)6 53 337522	noordermeer_aswin@itf.org.uk
Grahame McLaren	Inspector	New Zealand	Wellington	+64(0)4 801 7613	+64(0)21 292 1782	mlaren_grahame@itf.org.uk
Henry Akinrolabu	Inspector	Nigeria	Lagos	+234(0)803 835 9368	+234(0)803 835 9368	akinrolabu_henry@itf.org.uk
Goodlife Elo Okoro	Contact	Nigeria	Lagos		+234(0)1 774 0532	utoro2good2007@yahoo.co.uk
Deborah Adekemi Akinware	Contact	Nigeria	Lagos		+234 708 7331148	ambassadordeborah@gmail.com
Cyril A Nzekwe	Contact	Nigeria	Lagos		+234 803 3091087	cyril.azuka@yahoo.com
Omeiza Jimoh Umar	Contact	Nigeria	Lagos		+234 708 7331148	umaroj2008@yahoo.com
Akintunde Oladipo Leoso	Contact	Nigeria	Lagos		+234 805 3367779	akinmacleo@yahoo.com
Angelica Gjestrum	Coordinator	Norway	Oslo	+47(0)22 82 58 24	+47(0)9 77 29 357	gjestrum_angelica@itf.org.uk
Aage Baerheim	Inspector	Norway	Stavanger	+47(0)51 84 05 49	+47(0)90 75 5776	baerheim_aage@itf.org.uk
Truls M Vik Steder	Inspector	Norway	Porsgrunn	+47(0)35 54 82 40	+47(0)90 98 04 87	stedler_truls@itf.org.uk
Tore Steine	Inspector	Norway	Bergen	+47(0)55 23 00 59	+47(0)907 68 115	steine_tore@itf.org.uk
Luis Fruto	Inspector	Panama	Cristobal	+507(0)264 5101	+507(0)6617 8525	fruto_luis@itf.org.uk
Joselito Pedaria	Inspector	Philippines	Cebu City	+63(0)241 618 572	+63(0)920 9700 168	pedaria_joselito@itf.org.uk
Rodrigo Aguinaldo	Inspector	Philippines	Manila	+63(0)2 536 8287	+63(0)917 8111 763	aguinaldo_rodrigo@itf.org.uk
Andrzej Koscik	Inspector	Poland	Gydnia	+48(0)586218543	+48(0)602 233 619	koscik_andrzej@itf.org.uk
Adam Mazurkiewicz	Inspector	Poland	Szczecin	+48(0)91 4239707	+48(0)501 539329	mazurkiewicz_adam@itf.org.uk
João de Deus Gomes Pires	Inspector	Portugal	Lisbon	+351(0)21 391 8181	+351(0)91 936 4885	pires_joao@itf.org.uk
Felipe Garcia Cortijo	Inspector	Puerto Rico	San Juan	+1787(0)783 1755	+1787(0)410 1344	garcia_felipe@itf.org.uk
Adrian Mihalciou	Inspector	Romania	Constanta	+40(0)241 618 587	+40(0)722 248 828	mihalciou_adrian@itf.org.uk
Sergey Fishov	Coordinator	Russia	St Petersburg	+7(0)812 718 6380	+7(0)911 096 9383	fishov_sergey@itf.org.uk
Petr Osichansky	Inspector	Russia	Vladivostock	+7(0)4232 512 485	+7(0)4232 706485	osichansky_petr@itf.org.uk
Kiril Pavlov	Inspector	Russia	St. Petersburg	+7(0)812 718 6380	+7(0)911 929 04 26	pavlov_kiril@itf.org.uk
Vadim Mamontov	Inspector	Russia	Kaliningrad	+7(0)4012 656 840/475	+7(0)9062 38 68 58	mamontov_vadim@itf.org.uk
Olga Ananina	Inspector	Russia	Novorossiysk	+7(0)8617 612556	+7(0)9887 621232	ananina_olga@itf.org.uk
Mouhamed Diagne	Contact	Senegal	Dakar	+221(0)775364071	+221(0)775364071	mazurkiewicz_adam@gmail.com
Seydina Keita	Contact	Senegal	Dakar		+221(0)776926408	fatima200817@live.fr
Sergey Eledinov	Contact	Senegal	Dakar		+221(0)774427906	eledinov@gmail.com
Gwee Guo Duan	Contact	Singapore	Singapore	+65(0)6390 1611	+65(0)9823 4979	duan_gwee@itf.org.uk
Daniel Tan Keng Hui	Contact	Singapore	Singapore	+65(0)6379 5666	+65(0)9616 5983	tan_daniel@itf.org.uk
Cassiem Augustus	Inspector	South Africa	Cape Town	+27(0)21 461 9410	+27(0)82 773 6366	augustus_cassiem@itf.org.uk
Jose M Ortega	Coordinator	Spain	Algeciras	+34(0)956 657 046	+34(0)699 436 503	ortega_jose@itf.org.uk
Joan Mas Garcia	Inspector	Spain	Barcelona	+34(0)93 481 27 66	+34(0)629 302 503	mas_joan@itf.org.uk
Mohamed Arrachedi	Inspector	Spain	Bilbao	+34(0)944 93 5659	+34(0)629 419 007	arrachedi_mohamed@itf.org.uk
Luz Baz	Inspector	Spain	Vigo	+34(0)986 221 177	+34(0)660 682 164	baz_luz@itf.org.uk
Juan Ramon Garcia	Inspector	Spain	Valencia	+34(0)96 367 06 45	+34(0)628 565 184	garcia_juan@itf.org.uk
Ranjan Perera	Inspector	Sri Lanka	Colombo	+94(0)112583040	94(0) 773 147005	perera_ranjan@itf.org.uk
Annica Barning	Coordinator	Sweden	Stockholm		+46(0)70 57 49 714	barning_annica@itf.org.uk
Göran Larsson	Assistant Coordinator	Sweden	Gothenburg	+46(0)10 480 3114	+46(0)70 626 7788	larsson_goran@itf.org.uk
Haakan Andre	Inspector	Sweden	Norrköping	+46(0)8 791 4100	+46(0)70 574 2223	andre_hakan@itf.org.uk
Sven Save	Inspector	Sweden	Helsingborg		+46(0)70 57 49 713	save_sven@itf.org.uk
Goran Nilsson	Inspector	Sweden	Gothenburg	+46(0)10 480 31 21	+46(0)76 100 65 12	nilsson_goran@itf.org.uk
Fredrik Bradd	Inspector	Sweden	Umea	+46(0)10 4803103	+46(0)761006445	bradd_fredrik@itf.org.uk
Sanders Chang	Inspector	Taiwan	Taichung	+886(0)2658 4514	+886(0)955 415 705	chang_sanders@itf.org.uk
Tse-Ting Tu	Inspector	Taiwan	Kaoshiung	+886(7)5212380	+886(0)988513979	tu_tse-ting@itf.org.uk
Franck Akpossi	Contact	Togo	Lome		+228(0)90 04 24 07	paxhominibus@hotmail.com
Paulin Beguedou Kokou	Contact	Togo	Lome		+228(0)9473113	sann.paolo@yahoo.fr
Muzaffer Civelek	Inspector	Turkey	Istanbul	+90(0)216 4945175	+90(0)535 663 3124	civelek_muzaffer@itf.org.uk
Nataliya Yefrimenko	Inspector	Ukraine	Odessa	+380(0)482 429 901	+380(0)50 336 6792	yefrimenko_nataliya@itf.org.uk
Ken Fleming	Coordinator	UK & Ireland	Dublin	+353(0)1 85 86 317	+353(0)87 64 78636	fleming_ken@itf.org.uk
Darren Procter	Inspector	UK & Ireland	Southampton		+44 (0)7949 246219	procter_darren@itf.org.uk
Gerard Flanagan	Inspector	UK & Ireland	Dublin	+353 (0)1 8588214	+353 (0)879890791	flanagan_gerard@itf.org.uk
Liam Wilson	Inspector	UK & Ireland	Aberdeen	+44 (0)1224 582 688	+44 (0)7539 171323	wilson_liam@itf.org.uk
Tommy Molloy	Inspector	UK & Ireland	Liverpool	+44(0)151 639 8454	+44(0)776 418 2768	molloy_tommy@itf.org.uk
Paul Keenan	Inspector	UK & Ireland	Hull		+44(0)7710073880	keenan_paul@itf.org.uk
Dwayne Boudreaux	Coordinator	USA	New Orleans	+1(0)504 581 3196 (ext.7)	+1(0)504 442 1556	boudreaux_dwayne@itf.org.uk
Enrico Esopa	Coordinator	USA	New York	+1(0)718 499 6600 ext. 240	+1(0)201 417 2805	esopa_enrico@itf.org.uk
Jeff Engels	Coordinator	USA	Seattle	+1(0)206 633 1614	+1(0)206 331 2134	engels_jeff@itf.org.uk
John Metcalfe	Contact	USA	Portland	+1(0)207 785 4531	+1(0)207 691 5253	metcalfe_john@itf.org.uk
Michael Baker	Contact	USA	Cleveland	+1(0)216 781 7816	+1(0)440 667 5031	baker_michael@itf.org.uk
Tony Sasso	Inspector	USA	Port Canaveral	+1(0)321 784 0686	+1(0)321 258 8217	sasso_tony@itf.org.uk
Lila Smith	Inspector	USA	Seattle	+1(0)206 533 0995	+1(0)206 818 1195	smith_lila@itf.org.uk
Arthur Petitpas	Inspector	USA	Baltimore	+1(0)410 882 3977	+1(0)443 562 3110	petitpas_arthur@itf.org.uk
Tony Sacco	Inspector	USA	Morehead City	+1(0)910 859 8222	+1(0)910 859 3153	sacco_tony@itf.org.uk
Shwe Tun Aung	Inspector	USA	Houston	+1(0)713 659 5152	+1(0)713 447 0438	aung_shwe@itf.org.uk
Stefan Mueller-Dombois	Inspector	USA	Los Angeles	+1(0)562-493-8714	+1(0)562 673 9786	mueller_stefan@itf.org.uk
Martin D. Larson	Inspector	USA	Portland		+1(0)503 347 7775	larson_martin@itf.org.uk

Thinking of taking industrial action?

Read this first

The ITF is committed to assisting seafarers serving on flag of convenience ships to get just wages and proper collective agreement coverage.

Sometimes seafarers have to resort to legal action in local courts. On other occasions boycott action may be taken against a ship. Different actions are right for different places. The right action in one country may very well be wrong in another.

Contact the local representative of the ITF for guidance. You will find contact email addresses and phone numbers in the centre of this bulletin. You should also seek local legal advice before you take any action.

In some countries, the law actually works against you and your fellow crew members if

you take strike action, and in such a case, the local ITF union representatives will explain this to you.

In many more countries, the key to winning a dispute is strike action. Once again, this depends on the local advice you receive. You have the legal right to strike in many countries, so long as your ship is in port and not at sea.

In any strike action it is important to remember to remain disciplined, peaceful and united. And remember, the right to strike is a basic human right guaranteed, in many countries, by the law or constitution.

Whatever you choose to do, don't forget to talk to the local ITF representatives before you take any action. Working together, we can win the battle for justice and basic rights.

Maritime accidents

There are international guidelines to ensure seafarers are treated fairly if their ship is involved in a maritime accident – whether by the shipowners, the port, the coastal state, the flag state or their own country's laws. Here are your rights if this happens to you:

- You have the right to a lawyer. Ask for one before answering any questions or making any statements, since these could be used against you in any future legal case.**
- You must be able to understand what's being said – ask the authorities to stop the questioning if you don't understand. If you have difficulties because of the language being used, ask for an interpreter.**
- Your company has an obligation to assist you – contact your company and/or union for advice and assistance.**

More information at: www.itfglobal.org/fairtreatment

Too good to be true

Fancy a job at sea? No skills required? Thousands of dollars a month? Of course you do. Who wouldn't? Which raises the question of why someone with such a great post to offer needed to email you about it unannounced. Sam Dawson, ITF press and editorial manager, warns would-be recruits to watch out for scams

"Dear Sir/Ma'am, I send you this contract from Goodjobs Consultants on behalf of employer Chevron UK or Chevron Nigeria Limited. I would like to verify the authenticity of this. Please withhold my identity to prevent my application being denied or refused. They want me to sign ASAP. Urgent...urgent, hoping for you reaction ASAP. Thanks, God bless".

That is one of many messages received by the ITF checking out a supposed job offer. We were able to prevent the person who sent it losing all their money. Mostly that's what happens. In this case from 2005 though it was too late:

"Today I see a ITF warning but already I made the fatal mistake to send an amount of 750 euros to them as agent fee for the offered job position."

That applicant lost his cash. The ship he hoped to join didn't exist. Nor did the recruitment agency. The premises where it was supposedly based were really a pet shop. We were in time though to stop him sending the further USD2,500 he had been told he needed to pay to the Nigerian government in order to get permission to work.

Which is typical. Once you pay a scammer, the demands never stop. Send money for 'registration' and they'll ask for more for a visa. Scrape together the cash for that and they'll

come back to you for money towards the air fare. Or a medical inspection. Or a job finder's fee. Always with the warning that if you don't make this one last contribution you'll lose what you've already paid. The poorer, the more desperate you are, the more they like it.

The fraudsters are rarely, if ever, prosecuted. Their risks are low, their outgoings negligible: a free email account, a few fake websites, maybe a bribe here and there to the local law enforcement. As fast as they are exposed they can invent another fictitious recruitment agency or set up another fake website.

Common sense

Luckily they have one weakness – common sense. If a job offer looks too good to be true then it almost certainly is. Just don't send money for a job at sea. You should never be asked to: international maritime conventions, prohibit the charging of fees to seafarers in return for finding a job. Employers with great, well paid jobs to offer don't need to send emails out at random to fill them.

The same need for caution applies to 'jobs' on offer via supposed shipping or recruitment company websites. The fraudsters are relentlessly copying genuine sites, even cut and pasting advice on how to avoid scams, and inviting applicants to send that 'one-off' first fee via bank transfer, Western Union or MoneyGram.

They also post fake jobs on real but free-to-use websites.

In every case you need to ask why a legitimate firm is asking you for money. Why would a cruise line need to borrow out of your first month's wages to pay your airfare? Why would an international recruitment agency suddenly ask you to pay a visa fee via wire transfer (real visa requirements are easily checked on government websites and via embassies)?

Many current frauds are linked to Nigeria, some to Ghana and Malaysia, with Eastern Europe a major growth area. But be aware that a well organised scam run from, say, Nigeria (as in the case of the seafarer above who lost 750 euros) will disguise that fact by claiming to be a legitimate company based in the UK, the USA, Australia or Canada.

Spot the scam

How do you spot a fake? There are a number of giveaways. Fraudsters aren't always the cleverest people out there, even if they are among the most pitilessly immoral. The easiest first step before you apply for any job is to run the company name through Google, adding the word 'scam', then 'fraud', then 'warning'. Check with others, check the ship details, visit the forums and websites that share advice and information – a list is in the box on this page. Look out too, for these common signs that the operation is not genuine:

- Any request for money, irrespective of its nature
- Any request for your bank details. Give them and you'll find your account emptied
- Offers to post your CV for free – this can be an invitation to identity fraud, especially if you're also asked to provide copies of documents such as a passport, qualifications etc
- Telephone numbers beginning 70. No UK-based firm has a main phone number beginning +44 70 or +44 (0) 70: it's an international redirect number. A good example is +447024021763, which is associated with six different scams
- 'Toll free' telephone numbers that could be used to make you pay a premium rate for your call
- Mobile phone numbers, especially if given as the main contact for a supposed office
- Email addresses from free providers such as gmail, globomail, Yahoo etc
- Misspelt and ungrammatical messages
- Recently set-up websites. Scammers regularly launch sites that look like those of reputable companies. Find the real one, look for warnings on it and contact the real headquarters if you're in any doubt

Any of these danger signals should sound an alarm. But in the end it can be even simpler than that. The golden rule hasn't changed: if a job offer or advert looks too good to be true – then it usually is. ■

More information

If it looks too good to be true it usually is
www.itfseafarers.org/job_scams.cfm

Good advice on warning signs to look out for www.scam-job-emails.tk

More advice and a forum to discuss

suspected scams www.fraudwatchers.org

List of known scam 'companies' (but be aware that as soon as one is exposed it is likely to be renamed)

www.cruiselinesjobs.com/cruise-ship-jobs-scam

UK Recruitment Industry Counter-Fraud

Forum www.safer-jobs.com

UK national fraud reporting centre

www.actionfraud.police.uk

Suspicious telephone numbers

www.scammertelephonenumberblogspot.co.uk

www.fraudwatchers.org/forums/view.php?pg=fw_personal_nos

ITF look up a ship app

www.itfseafarers.org/seafarer-apps.cfm

Inspector profile

Jang Kyoung Woo is an ITF inspector based at the port of Incheon, near the South Korean capital of Seoul. Prior to joining the inspectorate in 2010, he served for six years on board merchant vessels as an officer employed by Hanjin Shipping.



Looking back, how do you remember your time as a seafarer?

There were pros and cons. Sometimes it is very lonely. On the other hand, I have been to lots of countries in the world; it has been a precious experience in my life.

At what point did you decide you wanted to become an inspector?

I once saw an ITF inspector inspect my ship. At the time, I didn't know what inspectors do exactly. But when I saw a job opening for an ITF inspector in Korea, I searched the internet for more information and I decided to apply.

What attracted you to the job? I know seafarers' lives. I think it is easy to do this job if you understand how seafarers work, how they live on a vessel, what their concerns are.

What other qualities do you need? As well as maritime knowledge, competence in English is essential so you can have conversations with seafarers and colleagues.

How do you overcome it when a seafarer doesn't speak English? In Incheon port there are lots of small vessels, trading between China, Japan and Korea only. Most of their crews, and especially Chinese crews, don't know English and they don't intend to learn. So I have tried to learn a little Chinese for conversation. If there are also western seafarers on board the ship, I try to have a more fluent conversation with them, in English, so that I can understand their problems.

What things do you most enjoy in your work? I am happy when I solve a crew's problem; it makes me feel worthwhile. Sometimes, seafarers stay in touch with me after they are repatriated to their country – it is a good feeling.

What normally happens when you first go on board a ship?

I show my ID in port, in front of the gangway, and to all crew nearby. After carrying out an inspection with the master, I usually go down and stop by the recreation room, the mess room, the galley and sometimes I go on deck, to meet the crew.

How do you find crews react to you? They appreciate the chance to have a conversation directly, face-to-face, without the master or anyone listening. They tell me their grievances – sometimes it is just small things, but they really appreciate it.

Do you see any changes since the MLC came into force?

In Korea there are no big changes because we haven't yet ratified. And when the ship's flag state has not ratified, there is no change in the working conditions, which are often terrible. However, the shipping companies are aware of the MLC. I use it in the negotiation with the company about the crew's problems, such as delays to paying wages, repatriation and so on.

Tell me about a typical dispute. There are many over back wages. Sometimes the crew take action by refusing to allow cargo working. They close the hatch cover to prevent any cargo discharging. I support them. I contact the owner directly, anywhere in the world. And I report the situation to the port authority, the dockers' union and any other associated organisation.

How long do the disputes tend to last? Usually, I solve them in a day. Because when crews refuse to allow cargo working for even one day, the company has too much to lose – there are charges, losses, so they pay the back wages. Twelve hours is usually enough to show our power.

How many times have you intervened to get back pay in last three years? So many times, I can't count them.

Do you always succeed? Until now I have never failed, fortunately. Because, if finally the crew find no way to get their wages, we help them arrange lawyers to auction the vessel. Sometimes it takes a long time – one year, two years, but finally they get their money.

Are crews always willing to work with you? Not always. Sometimes, the crew will trust the owner. Even if they don't give them any money for three months, four months, the seafarers still believe the company will pay. Normally it happens in two groups: one group believes the owners, one group doesn't believe them any more.

What advice would you give a seafarer who may be unsure of who to believe? You should be paid every month. If your company has delayed payment for two, three months, the proper authorities should know – please call the ITF inspector and ask for help.

What's the hardest thing about your job? It's not hard for me – I trust this job. Still, for all inspectors there are some difficulties: we cannot take a complete rest, even during holidays, because each and every hour ships operate in the world.

What do you do when not working? I like to exercise; I go swimming. I study English every day. I am also now at university in the evenings, studying for a law degree.

Once you have your law degree, do you think you will continue as an inspector? Yes, of course. And when I have more time I will try to learn more Chinese. There are many Chinese seafarers, and I feel cannot help them if I cannot communicate with them. So I think that is my next big challenge to overcome.

Dockers: Heavy conscience

When container weights are inaccurately labelled, dangers arise along the entire supply chain. The ITF is leading the way in a campaign to ensure the enforcement of new safety rules, says Jessie Fenn-Samuelsen, ITF dockers' section strategic campaigns coordinator



Far too often the actual weight of a goods container turns out not to be the same as the weight declared on its manifest.

An accurate understanding of weight is clearly crucial to the tasks of loading, unloading and transporting goods, which may include dangerous or hazardous cargo. Stowing containers on vessels is a technical and specialist job that should ensure the safe transportation of goods. Where weights are wrong, there could be serious consequences — from lifting injuries, leaks and goods damage to the sinking of ships.

These are dangers with potentially heavy human costs: for dockers and porters lifting overweight boxes, for seafarers who are at risk of accidents at sea, for truck and train drivers carrying the load on land — and

members of the public who will also be affected by any road or rail accidents that result.

In addition, there are potential problems with damage to machinery, equipment and transport infrastructure such as roads and railtracks, as well as issues around financial losses, export tax avoidance, insurance claims, loss of containers overboard and environmental damage.

A recent decision at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) introduced an amendment to the Safety Of Life At Sea convention (SOLAS) in a bid to improve the system. As a result, the convention now includes a requirement for containers either to be weighed when fully packed or to have the weight of their contents certified and added to their weight when empty.

“Since the issue of container weights affects transport workers across the supply chain, the ITF campaign joins together dockers, seafarers, railway workers and workers on the roads.”



Any attempt to improve safety must be welcomed. However, the ITF is concerned that the amended convention still fails to provide clarity on the question of enforcement, or put any penalties in place for those who misdeclare the weight of a container. So long as this situation continues the threat to all those working and living along the supply chain remains.

An ITF proposal that the amendment should require mandatory weighing was heralded as the ‘gold standard’, but rejected by IMO members on the grounds that it demanded too much, too soon. Still, this remains the ITF position – that there should be mandatory weighing of packed containers before they are loaded onto a vessel.

The most logical place for weighing to happen is at the

port, although responsibility for checking lies all along the supply chain, especially where containers are packed and sealed. Any containers that are misdeclared and pose a threat to safety should not be loaded. Knowing that a container could be returned or left on the quayside would surely be an effective deterrent to anyone considering misdeclaring its weight.

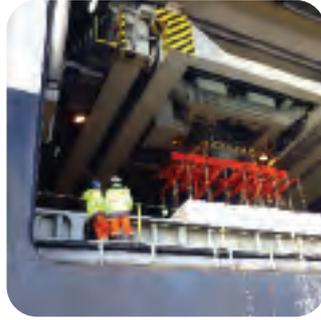
Since the issue of container weights affects transport workers across the supply chain, the ITF campaign joins together dockers, seafarers, railway workers and workers on the roads. Unions are working together and with industry partners and civil campaign groups to raise awareness of the dangers of misdeclared container weights for transport workers, members of the public and the environment alike. ■



JOIN THE SAFETY CAMPAIGN FOR CONTAINER WEIGHT REGULATION

ITF affiliates are now taking charge of the campaign and lobbying their national governments to implement regulation and penalties for container weight misdeclaration. Get involved in the campaign and protect your safety! Visit

www.itfglobal.org/road-transport/containersafety.cfm



No automation without consultation

Automating some functions can make sense in a busy port, but technology should be about safety and progress, not an excuse for attacking organised labour, says Jessie Fenn-Samuelsen

When should technology take over the role of human labour? In the ports industry, this has become a pressing and vexed question. Some automated systems, including gate operation, security and scheduling, have been around for many years. More recently however, automated machinery is beginning to replace work traditionally done by dock workers, such as crane and non-road vehicle operation.

Unions are working hard to protect dockers' jobs in the face of these changes, but it appears that, in many instances, automated systems are being introduced primarily as a way to bring down costs and weaken organised labour.

In Europe, where a large number of terminals are already semi-automated, some ITF-affiliated unions have been able to negotiate with employers to secure jobs for existing members. Unions in countries such as Japan, Korea and Australia have also negotiated successfully when automation has been introduced. In the US, the ILWU and ILA have secured clauses in their collective bargaining agreements ensuring that workers who are

displaced by automation will be redeployed or retrained.

Saudi Arabia, Germany and the Netherlands all host examples of the growing number of fully-automated ports; it's a very expensive option, currently well beyond the budgets of many operators, yet almost three per cent of ports in the world are already fully automated and new models are being built. Terminals like these employ a minimal number of staff who operate systems remotely, sometimes from locations away from the port itself.

The ITF-affiliated FNV union in the Netherlands has been negotiating on this issue for years, having represented workers at the port of Rotterdam — one of the first ports in the world to be fully automated. FNV's approach is to safeguard jobs, helping workers move into new roles such as control tower, mechanics, security and maintenance work and ensuring where possible that changes lead to improvements in working conditions.

ITF affiliates are concerned that automation, which is now rapidly on the rise, is being used as a way to rid the ports industry of strong unions. This worrying situation also affects seafarers — who generally do not welcome the prospect of coming into a port with no dockers. Often ITF inspectors find seafarers coming in to port who have not been paid, living and working in sub-standard conditions; they rely on the assistance of dockers' unions to remedy the situation. Clearly this support will disappear if

there are no dockers in place.

The ITF and its affiliates are working together to understand better where and why automation is happening and how it is affecting workers. What they learn and share through meetings, conferences, and other networks helps shape both individual union responses and global solidarity and campaigning — for example when anti-union activity is disguised as modernisation by global network terminal operators such as DPW.

It seems some companies who sell equipment for automated terminals are successfully promoting it to port operators as a way to bring down labour costs and eliminate the industrial 'problem' of union presence. A presentation by a producer of 'workforce management software' at a recent Lloyds List seminar flagged up reduced labour

costs as the main benefit to using its products. A similar presentation was given by a company which cited 'wages, benefits and practices of the ILWU' on the US West Coast as key issues when considering automation in that area. Other companies have talked about 'avoiding labour problems' through automation.

ITF-affiliated unions are not opposed to progress, but they are firm in their demands. They insist that any changes to operations in a terminal should be negotiated with the union — and that automation should be used to maximise productivity and safety, not to attack organised labour.

Dockers' unions will continue sharing best practice in relation to automation and challenging employers to engage on this issue. Automation should mean a safer port, not a non-unionised one. ■

Taking a stake in the ports of tomorrow

Everyone agrees that ports need to tackle their environmental problems, but how to go about it? The approaches taken can mean good or bad news for workers, so it is vital that dockers' unions are involved in policy development from the start, says Paula Hamilton, ITF dockers' section assistant secretary

Research by the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) in 2011 suggests that improving the environmental performance of ports can have both positive and negative impacts for workers. It can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance the working environment and therefore improve the health of workers and port communities. However, the cost of environmental initiatives can be pushed onto workers in the form of lower wages or job losses.

Dockers unions need to be at the negotiating table right from

Leave cargo to the dockers

Seafarers who handle cargo in ports or onboard may be risking their own safety, breaching their collective bargaining agreement and threatening the jobs of their strongest group of allies: the dockers

The job of moving goods onto and off ships is a skilled, multi-faceted and potentially dangerous one. As technology and approaches to good practice change, the dockers who are trained to do this work are constantly required to refresh and develop their expertise. So alarm bells ring on a number of levels, when dockers find aspects of their work being handed over to seafarers.

We know, for example, that seafarers are regularly asked to carry out lashing of containers in addition to their regular duties and often without being properly trained. This practice is not only dangerous in itself for all those involved in the task, but it contributes to seafarers' fatigue — a major cause of accidents at sea and something seafarers' unions have been campaigning against for years.

Dockers also want seafarers to understand that by doing this work, seafarers may be taking their jobs, or threatening their terms and conditions. There is a

strong history of solidarity between these interdependent groups of workers, and dockers form the backbone of the system that protects seafarers' rights on FOC vessels. Their industrial strength and willingness to use it on behalf of seafarers — for example, by refusing to unload cargo from ships where seafarers are in dispute with their employer over unpaid wages — have brought countless gains for seafarers' rights.

If your employer has signed a collective bargaining agreement with the ITF, it will contain a crucial clause (see box) stating that, unless by union agreement, no seafarers will be asked to handle cargo in port; instead the work should be done by trained dockers. The ITF sees this clause as a vital weapon in the fight to protect the safety and employment of dockers and seafarers; any instances of cargo handling by seafarers that come to the notice of ITF-affiliated unions are reported to the ITF office in London so that action can be taken.

In the UK, the ITF-affiliated Unite union has been working with the ITF on a new initiative to further strengthen cooperation between dockers and seafarers for their mutual benefit. The initiative involves ITF inspectors and union leaders working with port employers along the British coastline. They work to promote the safety of seafarers and to safeguard dockers' jobs by reinforcing the principle that cargo handling work is for dockers only. Their approach, which the ITF hopes will be emulated in other countries, has already saved dockers' jobs in the port of Liverpool, where a memorandum of understanding between the ITF and the port operator has been signed.

Unite and the ITF inspectorate have held several events in UK ports, where dockers hear about the lives of seafarers and the poor conditions that many face. Dockers and seafarers are stronger when they support each other, and being organised in unions is critical to safeguarding the rights of both. ■

the start when employers are considering new environmental policies. Job losses and the creation of new 'green jobs' are key issues, as are the challenges of matching environmentally-sound policies with imperatives for expansion or development.

Judith Abuka, ITF Africa dockers' chair says: "Africa has a big challenge; with the discovery of oil and gas fields off the East African coast unions need to be actively engaged now. We need to change our approach and to start to look at the links between these new

discoveries and the effects on our environment in East Africa. We shouldn't just be championing better wages and conditions of service. Every collective bargaining agreement should include clauses that tackle environmental issues in our ports."

At the same time, unions need to speak out for workers and communities when some parts of the industry take advantage of the green agenda to push initiatives — including, for example, some automation schemes — that undermine labour rights. The more actively

engaged dockers' unions can be involved in campaigning and policy development — in port communities, port cities and within the ports themselves — the more workers' concerns can contribute to shaping future change.

The voice of workers needs to be centre stage in order to ensure that what appears to be a fundamental shift in the port industry is not only environmentally and economically sustainable, but socially sustainable too. ■

Ships' crews should not have to handle cargo

Every ITF collective bargaining agreement includes the following commitment:

Non-seafarers' work

Neither ship's crews nor anyone else on board whether in permanent or temporary employment by the company shall carry out cargo handling and other work traditionally or historically done by dock workers without the prior agreement of the ITF dockers union or ITF unions concerned and provided that the individual seafarers volunteer to carry out such duties, for which they should be adequately compensated. For the purpose of this clause "cargo handling" may include but is not limited to: loading, unloading, stowing, unstowing, pouring, trimming, classifying, sizing, stacking, unstacking as well as composing and decomposing unit loads; and also services in relation with cargo or goods, such as tallying, weighing, measuring, cubing, checking, receiving, guarding, delivering, sampling and sealing, lashing and unlashng.

Better together

A new guide is helping maritime unions to capitalise on encouraging signs that more women are joining up and taking a stake in the issues that affect them as seafarers

ITF membership figures show that an increasing number of women in maritime jobs are joining trade unions.

This is encouraging news for men and women seafarers alike. Not only do more women members mean more influence on issues that affect women working at sea – they mean a stronger total membership and therefore a stronger voice when negotiating on issues that affect everyone, like pay and safety.

In an effort to build on current trends, the ITF has produced a new guide, sharing the best practices maritime unions have been using to strengthen their representation of and engagement with women.

Winning a better deal for women explores the considerable obstacles women still face to maritime employment and union involvement and shares

approaches to overcoming many challenges.

It shows how collective bargaining can secure key provisions on women's issues, as well as how women are being attracted to membership, gaining better representation in union structures, and getting more involved in union activities. The guide includes many examples of best practice shared by ITF unions around the world, as well as checklists, model collective bargaining clauses and model policies for unions to use as they develop their work with and for women.

To view the guide, visit www.itfglobal.org/infocentre/pub.s.cfm/detail/39317

To find out more about the work of the ITF women's department, visit www.itfglobal.org/women/index.cfm ■



“more women members mean more influence on issues that affect women working at sea – they mean a stronger total membership and therefore a stronger voice”

Winning with women: approaches that work

Bargaining for equal rights

When unions negotiate for gender equality, improved conditions benefit the working lives of men as well as women. New policies to address sexual harassment may end up reducing workplace bullying too, while provision for pregnancy and maternity rights could be the first steps in creating inclusive parent-friendly workplaces.

Unions in action:

- The South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (Satawu) is negotiating to raise fully-paid maternity leave from four to six months, along with securing permission for women to breastfeed and post-natal days off for clinic check-ups.
- Collective bargaining by the Norwegian Seafarers' Union won the right for members working on Bahamas-flagged cruise vessels to be repatriated no later than the 26th week of her pregnancy; they are also entitled to 100 days basic pay and priority consideration for vacancies up to three years after the birth of the child.
- The BTB union in Belgium has successfully negotiated for better sanitary facilities for women seafarers and safety clothing designed for women dockers.
- A project by the Anglo-Dutch-Swiss maritime union Nautilus International to eradicate harassment and bullying on ships resulted in both UK and European guidance being agreed by social partners.

Structures and leadership

Unions have taken all kinds of approaches to improving women's representation at every level: establishing women's committees, offering leadership training, ensuring women sit on policy-making bodies and appointing

women's officers — as well as encouraging less formal networks and women's activities.

Unions in action:

- Half the senior staff of the Barbados Workers' Union are women
- The Estonian Seafarers' Independent Union has three women employed as full-time officials
- Women's committees are on the agenda of emerging trade unions, such as the newly-formed General Union of Port Workers in Jordan and the Seafarers' Union of Burma.
- The Seafarers' International Union, USA and the Japan Seafarers' Union use informal networks and forums to exchange views with women members and develop strategies for addressing the issues they raise.

Membership and taking part

ITF maritime unions are getting involved in a full range of recruitment and organising activities: from action days on specific topics such as violence against women or HIV/AIDS awareness, to targeted workplace recruitment drives and campaigns.

Unions in action:

- The Japan Seafarers' Union visits maritime universities and training schools annually to promote women in the maritime industry.
- The women's committee of the Synatram union in Togo asked its executive to waive the membership fees for women wishing to join. This has particularly encouraged low-paid women workers to join the union and get involved.
- The Transport and Dock Workers' Union in Kandla, India runs regular educational activities and seminars around basic rights, sexual harassment and violence, HIV/AIDS and International Women's Day. The union reports that these events have helped women develop their leadership skills and they have started to take a more active part in union activities. ■

Trade unions: what's the point?

If you are not entirely sure why some of your crew mates, or that ITF inspector, talk so much about trade unions — read on. Senior section assistant for the ITF seafarers' section, Steve Yandell, goes back to basics with a mini briefing on what a trade union can do for you, your workmates and fellow workers the world over

“Clearly the union can protect you individually when you get into trouble and it can enhance your pay and conditions. However, by joining all workers together it can help pull everyone up the ladder, with workers in a stronger position helping protect those with less bargaining power...”

Standing up for you

You might need help if you get into trouble through no fault of your own; maybe you have a disagreement with the officer in charge and you get unfairly disciplined, or you have an accident through employer negligence. In these instances being a member of a trade union can be a lifeline: providing you with crucial support, including financial and other assistance to obtain legal redress.

Trade unions also run campaigns and lobby politicians to improve legislation that impacts upon members in the workplace.

International influence

The ITF does vital work in representing seafarers in international forums: It influences international bodies such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO), where conventions and legislation governing how seafarers work are actually decided. It ensures that the voice of seafarers is heard loud and clear when a crisis needs action from the international community, for example in the case of piracy. It also coordinates the supportive actions of its member unions when they want to show solidarity to one another during disputes.

However, solidarity is not just practised by international federations. It is an essential element for the functioning of any trade union. Likewise, the importance of the political work undertaken either by individual trade unions, or joining together, cannot be overstated.

Standing up to governments

One of the ITF's UK affiliates, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), organises seafarers who work on the ferries that travel from the mainland in Scotland to the Western Islands. Working together with another ITF-affiliated union, Nautilus International, they fought off a government attempt to subject ferry services to market tendering – something that would have broken up the existing network of services and hit conditions of employment, including pension rights.

The RMT called a ballot for strike action, and together with Nautilus International, began to lobby politicians against the privatisation process.

A lobby of the Scottish parliament was organised by the Scottish Trade Union Congress and affiliated unions. Following intense pressure, the Scottish government agreed to guarantee pensions and

safeguard against savings being made through reductions in pay and conditions. Consequently, interest from the private sector disappeared and the existing government-owned company, Caledonian MacBrayne, won the contract.

More recently, in a further review of ferry services, the Scottish government announced that the private sector might have to take over certain routes run by the state operator in order to secure investment in new tonnage. This time an academic study commissioned and presented to the government by the RMT and Nautilus International clearly disproved the case for part-privatisation, finding that the private sector was in no better position to obtain value for money and that safety could be compromised by removing responsibility from the existing public sector operator.

Campaigning techniques like these can be used to protect the interests of trade union members in a collective way that just would not be possible for an individual. Having the strength of your trade union behind you in the workplace can make an enormous difference, not just to your pay and conditions, but potentially to how a ferry service is organised

and what kind of employer you work for.

A voice for all workers

Clearly the union can protect you individually when you get into trouble and it can enhance your pay and conditions. However, by joining all workers together it can help pull everyone up the ladder, with workers in a stronger position helping protect those with less bargaining power so that everyone has a fair wage and reasonable conditions of service. By joining your trade union and supporting others you are showing you care about the fate of your fellow human beings in the workplace. So joining a trade union can also be seen as an act of social solidarity.

The work of the ITF can only happen because it has successful affiliates with substantial numbers of members, who believe that their national union plays a vital role in their workplace. Trade unions deliver for their members through collective representation to improve pay and conditions, through individual representation and protection, through political campaigning and lobbying — and for the common wellbeing of all associated workers through collective strength and social solidarity. ■

Investing in seafarers of the future

Employers are lining up to sponsor the training of new seafarers amid signs of an impending labour shortfall, says Alexander Woods of the International Maritime Employers' Council



Despite the recent economic downturn, shipping companies have recognised a pressing need to protect and nurture the crucial role seafarers perform in the global transport of goods.

Ninety per cent of world trade continues to be conducted by sea: everything from oil and

steel, food and clothing, to luxury consumables. Indeed, while the industry has suffered and is still far from recovery, the world fleet is actually growing. Over 100,000 vessels are currently registered in more than 150 countries, manned by 1.5 million seafarers of virtually every nationality, around a third of whom are officers.

As more ships take to the sea, manpower surveys predict a shortage of seafarers, both officers and ratings. A scarcity of competent, qualified and dedicated seafarers, and particularly officers, poses a serious threat to the industry.

In 2006, the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC), which represents over 180 shipping companies throughout the world, established a recruitment and training committee to address the need for a ready supply of high quality, highly skilled

seafarers. The same year, 20 cadets sponsored by IMEC members embarked on the council's cadet training programme at the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) in the Philippines. In 2008 IMEC commenced activities at the Maritime Education Centre (METC) in the University of Cebu, sponsoring 50 cadets. The programme has grown from strength to strength, with around 250 cadets starting each year at these two institutions.

It is a four-year course, preparing school leavers to become deck or engineering officers. Candidates are carefully selected by academic examination and interview, firstly by an official representing their potential college, and secondly by the IMEC secretariat and a member representative, who determine their motivation and suitability to become a merchant navy officer.

"It pays to be selective in the recruitment process," says Adam Lewis, IMEC's training and operations manager, "but it's not just a question of choosing cadets who are academically able. We select young men and women who have a genuine aptitude and ambition to build themselves great careers at sea".

Raising standards

Before starting the programme, cadets undertake a preliminary course focusing on mathematics, physics and English. Only on passing this course do they officially become an IMEC cadet at an inauguration ceremony. Each cadet is sponsored by an IMEC member, who provides a training berth during their third year, guaranteeing that all-important time at sea. During this year the employer pays into a stipend, which then funds the cadet's fourth and final year at college.

IMEC funds cadets through the first two years of their training

through the International Maritime Training Trust (IMTT). The organisation has also funded the upgrading of classrooms and learning materials, as well as continued professional development for lecturers and teaching staff.

"I chose a career as a ship's officer mainly because I want to develop my leadership skills. Ever since I was a child, it has been my dream to go out to sea and sail the world; seafaring is my passion," says cadet Dave Polistico.

"When I was still in high school I researched maritime schools and scholarship programmes that would suit me in order for me to fulfil my ambition. Now I can train to become a very competent ship's officer in the future."

It's clear that, despite the turbulent state of the shipping industry at present, IMEC members are still willing to invest in preparing a new

generation of ships' officers. Companies are able to look beyond their own books and consider the future state of the industry.

"Our goal is to establish well-trained officers," says one member. "We select the top-class cadets from good maritime academies. Our challenge and ambition is to succeed in making a cadet into a high quality officer for the merchant navy."

"IMEC sets standards for the cadets it sponsors, making sure they are not only competent in theory, but also in practice. Experience at sea, which is so vital for new officers, allows cadets to put the theory they learn in the classroom into practice and makes them stand out from their contemporaries."

Officer readiness

Newly-qualified officers return to their sponsoring companies for full time employment on completing their studies.

"The competence of seafarers is of crucial importance in the safe and efficient operation of the industry," says Adam Lewis. "Meeting the minimum standard is not enough, we want cadets who excel".

"I believe we are provided with a quality of education and training that others don't have," says cadet Cyril Sables.

"Getting sea time ended my preconceptions of what life at sea is like. Being exposed to the basic work routines onboard, and getting experience of the responsibilities involved in being an officer gave me the confidence to tell my company I am ready to do it."

At a time of ongoing challenges for the shipping industry, it could be that the visible signs of its expansion, coupled with employers' increased commitment to nurturing the maritime workforce, will promote a sense of confidence and optimism among the men and women who keep world trade moving.

State of the art offshore training for Indian seafarers

A trust for Indian seafarers managed by the National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) and the ITF opened a world-class simulation training centre in November 2013 for Indian seafarers in the offshore sector

The Nusi Offshore Training Institute (NOTI) in Mumbai has been created to help seafarers develop competence in offshore shipping disciplines and progress up the chain of command.

Captain Nand Hiranandani, chair of NUSI, said: "The NOTI facility provides the missing link in training for Indian seafarers working in the offshore sector today."

The centre includes a suite of cutting-edge simulators. They include a large, visual 360-degree dedicated offshore vessel bridge simulator, as well as India's first remotely-operated vehicle (ROV) simulator.

The NOTI centre also boasts vessel engine and

offshore crane simulators, as well as a multifunctional classroom equipped to train cadets in radar, ship-handling, oilfield navigation and other operational skills. Trainees can use simulations as part of their studies in logistics, towing, rig positioning, subsea installations and heavy lift crane operations at sea.

Referring to the wider work of NUSI and the ITF, Captain Nand Hiranandani commented: "As a not-for-profit organisation, we have been able to make an investment in the future of all seafarers and provide a means for them to continue their professional development and further their careers."



For further information about the IMEC Enhanced Cadet Training Programme visit www.imec.org.uk/training.

About IMEC

IMEC is the only international employers' organisation dedicated to maritime industrial relations. It represents over 180 members, located in 45 countries, which operate over 9,710 vessels and employ more than 209,000 seafarers of all nationalities.

IMEC co-ordinates the views of its members and represents them through a Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) in negotiations with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) over the wages and conditions of employment of seafarers serving on the ships they operate.

For more information about IMEC visit www.imec.org.uk. ■



Global union influence felt in growing offshore sector

The results of campaigning are clear to see in the offshore industry today, says Norrie McVicar, chair of the ITF offshore task force group



“It all began in 1997, soon after the formation of the OTFG, with a successful campaign against social dumping in the North Sea.”

Over the last 15 years, the ITF offshore task force group (OTFG) has changed the industrial relations landscape in the offshore sector worldwide.

The group's industrial campaigns and political initiatives have impacted on offshore employment in the North Sea, Brazil, Canada, India, USA, Indonesia, Singapore, Trinidad & Tobago, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Croatia, East Timor and most recently Kenya. It has also lent substantial support to the work of ITF affiliates in the sector, most notably perhaps to the well-documented campaigns of US and Mexican affiliates in the Gulf of Mexico.

It all began in 1997, soon after the formation of the OTFG, with a successful campaign against social dumping in the North Sea. As a result of this campaign, which was focused on a Norwegian-owned company called Farstad, the ITF secured an agreement with the company, which led to the first ever model offshore service

vessel agreement guaranteeing minimum levels of decent pay for offshore workers. This agreement was signed between Norwegian ITF affiliates represented by the NMU and the shipowners' body, the NSA. Since then, the model agreement and the ITF offshore standard collective bargaining agreement have made steady progress, with over 200 flag of convenience vessels covered by ITF agreements.

In June 2013 the ITF welcomed the Swire fleet agreement, signed with the ITF-affiliated Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU) and Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS), and the signing of a global co-operation agreement with French-owned company Bourbon offshore. Bourbon is a major provider of marine services to the oil and gas industries in over 45 countries worldwide, covering over 450 vessels and 10,000 plus seafarers.

The signing of these agreements signals a real turning point in the campaign for

fairness and equality for workers in the offshore industry. They support the Maritime Labour Convention (see pages 12-15) as it applies to the offshore sector and help the ITF to identify the real players in the sector.

In a rapidly growing industry, the OTFG has developed a reputation, attracting the interest of organisations such as the International Maritime Employers Council (IMEC) with its global industry profile. IMEC has shown a keen interest in developing a formal relationship with the task force group and offering partnership in the development of offshore collective bargaining agreements for and on behalf of its members.

IMEC has a number of high-profile company members engaged in the hydrocarbon industry in Europe, Asia and Africa; it offers an important additional forum for the ITF to pursue its objectives on behalf of seafarers working in the offshore sector. ■

African unions launch regional arm of ITF task force group

At the end of 2013, ITF-affiliated trade unions meeting in Mombasa, Kenya launched a new task force dedicated to protecting the rights of African workers in the offshore sector and to fighting for more jobs for African nationals in the indigenous hydrocarbon industry.

The new ITF African regional offshore oil and gas task force group (AROTFG) campaigns to secure national cabotage and continental shelf jurisdiction in the offshore oil and gas sector. It is also checking for any abuses by companies of African workers' rights, particularly where they contravene the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, the seafarers' bill of rights.

Speaking at the launch meeting, ITF Africa regional secretary Joe Katende, said: “This is a historic event. The AROTFG, backed by the ITF and its global offshore task force group, will send a signal to governments and the hydrocarbon industry that African workers are sick and tired of hearing excuses. It is time the industry backed African workers in developing their skills and finding job opportunities on their own continental shelf.”

Learning together

Lena Dyring of the Norwegian Seafarers' Union explains how employee seminars are helping to challenge ignorance and fear about HIV/AIDS in the maritime sector

Being well-informed about HIV/AIDS is crucial for all of us, and certainly for anyone working away at sea, where a higher incidence of casual, potentially risky sexual behaviour can translate into high HIV prevalence rates.

Even today, too many of us have an incomplete understanding of the HIV virus – both how it is transmitted and how its effects can be managed. As a result, we can be more inclined towards inadvertent risk taking on the one hand and misguided fear and prejudice on the other.

With this in mind, trade unions have been encouraged to find that HIV/AIDS education events often generate a great deal of interest among employees in the maritime sector.

Every year, hundreds of men and women working in the cruise industry take part in wide-ranging training seminars organised by the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Seafarers' Union, the Italian union FIT-CISL, and the ITF. They discuss all kinds of pertinent topics, from international shipping facts to trade union rights and workplace challenges. But the most popular sessions are always those on HIV/AIDS. These seminars include specialist information, opportunities to explore

questions and concerns in a safe environment, and various fun activities to help lighten this very serious topic a little. Participants often find they can overcome inhibitions and feel less shy or ashamed about engaging in conversations that often need to be had.

Social stigma is sometimes the most difficult obstacle to overcome for people who live with HIV/AIDS. It is therefore very important for educators to convey information about how HIV does not spread and how HIV-positive employees can conduct next-to-normal lives — for the most part continuing in their jobs and daily activities with few or no changes. A common misconception persists that you can catch the virus through handshakes and hugs – we need to kill such myths once and for all.

The social stigma around HIV/AIDS is perpetuated by the view that the virus is linked to some kind of 'shameful lifestyle'. A central education objective is therefore to underline the message that anyone can be infected if they do not take the necessary precautions.

At our seminars, cruise ship staff learn through one another's experiences, and there is always someone living with the virus in attendance to share first hand how it has affected their lives.

Yoke Ferdinandus from Bali, Indonesia, who tested positive three years ago after her husband died of AIDS, is one of the courageous people who have come to our seminars to share their experiences.

Immediately following her diagnosis, she felt depressed, hopeless and convinced she would die soon. When her youngest son, who she had been breastfeeding, also tested positive, her sense of hopelessness deepened. Nothing friends and family could do to help did anything to change her state of mind. She did not dare even to kiss or hug her other two sons for fear of passing the virus on to them.

Yoke's life did not turn around until a doctor put her in touch with a local HIV/AIDS foundation, where she got the education she so sorely needed and the support from other women in the same situation. She tells us how healthy and happy she and her son are now that they receive the medical treatment they need, and now that she understands their situation so much better. Yoke reports that she is taking good care of all her children, doing her best to help them succeed in the future. She has now become an activist, offering to others the same education and support that she received.

Of course, life can still be a struggle for Yoke and her family, especially when discrimination and ridicule arise from people's ignorance. However, Yoke finds great satisfaction in helping other infected people to cope with their circumstances. Her advice to everyone is: take your medications, stay fit and healthy and carry on with your life. Her mission is to keep educating until she reaches her goal, which is 'Zero to AIDS'.

It is rewarding at these events to see how people can open up about their experiences; and very moving to watch when participants who were initially wary 'hug it out' at the end of the session with the HIV positive person who has given their statement.

Wherever we hold our seminars, our participants always tell us they have learned and gained a lot. We will continue to educate seafarers in the cruise industry about their working conditions, how to stay healthy and how to understand HIV/AIDS. New dangers have arisen from complacency as people begin to see HIV as a thing of the past — something that 'everyone' knows about. The reality is that some 2.3 million new infections still occur each year worldwide, and the figure is rising among some seafaring populations. ■



Seminars are currently planned for the Philippines, Indonesia, India and Jamaica

Contact us at seminars@nsu.org for details

You can also find us on www.facebook.com/norwegianseafarersunion

When you need a legal hand

As a result of the often-dangerous nature of the shipping industry, many seafarers run into problems that turn into legal cases. Perhaps you wish to bring charges against a shipowner, having been abandoned in a foreign port with no way to get home. Or you might need to defend yourself against criminal or civil charges levelled at you following an accident at sea.

If you find yourself in this kind of predicament, you should contact your union straight away to ask for advice and support. Your union can guide you through any relevant procedures laid down in your employment contract. They may also be able to provide you with legal services or, if necessary, help you find a lawyer.

Should you be unable to access union assistance, and believe you need a lawyer, you will have the potentially daunting task of finding and instructing one, negotiating fees or establishing whether or not you qualify for free legal advice. The guidance that follows is taken from the website of the independent advice and research centre, Seafarers' Rights International. More detailed information, including specific advice on using lawyers in different countries, can be found at www.seafarersrights.org

1. WHAT KIND OF LAWYER?

Lawyers are known by all sorts of different names around the world – not only as lawyers, but also as advocates, legal consultants, attorneys, barristers, solicitors or counsellors. Whatever the title, you will want to know you have found the right legal representative to meet your needs.

Make sure the lawyer you choose is experienced in the type of legal problem that you have. All countries with a coastline will have specific maritime laws, and sometimes maritime courts. However not all lawyers will be familiar with maritime law.

A word of warning. A lawyer who acts for you should not also be acting for shipowners or other maritime interests that might conflict with your own. Always check that your lawyer is acting in your interests alone.

2. WHERE TO LOOK

- www.seafarersrights.org. Here you will find a list of lawyers/law firms who have subscribed to a Charter of Good Practice for the Provision of Legal Services to Seafarers
- International guides and directories such as www.legal500.com and www.chambersandpartners.com (websites in English)
- On the websites of legal membership or regulatory bodies in specific countries (NB often in a foreign language)
- Recommendations from friends or family
- Recommendations from local trade unions or welfare organisations
- Recommendations from the local consulate

3. ENGAGING A LAWYER

Most legal proceedings have to be brought or defended within a specific amount of time, so if you have a legal problem that necessitates a lawyer, you should appoint one as soon as possible.

Once you have found a

prospective lawyer, ask them to explain the following:

- The options for sorting out your problem
- The chances of getting the result you want
- How long the case will take
- An estimate of the likely cost of the work to be done
- Whether legal aid is available
- What you might have to pay if you lose the case
- Whether you must provide security for the other side's legal costs
- How frequently you will be updated on progress (you should expect to be kept regularly informed)
- What you should do if you are unhappy with their services.

4. PAYING FEES

The following arrangements for paying fees are common, though not all are available in every country. Make sure you understand the options:

- Contingency fee or 'no win-no fee'. Payable only if there is a favourable result for you. Usually calculated as a percentage of the amount awarded to you. In some countries, a conditional fee applies instead, but is similar.
- Flat or fixed fee. The lawyer charges a fixed total fee, which is sometimes a percentage of the value of the claim. This is generally offered if the claim is relatively simple or routine, but it is still important to ask exactly which services and expenses are covered by this fee and which are not.
- Hourly charges. Based on the number of hours spent working on your claim. Hourly rates vary significantly between lawyers. Some lawyers charge different fees for different types of work (eg legal research or court appearance).
- Retainer fee. You pay the lawyer a set fee, which acts as an advance, usually non-refundable, payment towards future costs. Additional fees beyond the retainer are often required when a matter must go to court.
- Statutory Fee. The law of a particular country sets fees by

statute, or a court sets and approves the fee that the seafarer must pay.

5. FREE LEGAL SERVICES

Legal aid: ensures that those who cannot afford lawyers can have access to legal services. However it is not available in every country, and it is not available for every type of legal problem.

'Pro bono': Lawyers working in private law firms often work a portion of their time on pro bono (voluntary, unpaid) cases. You can enquire whether a lawyer provides pro bono legal services, and if so, whether you would be eligible.

Non-government organisations (NGOs): Some organisations representing particular groups of workers may offer free legal services. Contact a local union or seafarers' centre to find out what they provide.

Telephone helplines: Useful for initial information, but you will need to talk to a legal expert for specific advice.

6. WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

If you are unhappy with the way your legal problem is being handled, a complaint can be made to the lawyer or law firm, or to the lawyer's professional regulatory body. You may be able to take legal action if the lawyer has been negligent.

Don't forget, you can change your lawyer at any stage. However, bear in mind that it can be expensive bringing a new lawyer up to speed with your problem. Also, if you change lawyers, it is important to be careful that deadlines in the case are not missed.

Visit the SRI website for a list of lawyers and more detailed information on how to find and use lawyers.

www.seafarersrights.org

Seafarers' Rights International (SRI) is an independent centre dedicated to advancing the rights of seafarers through research, education and training in issues concerning seafarers and the law. ■

Filipino seafarers warned against legal sharks

As home to the world's largest contingent of maritime labour, and to an intensely competitive maritime law industry, the Philippines can be a risky place for a seafarer in need of legal help. John Canias, ITF maritime operations manager, explains

Filipino seafarers make up some 30 per cent of the global maritime workforce, equating to around 300,000 employees.

When that figure is seen in the context of a very high litigation rate in the shipping industry, the potential scale of the market for maritime lawyers in the Philippines becomes clear. A great many legal practitioners are to be found seeking business there; it's something seafarers should be aware of, since an attractive offer of help from a legal expert will not always turn out to be cost-effective or even necessary.

Collective bargaining provisions in the Philippines provide a legal framework for determining claims through arbitration, many of which are sufficient for the resolution of overseas labour disputes without the services of a lawyer being needed.

There are different legal processes in operation which may be used when a seafarer wishes to make a claim for money — one is for claims over PHP5,000, which come under the National Labor Relations Commission, while smaller claims can be referred to the Regional Office of the Department of Labor and Employment (compulsory arbitration) or the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (voluntary arbitration).

These systems provide lawyers with opportunities to sell their services. Claims made by seafarers and their families typically concern serious alleged breaches such as the

pre-termination of contracts, or non-payment of agreed death, disability or medical benefits, many of which can command large sums of money.

Competition is intense among maritime labour practitioners, many of whom use different schemes to make themselves more attractive to seafarers or their dependants. Seafarers and their families need to be on their guard, as some of these schemes are extremely dubious. Unscrupulous practitioners and their associates will often offer prospective clients what appear to be attractive loans or cash advances, for example; but they come with interest rates so high that the interest to be paid by the seafarer almost eats up any compensation they may ultimately receive. They will also try to recruit seafarers to help them secure more clients by offering a finder's fee.

If you have unwittingly hired a corrupt lawyer, you may find you are presented with blank sheets of paper to sign; or you might be charged exorbitant fees but reassured that these will be easily payable in proportion to the huge settlement you are bound to receive — in reality the promised sum may or may not turn out to be awarded by the court, but the lawyer may still insist you are liable for the fees.

To protect themselves against these kinds of tactics, Filipino seafarers should refer to the checklist below.

Before appointing a lawyer:

- 1) Check your collective bargaining agreement and seek advice from your union
- 2) Note that the fee set by the Labor Code of the Philippines, as amended, that can be charged for legal services is 10 percent of the settlement
- 3) Do not sign blank sheets of paper or any document that may commit you to a contract without your informed consent

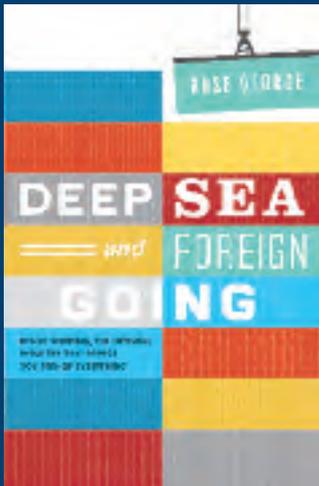
Visit the SRI website for a list of lawyers and more detailed information on how to find and use lawyers. www.seafarersrights.org



The invisible space of the sea



During three spells at sea, writer Rose George has been captivated and saddened in equal measure, by the strangeness and intensity of life onboard the merchant ships that bring '90 per cent of everything' to a world that scarcely acknowledges their existence



Intrepid. Tenacious. Brave. I've been called all these things recently, by radio interviewers or in book reviews. It makes me smile, because they call me brave for doing something that thousands of people do every day, with little attention or thanks and certainly no commendation of their 'bravery': All I did was go to sea on a container ship.

Admittedly, this was in 2010, and Maersk Kendal, a K-class with a capacity of about 7000 TEUs, was doing its usual loop from the UK to Asia, directly through the highway of Somali piracy. But our freeboard was considered too high for pirates to throw their grappling hooks or ladders over; we could do a fast 23 knots if pushed (and if budgets allowed); the captain had 42 years experience and I trusted him. Even so, when we got out of Suez, travelled another day south and then entered into pirate watch, I did wonder what the hell I'd been thinking. Or, as the captain said regularly: "You want to sail through pirate waters voluntarily? Are you mad?"

I wanted to write a book that explored the reality of life at sea in the present day, not history. I chose a container ship, perhaps because I'd already been on one, on a 10-day passage across the Atlantic in midwinter in 1999, following the route of the Titanic. The weather was awful, but it was a mesmerising experience.

I have travelled in plenty of strange places during my career as a journalist and author: I've been to Saddam Hussein's birthday party, twice. I've interviewed women in beauty salons in Afghanistan, six months after the NATO invasion. I've been a war correspondent, for precisely one day, in Kosovo (and that was enough). But after I disembarked Canmar Pride at Sugar Quay in Montreal, I knew that I'd just spent 10 days in one of the strangest, most fascinating and compelling places I'd ever visited, because I'd been in the invisible, forgotten space of the sea.

There are reasons for this invisibility. Most people get where they want to go by flying or driving now. The sea is a blue blob on an inflight map, there only to be flown over. Ships are so big they use enormous ports that have been moved away from residential areas. These ports are locked behind security concerns. In the UK, the size of the merchant navy has shrunk so dramatically, hardly anyone knows a working seafarer now. I didn't, until I went to sea.

So when it came to writing my third book, and finding a topic that could captivate me for at least two years (in the end this book took four), I chose shipping. I wanted to go back to sea, for a start. But I also wanted to understand why, as ships have grown larger, and as we have become more reliant on shipping to bring us 90 per cent of everything, that their place in the public imagination has shrunk to nothing.

So I embarked at Felixstowe on a Friday in June, and disembarked 9,288 nautical miles later in Singapore, reluctantly. I was never bored. Apart from during pirate watch, there were always ways to break up the day: a morning walk on deck to my favourite spot on the foc'sle; a daily interview with the captain, because his 42 years at sea meant his career had paralleled

the rise of containerisation, and he had watched his beloved job change beyond recognition. After lunch, I would read or go to the gym. Then some hours on the bridge, just listening and watching. Evening meal, a game of backgammon. And then the quiet time.

People ask me what surprised me most about going to sea. I generally respond with: "That there was no internet." Seafarers spend months without basic communication capabilities — browsing, messaging, Skype — that the average five year-old expects. But the other thing that surprised me was the lack of group activity. There was little fun to be had on Kendal. By then all Maersk ships were dry, a reasoning that I understand, but it wasn't popular. In the evenings, although there were Wii machines, karaoke, even a sad barbecue outside right in front of the buzzing, humming reefers, crew just retired to their cabins. Socialising was minimal and the evenings were quiet, the loneliest time. I timed how long it took most crew to eat their meals: six minutes.

Later, I spent 10 days on a counter-piracy warship. The difference was striking. Not just that on a much smaller ship, there was a crew of nearly 1000. But that the navy understood that a happy crew is a properly socialising crew. Efforts were continually made for group activities, parties, bars. Welfare budgets were higher; when I asked the logistics chief if his victualling budget was a daily \$7 per head as it was on Kendal, he laughed, very loudly. On his ship, nutrition was given more value than a handful of dollars.

Kendal was a lovely ship. She was only four years old. And Maersk is an excellent company. But the problems of modern sea life — fatigue, loneliness, to name but two — spread wider than a ship or a company. Partly, it's the nature of modern shipping and its frenetic pace, so that most seafarers can grab only a couple

of hours ashore if they're lucky. But also it's that, although the industry talks continuously about the importance of its 'human element', they don't realise how inhuman that phrase sounds, and that its use says much about the place of seafarers in shipping: expendable, too often exploited, or at the very least bored and exhausted.

I had a wonderful time on Kendal. I didn't want to disembark. But towards the end of my voyage, I asked my captain if it was a happy ship. He said, "well, no-one's happy to be here". I know that other industries can be tough to work in. But even miners can go home at the end of the day. Even oil rig workers have better internet access than most seafarers. They probably have TV, too.

I would love to go back to sea, but not for a career. Even so, cadets have written to me looking forward to their first sea phases. I wonder how long they will last, but I hope they do, because we depend on seafarers to continue to do one of the most dangerous jobs on the planet, for little reward or regard. If the industry wants to thrive — and shipping by sea is supposed to grow two per cent a year for the foreseeable future — then it needs to figure out how to improve life at sea to make it a career that can be enjoyed, not just endured.

Deep sea and foreign going: Inside shipping, the invisible industry that brings you 90% of everything, is published by Portobello (UK)

The US edition is Ninety percent of everything: Inside shipping, the invisible industry that puts clothes on your back, gas in your car and food on your plate, published by Metropolitan Books (US)

Towards decent work for fishers

The hope of a better future may at last be in sight for some of the world's most vulnerable workers, says Liz Blackshaw, leader of a joint ITF/IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural and Hospitality Workers) campaign to improve working conditions in the fishing industry



Being a fisher in the high seas is just about the most dangerous job on earth – because of natural hazards like storms and gales, and because of the many illegal, unregulated and unscrupulous employers who subject fishers to often-atrocious working conditions. However many other fishing-related jobs are also unregulated and risky, involving a multitude of challenges that are unique to the industry.

Fishing is the first link in the long chain of actions that ultimately result in fish products appearing in our shops. This 'catcher-to-counter' chain is responsible for millions of jobs worldwide, from catching to processing, shipping and selling the fish.

Most companies who employ fishers on fishing vessels also employ workers on land — in canneries and processing plants. So it makes sense for fish workers on land and at sea to join forces over common concerns. This has been the thinking behind campaigning by the ITF together with the IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural and Hospitality Workers). By working together on their joint campaign to

counter programme to organise fishers and fight for their rights, both global federations have found they are in a better position to win significant improvements for workers.

Currently the most urgent goal is for as many countries as possible to ratify an International Labour Organization convention (convention 188) to secure minimum safety standards and decent working conditions for fishers. Until a minimum of 10 countries, eight of them coastal states, have formally declared their backing for this convention, it cannot be brought into force. Many maritime unions are in the process of developing campaign activities to lobby for ratification, as well as working to represent more fishers within their union structures.

The precarious position fishers find themselves in is partly explained by their historical status — they were never classed as seafarers. As a result they are left unprotected both by domestic employment laws that apply to seafarers and by much of the work trade unions do to represent seafarers' interests.

However, more countries are becoming aware of the need to protect the men and women who work in the fishing industry. At the end of 2013, Morocco and South Africa ratified convention 188, adding their names to those of Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, who ratified very early on. At a recent global meeting to increase the speed of the ratifications and therefore the implementation of these crucial minimum standards, another eight countries signified their progress toward ratification.

The ITF has argued for decades that fishers should have more

access to employment standards. Now, assuming that ITF affiliates can continue their campaigning efforts, there is every reason to be hopeful that this goal could soon be realised.

A misconception persists that seafarers who work on fishing vessels are protected by the Maritime Labour Convention. They are not. Until convention 188 is implemented, the only legislation outside of maritime law that applies to fishers is that of the country within whose waters the fishing is taking place — something that does not apply on the high seas.

As well as campaigning for the ratification of convention 188, the ITF is working to support the vital work being done in many countries to help fishers get access to a better working life. In countries such as Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Chile, Peru, South Africa, Namibia, Madagascar and across Europe, huge steps are being taken. The focus is on regulating the employment status of fishers and setting minimum standards of safety, living and working conditions — while at the same time negotiating for further improvements that seek to match the standards set by countries such as Argentina, Iceland and Norway.

Where this work is being done, it is crucial that fishers and seafarers on board fishing vessels are actively joining unions. Only then can they help ensure their union is lobbying its government for ratification of convention 188, working to get better occupational safety and health protection for fishers and, at the very least, fighting for minimum terms and conditions.

www.itfglobal.org/fisheries

“Currently the most urgent goal is... to secure minimum safety standards and decent working conditions for fishers.”

Crewing Agents Beware! Seafarers Be Aware!

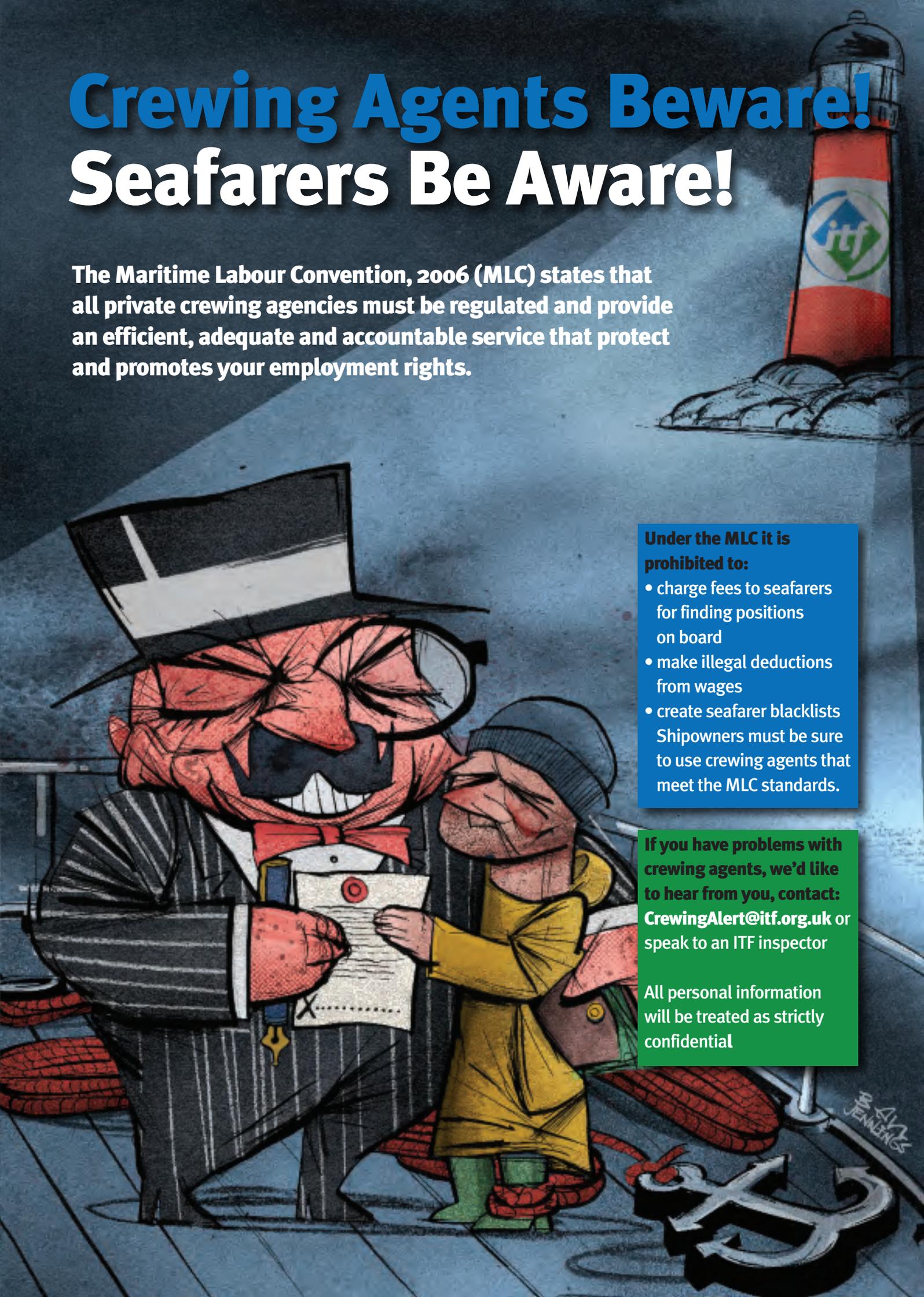
The Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC) states that all private crewing agencies must be regulated and provide an efficient, adequate and accountable service that protect and promotes your employment rights.

Under the MLC it is prohibited to:

- charge fees to seafarers for finding positions on board
 - make illegal deductions from wages
 - create seafarer blacklists
- Shipowners must be sure to use crewing agents that meet the MLC standards.

If you have problems with crewing agents, we'd like to hear from you, contact: CrewingAlert@itf.org.uk or speak to an ITF inspector

All personal information will be treated as strictly confidential



your port of call online!

www.itfseafarers.org



A WEBSITE FOR SEAFARERS FROM A SOURCE YOU CAN TRUST

- * Find out what your rights are
- * Get information on your ship
- * Learn where to get help in a crisis
- * Discover what a union can do for you
- * Link up online with fellow seafarers
- * Get in touch with the ITF
- * Download free apps for seafarers
- * Download the ITF guide 'A Seafarers' Bill of Rights'



Available in Chinese, Russian, Spanish and English

your rights • maritime news • contact the ITF • advice on pay, jobs and safety
look up a ship • port profiles • flags of convenience • inspectors' blog
crew talk • forums • your rights