



Seafarers' Bulletin

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International Transport Workers' Federation



Stories from the frontline

In this issue:

Women at the helm:

ITF's new maritime leaders working for you

The impact of Ebola on seafarers

Your pullout guide to getting help



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The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is an international trade union federation of transport trade unions, representing around 4.5 million transport workers in 700 unions in some 150 countries. It is organised in eight industrial sections: seafarers, fishers, 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.29/2015

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Welcome



Welcome to the Seafarers' Bulletin for 2015.

The Maritime Labour Convention, which came into force in August 2013, is already the ILO's most widely ratified convention – an extraordinary achievement. It's already brought great benefits to seafarers and we're pleased to tell you about important amendments which will offer greater support if you are abandoned or have a claim for long-term disability.

I'm also pleased to introduce you to two strong women – our new maritime co-ordinator, who is championing the interests of all workers in the industry, and the new head of our Seafarers' Trust, who is determined to improve the support it gives to seafarers.

Tragically, Ebola has caused huge misery and brought death to thousands of people in West Africa. Seafarers travelling to and from the affected countries are rightly concerned about the risks to their health. Industry guidelines have been put in place to help prevent any seafarers from getting the virus. But no-one can be complacent – that's why we've produced a special health feature, which includes a guide to staying safe from Ebola in port and on board. As mobile workers, away from home for long stretches of time, seafarers are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, so we also look at developments in our work on HIV/AIDS and what this means for you.

With our affiliated unions, we continue to fight on your behalf by policing shipowners, applying pressure on governments and international institutions and the daily business of righting wrongs in port and at sea – whether it's tackling bullying or discrimination, winning unpaid backpay or dealing with abandoned seafarers. You can see this in evidence in Stories from the frontline and throughout this issue.

Fishers are among the least protected and most abused workers in the world, as illustrated by our story of a British newspaper's exposé of slavery in the Thai fishing industry. We tell you what the ITF is doing to tackle such forced labour and human trafficking.

You will also find our eight-page pullout guide on where and how to get help if you need it. This shows how to contact ITF inspectors and gives advice on getting hired. There's also a feature on the warning signs to look out for to avoid scam recruiters.

We can only fight for your rights because of the collective strength of seafarers and your trade unions. We passionately believe that the only way you can win justice and improve your working conditions is by being a union member – so come on, join today and reap the benefits of being part of a great, international family of workers.

Steve Cotton
ITF general secretary

The ITF FOC campaign in numbers



ITF inspections

(2014)

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



■ Total number of inspections **10,111**

■ WITH problems **6,508**

■ WITHOUT problems **3,603**

Total backpay recovered

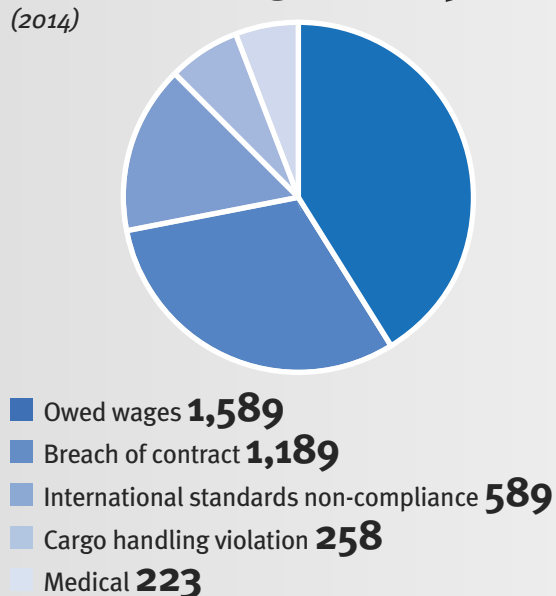
(2014)



*Includes USD 19 million recovered from one company over 28 vessels



Top five problems by type found during ITF inspections (2014)

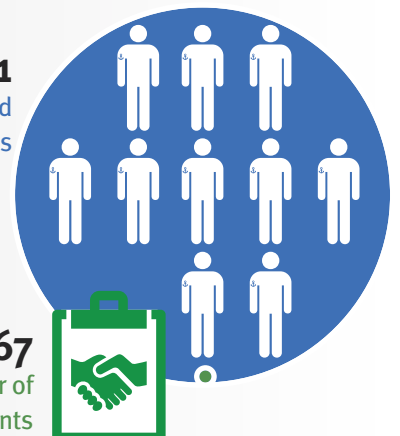


Vessels and seafarers covered by ITF agreements (at time of going to press)

(at time of going to press)

269,641
Positions covered
by agreements

12,467
Total number of
ITF agreements



Smith at the helm

Ex-seafarer Jacqueline Smith has recently taken on the post of ITF maritime co-ordinator. Previously held by our general secretary, Steve Cotton, it's a job at the heart of the ITF's total commitment to your needs, concerns and strengths as seafarers. Here she tells us how she hopes to bring to it a lifetime's experience of the sea, including as general secretary of the Norwegian Seafarers' Union

Tell us about your background.

I was born in Wyoming, USA and brought up largely in Norway. I studied law for one year but decided to leave university and got a job as a croupier on passenger ferries from Norway to Denmark and Germany. My intention was just to do something different for one year but I stayed for eight because I enjoyed the environment on board and the two weeks on, two weeks off suited me.

Where did your passion for workers' rights come from?

I realised we weren't getting equal pay for equal work and all the croupiers had individual contracts with varying conditions. We needed a collective bargaining agreement so I organised my colleagues and approached the Norwegian Seafarers' Union (NSU). It had never organised concessionaires but with intervention from the Norwegian TUC, it agreed to represent us.

How did you go from there to being NSU president? In 1998 I was elected as a delegate to congress, then as a deputy on the national board. I was immediately invited to be assistant director dealing with cruise ships in Miami, USA – a challenging move with a young daughter but very enjoyable. In 2002 I was asked to stand as elected secretary, so returned to Oslo, Norway. I was then elected NSU president by congress in 2006 and re-elected in 2010.

What is your proudest achievement? Being the youngest person and the first

woman to be elected president of such a male-dominated organisation, thanks in part to the progressiveness of members.

I'm proud of two achievements at the NSU: the personal contacts I developed with members through ship visits, getting to know their issues and educating them in their rights; and the structural changes to give ownership of the union back to our members. It was challenging to change people's attitudes but well worth it to see the transformation in the union.

I'm also really proud and thankful that the NSU donated money in my name to set up a project to provide psychological and educational help to abused children in a Philippines orphanage.

What's your message to seafarers?

Seafarers need to know more about unions – what they offer and how they can become active – and how they themselves can use a collective agreement to ensure their rights are not being breached. Knowledge is power and we need to empower seafarers.

How do you see the future? We must ensure that seafarers internationally are covered by collective agreements, and that these are upheld and enforced. We've got to constantly strive to improve conditions and negotiate down the length of employment.

I'm totally committed to seeing that we don't lose national cabotage – countries like Brazil, Norway, the US and Australia cannot compete because of low



wages elsewhere, so we need to ensure that national seafarers can continue to operate in their own waters.

Securing dockers' jobs is a top priority. They are being attacked everywhere. Without dockers the FOC campaign wouldn't exist – they provide the 'muscle' to enforce it and ports are the connecting points for other transportation modes. We can't stop automation, but we can strive to ensure that dockers are re-educated to fill the new positions. We must also stop companies using automation to avoid dealing with unions – that's union busting – and fight the outsourcing of contracts which results in a lack of training, long hours and risks to safety and health.

We need minimum standards in the global network terminals. So we must build stronger solidarity between dockers and seafarers, identify where our leverages and strong points are in the networks and target our resources there.

The potential in fisheries is enormous. It's like the Wild West out there, particularly in Asia. I want to see the spread of some of

our achievements in Norway, where uniquely we have a collective bargaining agreement for deep sea fishers. Achieving better standards on fishing vessels is an enormous challenge. The ITF and International Union of Food, Agricultural and Hospitality Workers programme to tackle illegal fishing and the lack of regulation in the industry has seen some good wins, which we need to build on, learn from and take elsewhere. We want all fishers to be covered by enforceable agreements so they have decent working conditions.

And the biggest challenge ahead?

Tackling shipowners and their insistent attempts to reduce costs and improve the bottom line for investors. We have to fight with the force of our convictions and expertise to have real influence with policy makers, politicians and global institutions.

The ITF is a strong organisation. I hope I can contribute to making it stronger by building capacity internally, with affiliates and among seafarers. This is my aim in the coming years. ■

Stories from the frontline

Dockers help win justice for Filipino crew

The fantastic solidarity of local dockers helped to prove that modern slavery has no place in the Ivory Coast port of Abidjan, say Joachim Mel Djedje-Li from ITF affiliate the Syndicat des Marins Ivoiriens au Commerce (SYMICOM) and Hamani Amadou, ITF inspector, Rostock, Germany

The ITF has been assisting seafarers visiting West African ports since 2010. In November 2014, an ITF mission travelled to Abidjan to recognise the work of local ITF contacts and prepare for the newly-created position of ITF inspector. News of a crew in trouble came just as the mission arrived.

It was local dockers who first told the ITF about the plight of the 22 crew on board the Liberian-flagged Confidence 1 – three officers from Romania and 19 officers and ratings from the Philippines.

The ship had arrived in the port on 12 November. Twelve of the Filipino seafarers were on strike, having received no wages since July from their manning agency in Manila. The German shipowner had just changed the agency and many of the seafarers' employment

agreements had expired, so the crew felt increasingly insecure. All 19 Filipino crew members asked the ITF for help to recover their wages and be repatriated.

After the CNDD dockers' union visited the vessel with us and met the crew, the dockers decided to act in solidarity. They stopped cargo operations, resisting pressure from the agent and cargo owner, a well-known local personality, and held out for five days until we won justice for the Confidence 1 crew.

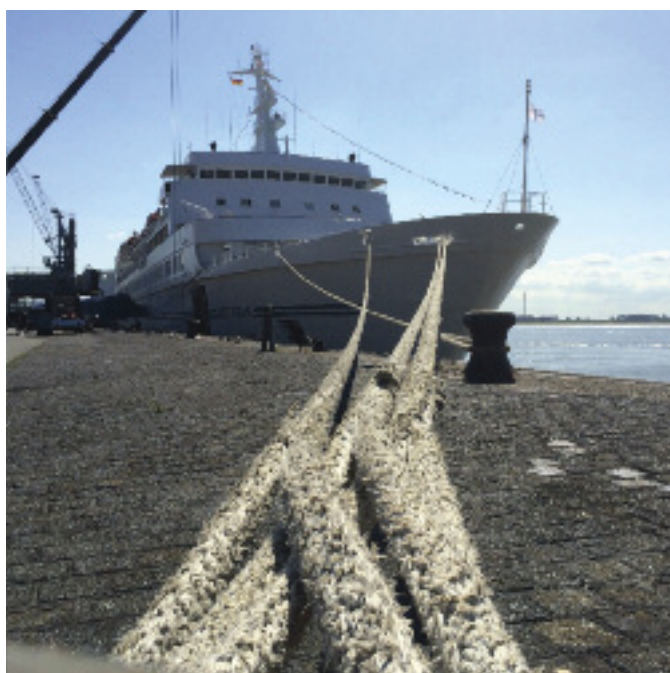
In December, all 19 were repatriated, with the last five receiving their full wages, totalling over USD49,000. On top of this success, in a first in the region, the German union ver.di signed a collective agreement with the German shipowner, and the new crewing agent applied for an ITF agreement. ■

“In December, all 19 were repatriated, with the last five receiving their full wages, totalling over USD49,000”



Huge backpay win for Delphin 1 crew

Ruud Touwen, ITF co-ordinator for Germany and the Netherlands, describes a great victory for nearly 200 seafarers



The crew of the Indian-owned cruise ship **Delphin 1** first approached the ITF in Germany because the owner had not paid the wages of the 199, mainly Ukrainian, seafarers, claiming that reduced passenger bookings meant he had 'delayed' the payments.

Then a new problem arose. The owner announced that a cruise scheduled for October 2014 was being cancelled due to the low number of passengers. The **Delphin** was going to dry dock instead and would then be laid up.

So now we had a double battle on our hands – to win both the seafarers' backpay and their entitlement under the ITF contract for severance payment.

We met the ship's managers at the ITF office in Bremen and

issued a stark warning that unless they acted, they could face arrest. Immediately afterwards, the owner agreed to pay all the outstanding wages once the ship had arrived in Bremerhaven, Germany. This amounted to a staggering total of USD850,392.42, including additional tipping money we had negotiated for the hotel crew.

We insisted on waiting on board for a full day until the money arrived – in a suitcase – from a bank in Hamburg. The crew was delighted to receive its money and expressed deep gratitude to the ITF.

The final step was to help the seafarers get home to Ukraine. We arranged for three buses to transport those with excess luggage to Odessa, a journey of 36 hours, while the rest flew home. What a great outcome for the crew. ■

Stranded Panamanian crew return home

Netherlands inspector Aswin Noordermeer describes how the ITF helped the crew of a cargo ship stranded in the Dutch port of Rotterdam get home

You would think ITF inspectors were hardened to what they encounter on their ship visits. But the situation was truly shocking on board the Panamanian-flagged **Red Duchess** when we boarded on the afternoon of 23 October 2014 while it was berthed in the port of Bolnes near Rotterdam.

The crew's complaints to the ITF proved to be more than justified. The stores room was empty, there was only one day's food left and only two days' water supplies. The fuel would last no more than two days and winter was on its way.

On top of this, one of the six men had burned his arm and back in an accident in the engine room. He had visited hospital but the wound was not totally closed. He clearly needed further medical attention.

We discovered only one crew member had a written employment contract; the others simply had verbal agreements. This contravenes MLC 2006, which stipulates that crew must have a signed contract before they travel on a ship. By this time, we were not surprised to find that the crew members were also owed wages and that their families at home could not afford to buy food.

There was more. The shipyard had arrested the vessel over outstanding payments for repairs and harbour fees, and it had also been detained by Port State Control. It seemed very likely that the ship would be auctioned the following January.

The CASCO humanitarian organisation in the Netherlands responded immediately to our alert by bringing food on board,

and we persuaded the shipyard to provide the vessel with fresh water and electricity.

The shipowner took days to respond to our efforts to contact him and then failed in his promise to provide wages, food, water and fuel. We asked the company's designated person ashore to meet us and settle all the outstanding matters but he cancelled because of family issues. And then we learned that the ship's master had also flown home to deal with family matters.

The crew were feeling even more abandoned and we judged the situation on board too serious to continue. We contacted the flag state and the Panamanian consul, who said they would contact the owner and try to arrange flights home for the crew. That was the last we heard from them.

In the meantime, the crew had received part of their wages via Western Union but not enough to buy plane tickets for them all. In desperation, we turned to the ITF head office in London for help.

Within two hours, the tickets were ordered and the men flew home on 21 November, full of thanks.

The ITF also submitted a report to the IMO/ILO abandonment database. This appeared to have had a galvanising effect on the flag state because it eventually recognised its responsibilities to the seafarers, as clearly set out in the MLC. On 22 November, the Panama Maritime Authority stepped in and agreed to refund the ITF's costs for the crew's repatriation. ■

"The ITF's report on the case to the IMO/ILO abandonment database appeared to have a galvanising effect on the flag state"

Rogue vessel brought to book by ITF and port authority co-operation



Matt Purcell, ITF assistant co-ordinator in Australia, congratulates the country's ports authority for banning a rogue vessel after co-operation with ITF inspectors

The resolution of a problem for the crew of the Liberia-flagged containership Vega Mars was swiftly followed by revelations of a serious situation involving its sistership, the Vega Auriga. Both required close collaboration between ITF inspectors in Australia and New Zealand and the intervention of port authorities.

In February 2014 we were contacted by the Mars crew over what turned out to be a three-month delay in payment of their wages by the vessel's German owner, Vega Reederei GMBH & Co KG. The seafarers were even more worried about the simultaneous delay in their home allotment payments by Vega Manila Crew Management Inc in the Philippines.

As the vessel's next port of call was Bluff in New Zealand, ITF

inspector Graham McLaren in Wellington arranged to visit the ship. He succeeded in forcing the owners to reimburse the crew for the outstanding USD121,887.

"Vessels entering Australia ports must ensure they meet minimum international standards"

We soon heard about difficulties on board the Vega Auriga, which was in Australian waters and heading for Tauranga, New Zealand. A visit by Graham ascertained that the crew was owed around USD40,000 in back wages, and Dean Summers, ITF national co-ordinator in Australia, secured the money when the vessel

reached its next port.

The story didn't end there, though. Following discussions with Dean, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) detained the Vega Auriga for a number of welfare deficiencies, including sustenance and fatigue – the third time it had done so in a year.

In an unprecedented and praiseworthy move, AMSA banned the vessel from entering any Australian port for three months, on the grounds of repeated breaches relating to seafarer welfare and vessel maintenance. Its ship safety division general manager Allan Schwartz said: "Vessels entering Australia ports must ensure they meet minimum international standards. Seafarers live a tough life under even the best of circumstances, spending many months at sea

away from family and friends."

The Vega Auriga headed for New Zealand and arrived in Tauranga on 31 August, where it was detained after Maritime New Zealand found 14 deficiencies. Eighteen Filipino crew members were stranded on board and had received no wages since June. The ITF helped them recover the full NZD100,000 (approximately USD79,200) for backpay and final salaries for September, October and part of November, and assisted the crew's repatriation to Manila in November.

German company Johs Thode took over the vessel's management and started the process of signing a new ITF agreement. Before the ship left New Zealand, its deficiencies were rectified, a replacement crew was hired and it was renamed Hansa Reliance. ■

Beyond shame?

Sam Dawson, ITF press and editorial manager, reviews the *Black Sea* film, which is being promoted around the world



A grandmother who shouts out to sea for her dead son to return and can't even show his sons their father's grave. Seafarers who tell how they share each precious cigarette between five of them. The terribly burned victim of an accident on a substandard vessel. Stories of abandonment, corruption, suffering – these are the desperate testimonies captured in *Dark side of the Black Sea*, a powerful new film that can be seen at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tk440t7Ih8

Produced by ITF member union the Marine Employees Solidarity Association (DAD-DER), the film exposes the dire and disgraceful conditions under which many

seafarers live – and die – there.

It examines the scandal of shipping in what the ITF calls the sea of shame. It's a tale of often unbelievably dangerous ships.

The film raises questions: how can this be allowed to happen? How can they get away with it? It provides some answers, too: corruption, inertia, criminality. A manager tells how at his former company the boss's catchphrase was "tell the cattle to go to work".

The film is a moving catalogue of misery, told direct to camera by seafarers. Their stories of danger, exploitation and abuse needed to be recorded, and

finally they have been. The words of the grieving mother linger long after watching the film.

But there is some hope among the sadness and shame. Workers on the ITF's Black Sea project tell how the Maritime Labour Convention provides a tool for change – but only if there is union force making sure it is applied. For that to happen the seafarers of the region have to believe that together they can make a difference, and that they are not alone.

Dark side of the Black Sea poses questions and demands that we all take action. ■

Albedo families win compensation

ITF inspector Ranjan Perera reports on a compensation win for the families of missing seafarers after a four-year ordeal



Twenty-three seafarers were on board the Malaysian-flagged Albedo when it was hijacked by Somali pirates 900 nautical miles off Somalia in November 2010.

One Indian seafarer died in captivity, but in July 2012, following a local campaign, the ITF managed to negotiate a deal for the release of seven Pakistani crew members, who returned home safely.

A year later the progressively unseaworthy vessel sank in heavy storms. Four Sri Lankan seafarers – Nakinda Wakwella, D L Sarath Silva, Anton Boniface and G C Perera – were listed missing and feared dead.

The remaining 11 seafarers – seven from Bangladesh, two Sri Lankans, one Indian and one Iranian – were held hostage ashore. Negotiations continued for their release and repatriation

and eventually the two Sri Lankan seafarers were the last to be freed, after spending 1,288 days in captivity, and arrived home in Colombo in June 2014.

The heartbreak continued for the families of the missing Sri Lankan crew members, as well as the financial burden caused by the loss of wages coming in. They finally won compensation from the authorities, thanks to the ITF and the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme working together on their behalf. In October 2014, each family received Rs50,000 (approximately USD813) from the chair of the Ceylon Shipping Corporation, Rear Admiral Jayanath Colombage.

This compensation will not make up for the loss of their loved ones but will at least provide some assistance as the families move forward with their lives. ■

Repeat offender tackled by flag state and ITF

Ulf Christiansen, ITF inspector in Hamburg, describes the collaboration with flag state Gibraltar to deal with repeat offender the German-owned ship Richelieu

Two Filipino crew members aboard the Richelieu approached the ITF in Sweden for assistance in March 2014. Their nine-month contract was coming to an end and their scheduled replacement in the next port was imminent but they would only leave the ship if they were first paid in full their outstanding wages, including holiday pay.

The men feared that unless they stayed on board they would suffer the same fate as a former Filipino crew member on the Richelieu, Joseph (not his real name). Joseph had flown home in February after completing his contract, only to be told by the Manila agency that he would receive just USD1,200 of the nearly USD4,000 he was owed for outstanding wages and

Sanjeev's criminal case ordeal

An ongoing criminal case prompts ITF inspector Thomas Sebastian to ask whether there should be an amendment to maritime law to protect seafarers following accidents at sea

This tragic story began with an accident at sea on the Kerala coast, India, in the early hours of 1 March 2012. Eighteen months on, a Sri Lankan seafarer on duty at the time is still deprived of his livelihood, scapegoated by the shipowner, facing criminal proceedings and uncertain about his future.

Sanjeev (not his real name) was on watch duty when the Indian-flagged Prabhu Daya, owned by Tolani Shipping Mumbai, had to abruptly alter course to avoid a fishing boat. He and the

quartermaster were confident the action was successful but nonetheless called the master to the bridge. He was satisfied with their handling of the incident and returned to his cabin 30 minutes later.

That afternoon the Indian Coast Guard sent a message to the vessel that a fishing boat had collided with a ship. The boat had capsized and sunk, killing five fishers and injuring the remaining two. The resulting outcry by the Kerala fishing community put intense pressure on the state government, which

“The ITF had dealt with the German-owned Richelieu before... So here we were again, in March 2014. We contacted owner Briese and its crewing agent Leda Shipping to demand Joseph’s full payment and the release and full payment, totalling around USD10,500, of the two sailors currently on board”

holiday pay. Joseph contacted us to express his determination to get all his money and to ask for our help.

The ITF had dealt with the German-owned Richelieu before. In November 2013, inspector Goran Nilsson had obtained backpay for some of the crew, including Joseph and the other two men, in Uddevalla, Sweden, after discovering that they had received much lower wages than set out in the vessel’s ITF collective agreement.

So here we were again, in March 2014. We contacted owner Briese and its crewing agent Leda Shipping to demand Joseph’s full payment and the release and full payment, totalling around USD10,500, of the two sailors currently on board.

Briese argued that such payment before the two seafarers left service would be unusual but the ITF stood firm.

Before putting into Hamburg, Leda Shipping had claimed it would not be possible to release the two sailors there because of ‘visa problems’. The ITF knew from the harbour police that this was untrue. We needed to apply additional pressure.

We informed both the ship’s charterer, Peak Shipping in Norway, and the flag state, Gibraltar. This had quick results. On 22 March we witnessed the handover of USD10,000 to the captain by a Hamburg agent and the captain’s payment to the two men of USD10,749.89. They were delighted to leave the ship that evening for the sailors’ hostel, and left for Manila the next day.

There was still Joseph’s case to resolve. We heard the Richelieu was about to start loading fertilisers at another Hamburg terminal and an ITF acquaintance there told the terminal management about the

case. When the ship was due to dock on 24 March, the terminal informed Briese and Peak Shipping that loading would not begin until the ‘ITF matter’ was resolved.

This spurred the head of Leda Shipping into contacting us and agreeing to pay Joseph’s outstanding wages in full. Within a day, the money was in the ITF account in Germany and shortly afterwards, an overjoyed Joseph in Manila confirmed receipt of the full USD3,834.53.

Gibraltar demanded that Briese pay Joseph’s outstanding wages. In mid-May, we heard that the flag state was still angrily pursuing Briese and Leda for responses to its queries about the ITF allegations, and had informed Briese that no authorisation to issue an MLC certificate for the Richelieu could be given until these questions were answered satisfactorily. ■

directed the police to find and arrest the ship.

The Prabhu Daya was one of seven vessels under suspicion and had to account for its position at the time of the accident. It was ordered to return to India and arrested at Chennai on 5 March.

Meanwhile, distressed Sanjeev decided to search for paint marks in the lower hull aft section of the vessel and accidentally fell overboard. Fortunately, he was rescued by the crew of Sri Lankan fishing boat FV Ranjan Putha, after floating in the sea half dead for almost nine hours. He was admitted to Trincomalee hospital with acute pneumonia.

The agent appointed by the shipowner to deal with Sanjeev’s repatriation visited him in hospital and collected his travel documents. He then simply disappeared, along with Sanjeev’s papers. When Sanjeev left hospital the Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka took him into protective custody,

issued an emergency passport and repatriated him to Kerala on 15 March.

“Sanjeev would have been alone in his battle for justice if it were not for the moral and financial support of the MUI, which has so far spent over INR 5 Lakhs (USD10,100) towards his travel and living expenses”

On arrival at Trivandrum Airport Sanjeev was formally arrested

and put in jail. Criminal charges were filed against him, the quartermaster and the master and all three were refused bail. During interrogation the police treated the incident like a road accident, ignoring all safeguards for crew under maritime law.

It took several legal appeals and 13 months before Sanjeev was finally granted permission to apply for a duplicate passport and even longer before his documents were retrieved from the agent and returned to him. Thanks to the persuasion of Sudhakar Duri, secretary of the Maritime Union of India (MUI), the shipowner agreed to officially seal Sanjeev’s continuous discharge certificate to certify his period of service on 24 June 2014.

The company continued to lay all the blame for the accident with Sanjeev, claiming publicly that his fall from the ship had been a suicide attempt and offering him no financial or legal assistance. In contrast, it supported the quartermaster and master and allowed them to return to work

on other company vessels.

The government promptly lost interest in the case once the shipowner settled out of court with the fishers’ next of kin and the two injured men, and the ship’s P&I club paid for the lost fishing boat.

For Sanjeev, however, the tragedy is far from over. The police case continues, although no charge sheets have been handed to the court. Sanjeev would have been alone in his battle for justice if it were not for the moral and financial support of the MUI, which has so far spent over INR 5 Lakhs (USD10,100) towards his travel and living expenses.

This dreadful case raises a number of issues. We will explore within the ITF how we can campaign industry-wide for a better system to deal with accidents at sea, assess responsibility and put in place basic protections and support for seafarers who are facing legal proceedings. ■

MLC update

MLC starts to take effect

By 20 August 2014, the Maritime Labour Convention had been in force for a year. Katie Higginbottom, ITF maritime operations project and campaigns leader, gives her verdict on its effectiveness in practice



Between 20 August 2013 and 19 August 2014, ITF inspectors carried out a total of 9,646 inspections on 7,486 vessels.

Thirty-two percent of them were found to have problems with living and working conditions that are covered under the MLC. Despite the convention requiring wages to be paid 'at least monthly and in full', the vast majority of problems still related to owed wages. This is no great surprise; the MLC was never going to fix all the world's maritime problems overnight. The question is: what difference does the convention make in helping solve the problems? Here we have to look at flag and port state responsibilities.

Seven of the top 10 offending

flags were ones that have ratified the convention. This suggests some serious room for improvement when it comes to flag state responsibility. While Panama had the most problems, by virtue of the size of the registry, the worst flags, with over 60 percent of their inspected vessels having problems, were Belize, Cambodia, the Cook Islands, Moldova, Russia, and St Kitts & Nevis.

There are signs of improvement, though, as can be seen in our Stories from the frontline on pages 7-11: Panama funding the repatriation of crew on a vessel abandoned in Rotterdam, and Gibraltar withholding MLC certification of a company with form for delaying payment of wages.

Belize, too, has been highlighted by ITF inspectors in Russia and Ukraine as an ally in resolving crews' problems with certain shipowners.

All positive signs, but there's no place for complacency. Flag states have the primary responsibility for maintaining decent standards on board their vessels and we will continue to hold them to account.

But it is in ports where the real power lies to enforce the convention. The Paris Memorandum of Understanding reported that 113 ships were detained for MLC-related deficiencies in this first year. AMSA, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, has not only detained vessels but has now banned three repeat offenders

from entering Australian ports for a period of three months. ITF inspectors are working increasingly closely with port state control officers to make sure that vessels with serious deficiencies don't slip through the net.

It's clear that the convention is still a work in progress, but there is no doubt that it is making a difference to vessels trading internationally. There is no excuse for shipowners who don't respect their crews. Vessels without proper contracts, where wages are delayed, where hours of rest are falsified, have no place in a decent shipping industry. It's up to all of us to make sure that the MLC is put to good use in eliminating such practices. ■

New amendments on abandonment and crew claims

Fabrizio Barcellona, assistant secretary, ITF seafarers' section, explains how the MLC – the seafarers' bill of rights – is being amended to better serve seafarers



MLC amendments at a glance

If you are abandoned:

- Flag states must have in place a financial security system to provide assistance for all their registered ships.
- There will be a simpler system for you to report an abandonment and quickly get financial assistance.
- You will be entitled to up to four months of outstanding wages and all reasonable expenses you incur on board and until you arrive home.

Making a claim for death or long-term disability:

- Flag states will be forced to adopt laws to provide you or your family with easy access to contractual compensation due.
- You, your next of kin or your representative can directly request contractual compensation.
- If the nature of your long-term disability makes it difficult to assess the full compensation, you must be given an interim payment to avoid undue hardship.

Under both amendments, evidence of financial security and the details of the financial providers must be posted on board and be made available to all seafarers. Any financial entitlements are without prejudice to any other form of compensation you may wish to pursue.

The much-heralded MLC is already bringing benefits to seafarers around the world – whatever job they do on board a ship – and more balance to the maritime industry.

Importantly, the ILO and representatives of seafarers and shipowners who developed the convention also made sure that the MLC was a 'living instrument' and could be amended simply to reflect changes in the industry and in seafarers' working conditions.

Less than a year after the MLC entered into force, and following arguments put forward by seafarers' and shipowners' representatives, the ILO called a special, week-long, tripartite committee meeting which agreed the first two amendments to the convention.

Firstly, to enable seafarers who endure hardship by being stranded in a foreign country without means to be repatriated to recover their earnings. It will be mandatory for flag states to ensure they have a financial security system that can provide direct access, sufficient coverage and quick financial assistance for all ships registered under their flag. Information about the financial security provider must be posted and made available to all seafarers on board. There will be a simplified system for seafarers or their representative to report an abandonment and promptly activate the necessary financial assistance.

Very importantly, the financial security system, without any prejudice to other forms of compensation a seafarer may wish to pursue, will cover four months' of outstanding wages

due by the shipowners to the seafarers under their employment contract. It will also cover all expenses reasonably incurred by a seafarer, including the cost of repatriation and essential needs including food, clothing, drinking water and medical care – both on board and until they arrive home.

Secondly, to improve how shipowners deal with claims related to death or long term disability. This states that too often seafarers or their families suffer unnecessarily before receiving compensation, mainly due to the bureaucratic and legal process that follow accidents at sea.

The new agreed text of the MLC will force flag states to adopt legislation that provides seafarers or their families with easy and expeditious access to the contractual compensation due in case of death or long term disability. Again, without prejudice to any other legal right for which a seafarer may wish to seek remedy, the request for contractual compensation can be directly brought by the seafarer, their next of kin or a representative of the seafarer. Evidence of financial security and the details of the financial providers must be posted on board and be made available to all seafarers. Where the nature of a long term disability makes it difficult to assess the full compensation to be made, the seafarer must receive an interim payment to avoid undue hardship.

It is hoped the two amendments will enter into force within the convention in 2017, to provide the necessary time for all ratifying countries to incorporate them into their national legislation. ■

New safety and health guidelines to protect seafarers

Additional practical safety and health guidelines are to be reflected in national laws, explains Rossen Karavatchev, senior seafarers' section assistant

The ILO has estimated that 6,300 people die every day as a result of all occupational accidents or work-related diseases. That's more than 2.3 million deaths every year.

The costs can be devastating to workers' families and their communities – and the economic burden is estimated at four percent of global gross domestic product each year.

It will come as no surprise to seafarers that seafaring is considered to be one of the world's most dangerous occupations.

There's been an international drive to ensure that seafarers' work environment on board ships better promotes occupational safety and health (OSH). To this end, maritime OSH experts met the ILO in October 2014 and agreed new guidelines to bolster the MLC's provisions on health and safety protection and accident prevention.

The Maritime Occupational Safety and Health Guidelines (MOSH) are intended to provide supplementary practical information to be reflected in national laws and other measures and deal with the special maritime working environment. This includes demanding physical working conditions, potentially hazardous tasks, isolation, long hours of work, rigid organisational structures and high levels of stress and fatigue.

The meeting addressed all areas of seafarers' occupational safety and health, including alcohol and drug abuse,

violence and harassment, and infectious diseases. The document details responsibilities for governments, shipowners and seafarers in relation to accident and illness prevention practices, implementation, training and emergency and accident response.

The guidelines elaborate further on the duties and responsibilities of the safety committees and safety representatives on board ships with five or more seafarers, and the need for proper risk evaluation to prevent accidents on board.

The final document provides flexibility without compromising on standards of OSH to protect seafarers, and will be a useful resource for those setting up or reviewing their OSH frameworks in compliance with the MLC. It says the OSH measures 'should not be seen as an economic cost but as an investment to continuous improvement to the safety and health of seafarers'.

Welcoming the guidelines, Patrice Caron, executive vice-president of the Seafarers' International Union of Canada, said: "There will be many challenges to implement occupational safety and health in the maritime sector. The guidelines should provide assistance. Minimising risk is a fundamental concern to seafarers and for others working on ships."

You can read the amendments and the health and safety guidelines on the ILO website at <http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/maritime-labour-convention>. ■

"6,300 people die every day as a result of all occupational accidents or work-related diseases. That's more than 2.3 million deaths every year"



Life as an inspector

As he reaches 22 years as an ITF inspector and co-ordinator for Canada, Peter Lahay gives the lowdown on life in the job



How did you get to where you are now? When I was a seafarer, I was an activist. If there was a problem with overtime, hours of work or leave for my shipmates, I was the person who would take responsibility for taking the complaint to management to get it resolved.

So once, when the ITF inspector in Vancouver was away at a meeting, I was asked to meet with a Bulgarian crew having trouble. I remember it still: it was a Zodiac Maritime ship, the Hemlock. The drinking water in their tank had been pumped from the Orinoco river in Venezuela. The captain had a fridge full of bottled water, but there was no potable water for the crew. The crew were also being cheated on salary, were near starvation and needed medical attention. Their gums were receding. One man showed me purple haemorrhoids two feet long hanging out of his backside. I was shocked, and I knew I had to do whatever I could to help these guys.

That job got me interested in the business of shipping and I learned from everyone I could. It led me to becoming an ITF inspector. I saw what crew went through and that they deserved respect and representation.

What is the most challenging aspect of your job? ITF inspectors work largely in isolation, just like seafarers. There are only 135 men and women around the entire planet specifically dedicated to representing foreign seafarers and enforcing the FOC campaign. We have a lot of support, but we work alone.

What are the things you're most proud of? I'm really proud that seafarers are willing to trust us day after day to press their claims, and to stick to the principles of confidentiality and direct representation for them – and often for their family and sometimes a whole community back home that relies on their wages.

I'm proud of mentoring and training new ITF inspectors, and of training Canadian port state control officers to have a clear understanding of their new role in enforcing seafarers' working conditions under the MLC.

But mostly I'm proud we make a real difference to workers.

Here's just one example. A bosun on a bulk carrier contacted his daughter to say he feared for the crew's lives as they crossed the North Atlantic in a winter storm on an unsound ship, heading from Europe to the Canadian Arctic. She contacted me on Facebook and I alerted Transport Canada and asked for an enhanced bulk carrier inspection on arrival.

The bosun's fears proved correct. Halfway across the ocean, the turbocharger broke on the main engine. Transport Canada had been watching the vessel and the Department of National Defence was doing aerial surveillance and laid plans to put it in to a safe port. The ITF inspector boarded with Port State Control, who found the three forward frames of the bow caved in. If the fourth had failed, the plates would have fallen off and the ship would have gone down.

We were able to work with the family, the bosun, the regulatory officials, the whole team. The vessel was detained for structural faults and repaired. Everyone survived. If the engine had simply been fixed and the vessel sailed on, crew surely would have been lost. The bosun and his daughter saved that crew. I'm proud to have helped, and I'm proud to be part of a campaign that people trust.

What are the most significant changes to the industry in recent years in your view? Shipowner building programmes have made the biggest difference. Internationally, we see a higher standard of vessels, although there are a few exceptions, like in the Black Sea. But right now too many ships are chasing too little cargo. Most owners are facing tight financial peril, which hits the seafarer in things like lack of food and water, late wages, extended contracts, being cheated on overtime and lack of vessel maintenance.

What impact has the MLC 2006 had on your work? In countries that have ratified it, it's given ITF inspectors a direct legislative enforcement tool. When an ITF inspector tells a shipowner that a vessel is not MLC compliant and we can seek to get the port state control to detain it, the owner takes that seriously. All over the world, through our strong relationships with maritime authorities, we can get vessels detained. And all over the world, that's happening. There were 113 detentions and 11 in Canada alone in the first year of MLC enforcement.

What advice would you give to a seafarer before they join a vessel? Make sure you understand your terms and conditions of work, and keep an accurate record of work done on board, your hours of work and rest. You need a copy of the Message to Seafarers – the phone book for ITF inspectors worldwide. And finally, if you find yourself in unsafe working conditions, inform an ITF inspector by email, phone or Facebook, any social media. You should trust that you can speak to an inspector confidentially before any action will be taken.

How do you switch off? I don't. I love my job. ■

Better services for seafarers

Kimberly Karlshoej, the new head of the ITF Seafarers' Trust, is passionate about seafarers' wellbeing and determined to improve how the Trust serves you. We asked what drives her and what is her vision for the grant-making body



The daughter of an American mother and a Danish shipping magnate father, Kimberly was born in the US, has spent most of her life in Denmark but has lived in several other countries. She describes herself as having “salt water in my veins” from growing up in the maritime industry.

She nearly took a different course, training as a nurse and then a psychologist, but couldn't escape the pull of maritime welfare. So in 2002, she co-founded the TK Foundation, a charitable trust named after her father. While she believes that achievements are “never the product of one person, but done in co-operation with others”, she is proud of her successes at the foundation. These include setting up the Seafarers Emergency Fund, being elected onto the board of the World Maritime University and being a founder of the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme.

Kimberly decided to pursue new

horizons so left Denmark in 2012 for England. She wanted to stay in the maritime world “because I feel I have a debt to seafarers” from the family connection, and was delighted when the opportunity at the Seafarers' Trust arose.

A colleague described Kimberly as a “volcano of ideas” and she's ambitious for the Trust to change the way it works, so that everything it does has a measurable impact on seafarers' wellbeing. She believes ‘wellbeing’ is more appropriate than ‘welfare’, as seafarers are active in their own wellbeing rather than having welfare ‘imposed’ on them.



Listening to how you want to improve your wellbeing and building better relationships with you lies at the heart of what Kimberly wants to do differently. She wants you to know what the Seafarers' Trust is and plans more direct communication with you via social media, and closer co-operation with ITF affiliates.

To kick this off, the Trust was about to participate in research into seafarers' views, undertake a rebrand to make the Trust and its website more accessible to you and to develop and better promote its seafarers' centres app and its directory. She hopes the rebrand will be completed by 1 May 2015.

Within her first month at the Trust, Kimberly went on the first of what she is determined will be many visits to seafarers, joining ITF inspector Tommy Molloy for a day in Liverpool. "Going out with Tommy was very informative and it was great to be on board chatting with seafarers again. I was enormously pleased that a Russian crew member on one vessel asked me about the nearest seafarers' centre, and I was able to show him our Shore leave app and how he could use it to contact the centre for a ride there."

It horrified her when someone likened the Trust to an 'ATM in a shed' and she's determined to change this perception. In practice, this will mean the Trust continues with its current grants but will increasingly set the agenda. It will do this by developing its own proposals for larger, more long-term projects and putting them out to tender, with clear terms and conditions that prioritise monitoring and evaluation.

"This approach is new in the maritime funding world but is a long-standing practice in the charitable world", she explains. "It's all about professionalising the Trust and proving its worth. We'll work closely with

organisations to develop their capacity to bid for and deliver projects."

An example of the type of project she'd like the Trust to fund is the operation of mobile seafarers' centres which cater for those who can't leave ship. Fully equipped vans would deliver online purchases to ships in port and provide internet access.

She also wants the Trust to work with ITF affiliates to strengthen their ability to comment on and influence how states meet their MLC requirements to provide port welfare.

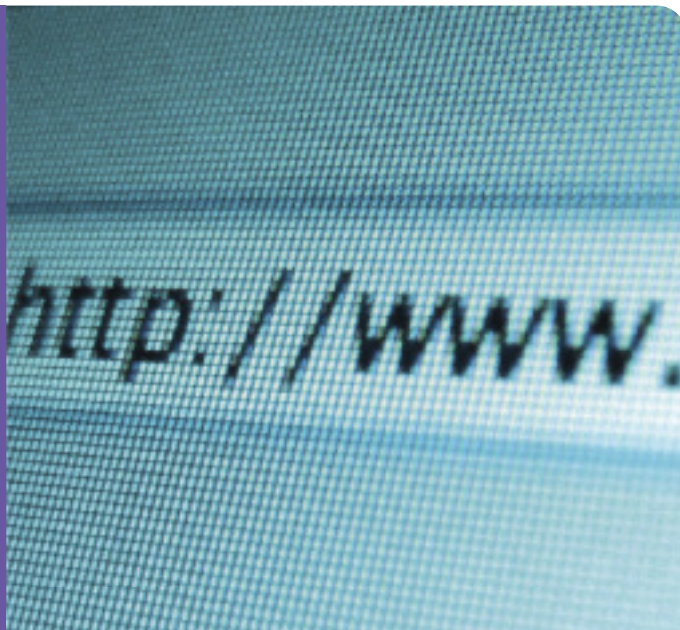
"I'm passionate about seafarers' wellbeing and very excited about the difference the Seafarers' Trust could make to their lives. The greatest challenge will be getting everyone to work together for the same goal but I will be consistently encouraging everyone in the maritime industry work towards providing better services for seafarers. We're fortunate to be working with trade unions and others, like the Mission to Seafarers, Sailors Society, Stella Maris – some of which have been around for a couple of hundred years. They have done a lot of good, but there's always room to improve and I am looking forward to working closely with them on attaining a common vision."

Her vision for seafarers' wellbeing? "Happy, healthy seafarers with decent work – work that offers security, freedom, fairness and dignity."

Wherever she goes, Kimberly seeks out conversations with seafarers. So next time you're at an airport, in a port or at a social event and a woman starts chatting to you about your life at sea and in ports, it could be the director of the Seafarers' Trust picking your brains about how to improve services for seafarers. ■

Have your say about improving onboard communications

We know communication with your families is vital when you're away from home for a long time. Luca Tommasi from the Seafarers' Trust invites you to have your say about how internet provision on board can be improved



A ship's broadband satellite connection is not yet as broad as the connection we can experience at home – Skype, for example, is still not available on board because of the high bandwidth required. And contrary to popular belief, only a small percentage of the world's fleet provides internet for crew members – all too often you discover too late that the promised 'internet on board' turns out to be just a narrowband satellite connection, available only to communicate with the management or, at best, to send a text email at a cost.

As seafarers in the internet age, used to communicating with your peers and families via text messages, chats and social media, you want more shipping companies to respond to your needs.

One management company has implemented internet satellite connections on board its vessels, charging seafarers USD25 a month for a reliable broadband connection. The recent Crew communication survey 2014 by ISWAN (International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network)

revealed that seafarers already spend USD134 a month on communication, so this service sounds fair.

It's not always much better in port. A few – such as Antwerp and Southampton – offer Wi-Fi. But it is difficult and expensive to implement and we haven't heard of many new ports adopting this service recently. This Filipino seafarer's experience is very common: "The first thing I do, when I'm in port off duty, is turn on my computer and look for a Wi-Fi connection. Unfortunately, most of the time, Wi-Fi is locked by a password."

Despite a move to provide better communication facilities on board, computers in seafarers' centres are still the primary source of access for you. Without them, getting in touch with loved ones would be much more difficult and expensive.

Today, however, most seafarers have either a smartphone or a laptop, and sometimes both. If your ship has a fixed-schedule route, with more than one port of call in the same country, you usually buy a local SIM card. Some seafarers' centres sell these and help you subscribe to a monthly service with an

internet allowance, in the same way you would use ashore on your smartphone. You've told us how much you appreciate this service, and for centres struggling to survive it brings in much-needed income.

If your ship is visiting a port just once and staying overnight, you may be lucky to have a skilled ship visitor who is able to turn the mess room into a Wi-Fi area, using a portable internet hotspot. You benefit from this until the ship departs and you've said that you are happy to contribute a donation for the service.

To offer such services, however, ship visitors need to be trained properly and to have a certain degree of IT knowledge. This can be difficult to acquire if they are volunteering just once a month, for example. That's why we would like ship visiting to become a career choice and to attract a new generation of young, IT-literate people who would bring their skills, enthusiasm and creativity to the wonderful and multicultural world of shipping.

But does internet access on board suit everyone and does it always bring benefits? There has been a reduction in the

number of seafarers going ashore over the last few years, largely because of shorter turn-around times and security restrictions. Many fear that having the internet, where seafarers are spending longer in the secluded and isolated environment of the ship, could increase social isolation. Others worry it might create a generation gap between younger seafarers and those who've been at sea for decades, so that they spend their free time in totally different ways.

We would like to stimulate a discussion between you, the seafarers who use communication services, and the wonderful port welfare providers and ship visitors who provide them. So please speak up when you meet them.

And here at the Trust we want to hear about your experiences with internet access – hopefully using the internet connection provided on board your vessel. Send us an email to Trust@itf.org.uk.

I look forward to hearing from you! ■

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 Helpline (24 hours):

+44 (0) 20 7940 9280

SMS Textline **+44 (0) 7950 081459**

Email help@itf.org.uk

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

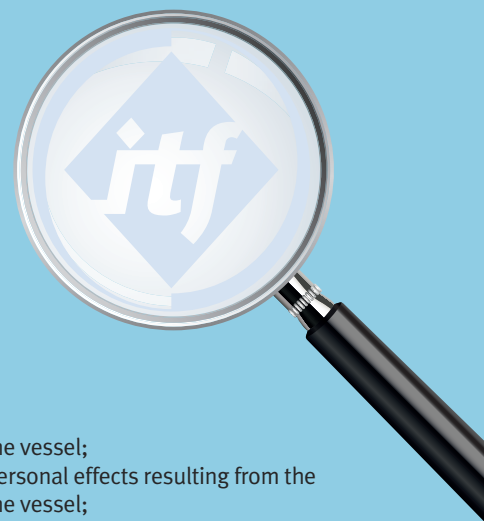


Getting hired Crewing agents

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 to only 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.itfseafarers.org/seafarer-apps.cfm

ITF inspectors listings

3

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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.seafarerfairtreatment.org

Spotting the signs of a scam recruiter

Scam employment agencies ruthlessly prey on vulnerable seafarers. Andrew Linington from ITF affiliate Nautilus International outlines the warning signs seafarers should look out for

As if seafarers didn't already have enough challenges to deal with, recent times have seen a rising tide of cases in which crew members have been conned out of cash by bogus companies promising well-paid jobs – often with reputable shipping companies.

"There's no end to the ingenuity of the scammers," says Nautilus International general secretary Mark Dickinson. "They prey on vulnerable seafarers – many of them from developing nations – and rely on the fact that many seafarers are desperate for jobs and will even borrow money to send them the fees."

Cunard, Carisbrooke, Sealion, Zodiac and Vroon are just some of the operators who have been affected by the fraudsters, who use not only the names of genuine companies but also their logos and other material to make seemingly attractive offers of employment.

The sting in the tail comes when the seafarer is asked to provide money upfront for visas or immigration papers. When they send the fees to the bogus visa-handling company, that is the last they see of their money.

Similar scams have sought to defraud seafarers by asking for 'agency' or 'registration' fees, payments for medical examinations or passport

processing – and even money for airfares to join a ship.

While the fraudsters often seem to target seafarers from Eastern Europe or Asia, those from traditional maritime nations have been affected too. And Nautilus International has taken a particularly active role in seeking to combat the problem, because many of the scams have been conducted using fictitious addresses in countries such as the UK, in an attempt to appear legitimate.

One case highlighted by Nautilus involved an Indonesian officer who contacted Nautilus/ITF inspector Tommy Molloy when a company claiming to be based in the UK offered him a position on board a passenger ship as second officer on a 'tax free' salary of £4,500 a month and generous paid leave arrangements.

However, the offer came with strings. The officer was asked to be 'responsible for the full payment covering their traveling paper to United Kingdom and Traveling Agent Charges and others'.

Fortunately, Mr Molloy was able to advise the officer not to pay the £230 being demanded by the company. The union passed details of the case to two government departments, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and

– because there are UK visa implications – the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), requesting they investigate.

However, there is concern that little effective action is taken against the scammers. Many of them hide behind post box addresses and operate across a number of countries, which makes law enforcement and jurisdiction a real challenge – even if the will is there in the first place.

One example of this was exposed by the ITF. A company called Caledonian Offshore used a post office box address in Canada when it was actually based in Panama. The ITF also highlighted the Al-Najat scheme, which was based in the United Arab Emirates and defrauded thousands of victims through levying a 'medical fee'.

There are hopes that the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 – which sets out clear requirements over the operation of private seafarer recruitment and placement agencies – may help to combat such abuses.

But in the meantime, crew members are being urged to submit evidence of 'seafarer scams' so that the scale of the problem can be exposed and the authorities pressed to take more effective action. ■

Watch out for the warning signs

Nautilus advises seafarers to beware of warning signals that are often associated with employment scams:

- Requests for the advance payment of fees for work on ships – something that is prohibited under international conventions
- Companies using box numbers and mobile numbers rather than landline phones
- Instructions to pay fees through Western Union or other money transfer services
- Email messages with poor English
- Emails purporting to come from state agencies seeking visa or work permit payments that do not come from government email accounts

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.scammmerphonenumbers.blogspot.co.uk
www.fraudwatchers.org/forums/view.php?pg=fw_personal_nos
 ITF look up a ship app
www.itfseafarers.org/seafarer-apps.cfm

Ebola and HIV/AIDS: the impact on seafarers

Ebola – how to protect yourself

Seafarers and dock workers entering port areas in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Senegal in West Africa may be worried about the risk of catching Ebola. However, the risk from travel to and from these countries is low, according to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) – and so far there have been no reported cases of seafarers with the virus. Here is a guide to help you stay safe

Shipping industry advice

International guidelines have been agreed by the ITF, the International Chamber of Shipping and the International Maritime Employers' Council. They advise that masters and crew of vessels calling at ports in affected countries should be aware of the risks of the virus, how it can be spread and how to reduce the risk. They state:

- ISPS requirements ensuring that unauthorised personnel do not board should be strictly enforced while the vessel is in port.
- There should be careful consideration of any shore leave in affected ports.
- The shipowner/operator should avoid making crew

changes in affected countries.

- After departing port the crew should report any symptoms immediately to the person in charge of medical care.

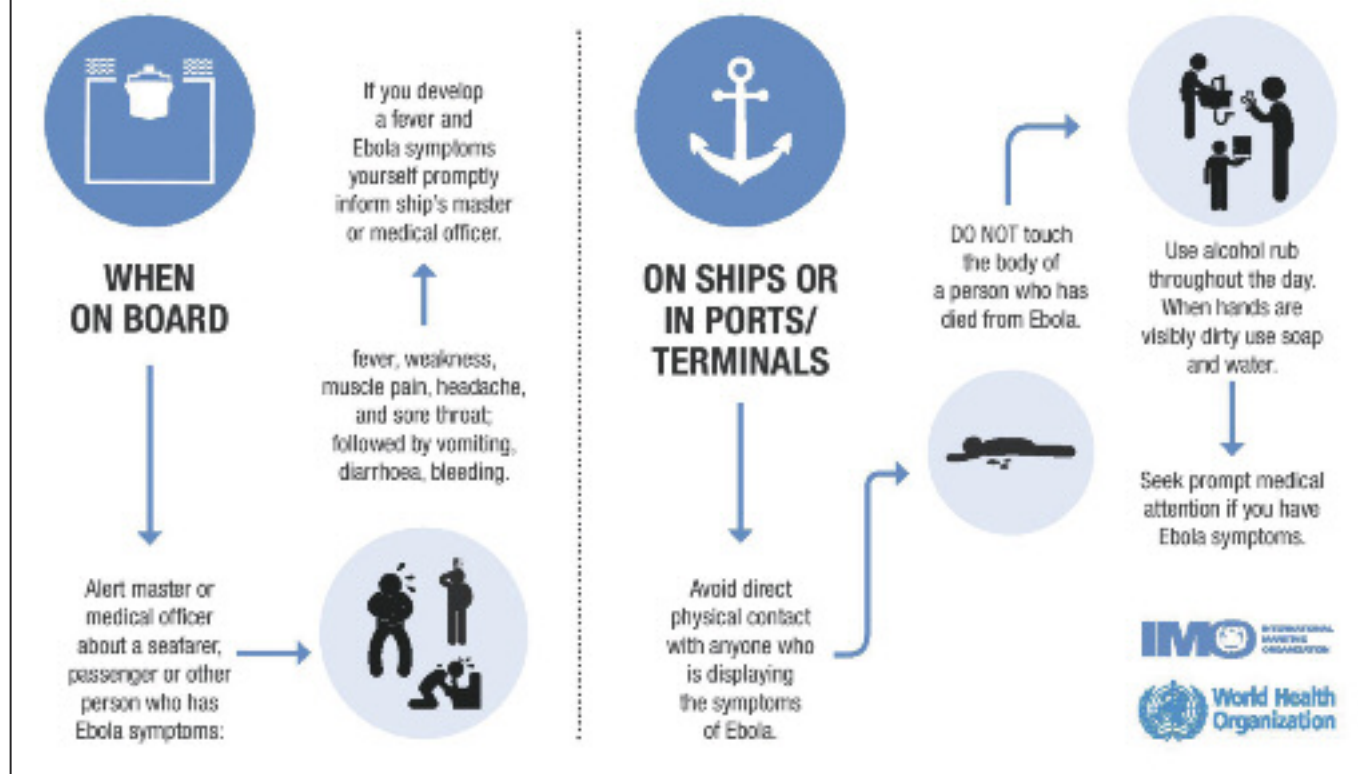
How to reduce the risks in affected areas

- Exercise good personal hygiene at all times and wash hands regularly.
- Avoid shaking hands or making bodily contact with anyone.
- Make sure your ship has a bucket or wash station containing chlorine, water and powdered soap at the gangway for all boarders to wash and disinfect their hands and in other prominent locations.
- Do not handle items that may have come in contact with an

Ebola: the facts

- Ebola Virus Disease is a severe and often fatal illness, with a death rate of up to 90 percent.
- Presently the only treatment available is for the symptoms of the illness.
- It is transmitted in the bodily fluids of people who are seriously ill, who are likely to be vomiting, bleeding or have diarrhoea. Blood, faeces and vomit are the most infectious fluids, and in the late stages of the disease even tiny amounts can carry high loads of virus.
- Anyone with broken or damaged skin will be more at risk and should ensure that these areas of their body are well protected when entering high-risk areas.
- It can take 2-21 days for symptoms to show but it is usually 5-7 days. Patients become contagious only once they begin to show symptoms.
- The first signs are likely to be fever involving a headache, joint and muscle pain, sore throat and severe muscle weakness. Many of those symptoms are similar to flu, so Ebola is not immediately obvious, though it should be suspected in anyone who has recently been in the affected countries.
- After the first symptoms, the patient will suffer diarrhoea, vomiting, a rash, stomach pains, impaired kidney and liver function, and, in some cases, both internal and external bleeding.
- Persons who have died of Ebola must be handled using strong protective clothing and gloves and must be buried immediately. The WHO advises that they are handled and buried by trained case management professionals.

TRAVEL TO AND FROM EBOLA-AFFECTED COUNTRIES IS LOW-RISK HERE IS WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



infected person's blood or body fluids.

- Avoid contact with animals or with raw meat.
- Take extra precautions to prevent stowaways from coming on board, including additional security watches and pre-departure searches.
- Monitor crew for displaying Ebola symptoms and report symptoms immediately to the master, local authorities and owners.
- Seek medical attention if any crew members develop fever, headache, achiness, sore throat, diarrhoea, vomiting, stomach pain, rash or red eyes.
- Avoid hospitals where Ebola patients are being treated. Ask embassies or P&I club correspondents for advice on suitable facilities.

What to do if someone becomes ill on board

If a crew member requires non-

Ebola medical attention, consider whether it is safe for them to remain on board until the next port of call and seek medical attention there. If a crew member is suspected of having Ebola and begins to show symptoms, seek immediate expert medical opinion. The master must report it urgently to the next port of call.

At sea, if a seafarer shows Ebola symptoms, the following precautions are recommended:

- Keep his/her cabin doors closed, unless another room can be used as medical isolation.
- Maintain a log listing all people entering the cabin.
- Anyone who enters the cabin must wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – a surgical protection mask and eye protection or a face shield, non-sterile examination gloves, disposable impermeable gown

to cover all clothing and exposed skin. A waterproof apron should be worn over a non-impermeable gown.

- Before exiting the isolation room the PPE should be removed in such a way as to avoid contact with the soiled items and any area of the face.
- Only transport the patient from the isolation room if it is essential, and the patient should wear a surgical mask.
- Clean or disinfect spills without spraying or using aerosols. Any item in touch with a patient's body or body fluids should be collected separately and disinfected in a way that avoids any creation of aerosol, any contact with persons or environmental contamination. Effective disinfectant is a dilution of sodium hypochlorite at 0.05ppm or 500 ppm available chlorine, with a recommended contact time of 30 minutes.
- All waste from the isolation

cabin must be handled according to the ship's protocol for clinical waste. If there is an incinerator on board, waste must be incinerated. If waste has to be delivered ashore, special precautions are needed and the port authority should be informed beforehand.

Can I refuse to serve on a ship bound for an infected area?

At present, the risk to seafarers is considered to be small, although all crew should take note of the advice provided above.

If you decide anyway that you do not want to go to an affected port, you must check whether or not you have the right to sign off or be repatriated in circumstances relating to potential threats to your health and safety. There will be legal implications if you refuse, such

as breach of contract.

Whether you have such a right will depend on various circumstances, such as the contents of your Seafarer Employment Agreement (SEA), terms and conditions of employment or collective bargaining agreement (check for example the notice and repatriation provisions), and the laws of the flag state. Check these to see if they give a specific or general right to sign off or be repatriated in the face of an imminent risk to health. If they do not, you should raise your concerns with the master or shipowner and request permission to leave or be repatriated.

You can also, of course, contact your trade union or the ITF inspector in the next port of call at any time for industrial support or advice. ■

Where to find up-to-date advice on the risks:

www.who.int
www.ics-shipping.org
www.imo.org

Keeping the Philippines Ebola-free

AMOSUP president Dr Conrad Oca describes how his union is working to prevent Ebola from entering the Philippines

With nearly 8,000 deaths in 2014 alone from Ebola in the West African countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, no-one can deny the threat posed by one of the deadliest viral diseases known to humankind.

Fortunately, there are good people around the world who are vigilantly guarding the preservation of the human race. At AMOSUP (Associated Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines), we are very glad to have a medical professional who knows the virus intimately from his earlier years as a general practitioner in West Africa. Dr Elias Gamboa was there during the first Ebola outbreak in 1976 in Nigeria and quickly became an active

physician in the battle against the spread of the disease.

After working with the leading doctors around the world to fight Ebola, Dr Gamboa is now based in our Pre-Employment Medical Examination section in the Philippines. His mission is to safeguard our shores from infection.

AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital in Manila is increasing awareness and knowledge of Ebola through organising health education sessions for seafarers and hospital staff, displaying posters and handing out flyers. It sends doctors, nurses and laboratory technologists to the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine for training seminars; formulates protocols for dealing with Ebola;

and buys personal protective equipment.

We are fortunate that the Philippines remains free of Ebola, and no Filipino has been infected by the virus. We are ready and capable to diagnose the disease, take preventive measures to avoid its spread and, most importantly, to manage cases if there are any in future.

But we are not complacent. The WHO has declared Ebola a public health emergency and urged all countries to be vigilant and strengthen their preparations against it. With the help of Dr Gamboa and his team, we stand a very good chance of success. ■

Ebola – how has it affected the shipping industry?

While the Ebola crisis has been catastrophic in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, it appears that the impact on the shipping industry has been much less than many feared. We take a look at what's been going on

News that ports in the Caribbean and Malta had turned away ships because of the Ebola scare drew a vigorous response from the ITF. It pointed out that such action is against both the law of the sea and common humanity.

On the whole, though, the industry has both heeded the joint industry advice issued in August 2014 (see page 19) and taken

practical measures to avoid spreading the virus in a way that has kept West Africa's trade lines open and prioritised the health of workers. Thankfully, so far not a single seafarer has been infected.

Rather than bypass the ports in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea and risk damaging those countries' economies, two of the companies that bring in the bulk of containerised cargo

to the region, CMA CGM and Maersk Line, have changed their services calling there to split them from the rest of the West Africa network.

Some shipping companies have introduced extra precautionary measures. CMA CGM advised its staff in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone not to take long car journeys, to avoid the possibility of a road accident

that could land them in hospital, where the risk of infection is highest. It banned its crews from going ashore and limited the number of local officials allowed on board, with strict hygiene rules in place and no physical contact permitted.

Some ports put in place additional safety measures, such as medical screening, which can result in delays while

Ebola – how has it affected the shipping industry? *continued*

inspections are carried out, Lloyds List reported on 20 October 2014. At least one global container shipping line, Hapag-Lloyd, has introduced an inspection surcharge of USD250 per teu to meet these additional costs.

In October 2014 SealIntel Maritime Analysis said: 'From a container-shipping perspective our analysis shows that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa is not having any significant impact on operations in the region.' It added that the main challenges in Africa continue to be port congestion and poor hinterland connections. But it warned that the present situation depended on the virus not becoming widespread in countries with the largest box ports in the region, such as Nigeria and Ghana.

However, World Maritime News reported on 1 December 2014 that 'West African trade [is] estimated to be down by as much as 30 percent since the start of the [Ebola] outbreak, according to data provided by UK shipping consultant Drewry'.

On 16 December, Reuters news agency in London reported that some of the industry's biggest trade associations were modifying freight contracts to reduce commercial exposure for companies whose ships travel to affected countries and to protect crews. It said that INTERTANKO had introduced an Ebola clause including stipulations to find alternative ports if there was risk to the crew, and that charterers would also be liable for any costs if a vessel was quarantined.

Overall, we can certainly be grateful that the impact on our industry has not been greater. But the risk continues and vigilance remains vital. ■

The union response to Ebola

Trade unions in West Africa are struggling to respond to the Ebola crisis. To find out how best to support them, the ITF carried out a survey of the impact of the deadly virus on transport workers in the three major affected countries. Here we provide a snapshot of the findings, though of course the situation may be different now

The survey of six unions in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea found that transport workers were faring worse in Sierra Leone and Liberia. The Sierra Leone Seamen's Union (SLSU) reported 30 deaths among its members, from some 43 reported and five confirmed cases. USPOGUL in Liberia had seen 31 reported cases, 10 confirmed cases and three deaths. While no foreign workers were affected in Liberia, one Liberian and one Guinean driver were affected in Sierra Leone.

Both Sierra Leone and Liberia unions reported unemployment, leading to loss of membership; poor working conditions, with long hours and reduced wages; and increased transport costs because fewer passengers were carried. Liberia additionally reported workers being restricted from boarding vessels and less frequent or cancelled operations by maritime companies.

The SLSU said that the crisis was affecting how it could engage and support its members – for example, it had had to cancel meetings as gatherings were prohibited and union branch offices had closed because of a drop in the collection of membership fees. The union also commented that the relationships between drivers and passengers were affected and that there were social and cultural effects from infected victims being

quarantined or buried in isolation without the usual funeral rites.

Unions in both Sierra Leone and Liberia ensured that their responses to the crisis complied with global prevention measures. Liberian affiliates worked with local non-government organisations to create awareness of the virus and provided education and training for union members, while the SLSU established prevention and mitigation measures relevant to seafarers.

In both countries, union responses have been developed and delivered through their national co-ordinating committees. The national union centre in Sierra Leone is part of the nationwide Ebola taskforce, and the Liberia Labour Congress ran an awareness campaign jointly with the Ministry of Labour Rights and Justice.

The SLSU reported that most employers are carrying out sensitisation at the workplace and through the media, while Liberian unions noted that some employers had distributed disinfectant materials.

ITF president Paddy Crumlin commented: "Our members are trying to get on with their normal trade union work while dealing with the restrictions related with this disease. They are playing an important role in trying to combat this disease effectively – through education on prevention

and the provision of basic hygiene materials. We will be doing everything we can to support them practically."

In October, ITF leaders, global section chairs and regional vice-presidents met in London to emphasise the role of education in combating the disease, following the survey report from African regional staff. ■

Countries and unions surveyed by the ITF

Sierra Leone

- Sierra Leone Seamen's Union

Liberia

- United Seamen, Ports and General Workers' Union of Liberia (USPOGUL)
- Independent Mano River Transport Union of Liberia
- United Workers' Union of Liberia

Guinea

- Fédération Nationale des Transports et Marins Pêcheurs de Guinée (FENATRAMP.G)
- Fédération Nationale des Transports Autos et Motos

Asking affiliates about HIV/AIDS

Activists increasingly believe that HIV prevention should be linked to other health issues, so the ITF's seafarers' section surveyed its affiliates to help it broaden its approach. Susan Leather, the consultant who helped conduct the survey, and the ITF's global HIV/AIDS programme co-ordinator, Dr Syed Asif Altaf, present the initial findings



The ITF consulted affiliates organising seafarers through a short questionnaire in late 2014 on HIV/AIDS, health and wellbeing among seafarers: analysing need and planning a response.

Replies were received from 32 unions in 29 countries from all regions (four from Africa, three from the Americas, two Arab states, 12 replies from 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, 11 from 10 countries in Europe). All major seafarer supplying countries responded, including India, Indonesia, Myanmar, the Philippines and Turkey. We also heard from major ship ownership countries

such as Germany, Norway and South Korea.

The initial analysis revealed that ITF affiliates recognise members' health as a legitimate concern for unions. They are open to the idea of a broader programme that includes, but is not limited to, HIV prevention and care, and would welcome ITF support with this.

When asked to identify the three main HIV and wellness issues for members, 24 unions replied HIV prevention, 17 other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and 14 stigma and discrimination linked to HIV. Ten identified alcohol over-use, nine weight control, and five depression and mental health. However, when asked to select health issues other than HIV to include in a union programme they gave depression more importance: 21 wanted activities on nutrition, with 17 on exercise; 17 on alcohol

use; 18 on depression; and 15 on other STIs.

Encouragingly, many unions already have some form of health programme: 22 out of 32 provide information to members, 12 offer education and training, 11 give out condoms, eight offer confidential voluntary testing and 10 provide other medical checks. Eight of the 32 have referral systems to ensure members have access to appropriate medical services.

Most national HIV/AIDS policies include a workplace strategy, although specific activities for seafarers are rarer, with Asia the best-served region. Progress has been made in making framework or collective agreements include health issues: the replies cited nine in Europe, six in Asia, three in Africa, and two each in the Americas and Arab states.

Mental health is increasingly

important: some affiliates wrote about the numbers of seafarers committing suicide. We clearly have to find out more about how living and working conditions on board might be a cause of stress, depression and suicide, and what unions can legitimately do to promote health and wellbeing.

This survey will be followed in 2015 by a deeper study of seafarers' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour (KAB). Unions representing every region will be asked to select a cross-section of members who are prepared to answer more detailed questions about their behaviour and knowledge of health and HIV.

This KAB study will inform our future approach. For example, it may make sense to produce materials and activities that cover related health conditions and so reinforce messages and behavioural change. ■

Success with HIV/AIDS clauses in dockers' collective agreements

Dockers' unions are increasingly successful at negotiating clauses on HIV/AIDS in their collective bargaining agreements. Here we share a handful of examples

The common elements in port collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) are non-discrimination against workers in terms of getting and keeping jobs, no forced HIV testing, and medical care for workers and their families.

Guatemala has one of Latin America's highest HIV rates. ITF affiliate SITRUEMPORCNAC has implemented a workplace HIV/AIDS programme for over four years with port management. HIV/AIDS clauses in the new CBA ensure continuous education and

sensitisation programmes for workers and their families, keeping workplace environments free of stigma and discrimination, and the availability of condoms.

This inspired 21 representatives from 10 dockers' unions to participate in the ITF's Central America HIV capacity building seminar in 2014. They learned about negotiating clauses and using HIV/AIDS related activities in organising. Nicaragua, Honduras and Panama have since successfully negotiated HIV/AIDS clauses in their agreements.

The dockworkers' federation (FSTPS) in **Nicaragua**, which represents 10 unions, works with the national AIDS programme to ensure the country maintains the lowest per capita level of people living with HIV/AIDS in Central America and to end discrimination against HIV-positive workers. It successfully negotiated an HIV/AIDS clause in its new CBA with national port company Empresa Portuaria Nacional (EPN) in September 2014.

Indian port and dockworkers and their unions celebrated the

inclusion of an HIV/AIDS policy at all 12 major ports in a five-year memorandum of settlement covering wage structure and employment conditions signed in October 2014.

In **Africa**, South Africa, Togo and Kenya all signed CBAs or HIV/AIDS workplace policies for dockworkers in 2014. The Kenya Ports Authority policy contains specific guidelines for managers, supervisors, union leaders and shop stewards and focuses strongly on prevention, education and care. ■

Trade unions at work

Trade unions in the ITF family are in action around the world to win a better deal for transport workers. Here are just a few highlights of seafarers' unions standing up for your rights

Young union makes great strides in Sri Lanka

The National Union of Seafarers in Sri Lanka might be quite young but it is already offering a range of important services to its members, says Ranjan Perera, ITF inspector in the region

The NUSS has 7,220 members, which is 55 percent of active seafarers in Sri Lanka. We have worked hard to build our membership since the union was established in 2007.

One of the most important services we provide for members is our social security scheme, as previously they had no such support. It offers medical insurance to the seafarers and their families, life insurance and contributions to a retirement fund. This scheme is very popular and has already benefitted many of our members immensely.

Seafarers face a lot of hazards and hardships, with a high

degree of stress, and we decided that the union should be there to offer support through difficult times. That's why we introduced counselling services with qualified practitioners for members to discuss personal or work related problems.

Of course, raising awareness among our members of HIV/AIDS is a priority and we receive ILO support for our regular programmes. We've also managed to achieve an HIV clause in our International Bargaining Forum agreement.

We like to welcome foreign seafarers and operate a free shuttle service from ships that berth at the port of Colombo, as

well as organising visits to important places in Colombo City.

I am proud of the legal assistance and solidarity support that we offer in our ports to both Sri Lankan and foreign seafarers who are experiencing distress.

One example is the Panama-flagged, UAE-owned Orana, a cargo vessel which was hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean in December 2010 and only released in October 2012. Sadly, only 13 of its 19 crew members were released with the vessel. Six of them were Sri Lankans who had been kept in the jungle for two years before they returned to Colombo in December 2012. My

union kept up discussions with Kassab Inter Shipping and eventually negotiated in January 2014 one year's salary for the electrician, who was the only remaining Sri Lankan seafarer.

The NUSS provided support for the families of the four missing Sri Lankan seafarers from the Albedo (see page 10) and provided the two seafarers who survived their 30-month captivity by Somali pirates with free places on the Maritime School training courses.

In total, we have won more than USD300,000 backpay for seafarers. ■





Social benefits for Ukrainian seafarers

The Marine Transport Workers Trade Union of Ukraine (MTWTU) is proud to be developing a strong package of social benefits for seafarers, reports Oleg Grigoryuk, the union's first vice chair

The MTWTU pays great attention to the social benefits for seafarers while they are between voyages. In general, this work can be divided into three groups: health insurance, financial aid and socialising.

The state health insurance system is absent here in Ukraine. The medical industry is on the verge of stagnation and is unable to sufficiently meet seafarers' needs. The private medicine sector is actively developing – new modern private clinics are widely available and personal health insurance is becoming popular. Since 2008 we have implemented voluntary health insurance for seafarers. First we launched small pilot projects: we insured nearly 200 seafarers, choosing the right insurance company for their needs. Now the MTWTU has strong co-operation with several insurance

companies of worldwide reputation and 3,000 seafarers are now insured.

We often receive applications from seafarers with financial problems. These may relate to a disease which is not on the insurance list, the illness or death of a close relative, or the birth of a child. In such cases, the seafarers can expect to receive financial aid from us, the amount depending on the need. So, if the seafarer had to contend with cancer, the amount of support provided would be large. The same goes for financial assistance to bury a close relative.

One of the popular reasons for applying to the MTWTU is for the partial reimbursement of the costs of sanatorium rehabilitation for a seafarer or their children, as some seafarers spend their annual holidays improving their health in this way.

We try to engage both seafarers and their families in our trade union activities. We arrange activities for the whole family, like tourist outings, museum visits, trips to children's entertainment complexes and movie screenings. Our New Year matinees for children are very special and counted as the best New Year celebrations in Odessa. Every year we give joy to about 8,000 of our members' children.

Seafarers often apply to us for legal advice or to raise issues regarding working and living conditions on board foreign-flagged vessels. So we regularly conduct information workshops and training seminars, where our legal experts explain to seafarers the controversial issues of national and international legislation. We also regularly visit ships covered by a MTWTU collective bargaining agreement, providing

information and sharing news, experience and best practice with the crew.

In addition, we conduct seminars for future seafarers. We meet with both the cadets and their parents to tell them about the MTWTU, the ITF and their rights. This is our contribution to the future: soon the cadets will become seafarers, and we hope that our trade union lessons will protect them from unpleasant situations.

An excellent example of co-operation are the joint workshops we organise with German union ver.di for seafarers who work on vessels covered by ver.di agreements. We tell seafarers about union coverage and our memorandum of understanding and answer any pressing questions. In this collaboration we see the future of a strong international trade union movement. ■



Tax exemption victory for Indian seafarers

Abdulgani Y Serang, general secretary-cum-treasurer, National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI), celebrates winning an income tax exemption for Indian seafarers working on Indian-flagged ships and describes how they showed their appreciation for the government's efforts

NUSI has long campaigned for income tax exemptions for Indian seafarers working on Indian-flagged ships, arguing that their whole period of service, whether on the Indian coast or in foreign waters, should be counted as serving in foreign waters and non-resident.

At home, we took up this matter with many government departments, including the shipping, finance and labour ministries, and regularly talked to the minister of shipping, the National Shipping Board and National Welfare Board. We provided legal opinion and comparisons with how many other countries, from Australia to the United Kingdom, treated the tax status of their seafarers. We

also appeared before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance on the Direct Tax Code Bill, 2010 to strongly present our case. We organised thousands of seafarers to sign our petitions, which we then presented to the government. Internationally, we sought the support of the ITF.

In 2014, the newly-formed government of the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) gave us a renewed chance to press our case and we continued to use every opportunity to lobby ministers. On 25 June, the Day of the Seafarer, Shri Nitin Gadkari, the minister for road transport, highways and shipping, assured NUSI that he would personally pursue the matter to ensure justice for all

Indian seafarers.

He was as good as his word. I am delighted to say that on 11 September, we won our fight. The whole period of service for seafarers on foreign-going Indian-flagged ships will now be considered as employment in foreign waters.

We were pleased to have an occasion to say a public 'thank you' for the government's positive stand by supporting the prime minister's popular national 'clean India' campaign, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. My union organised a day of action on 29 October, during which all twelve of our branch offices across the coastal states of India took part simultaneously, displaying posters and banners.

In Mumbai, hundreds of keen participants turned out. They swept the traffic lanes from Free Press Journal Marg to the office of the Shipping Corporation of India at Nariman Point and took Swachhta Shapath, the campaign pledge, into the SCI building. We were grateful for the positive support from the media for this story, which brought it to much wider attention.

I was proud that the shipping fraternity chose to lead by example in the nation's efforts for a clean and green future. Our efforts to maintain cleanliness and hygiene will further strengthen the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan campaign. ■



Raising awareness about exploitative recruitment agencies

Manoj Yadav, secretary, Forward Seamen's Union of India, explains how his union is raising awareness about the dangers of non-licensed recruitment agencies

The recruitment and placement of seafarers has been a big problem in India since 2001, when the government-controlled Seamen's Employment Office, through which all Indian-flagged ships appointed seafarers, was abolished and Indian-flagged ships started recruiting seafarers directly. Foreign-flagged ship companies have continued to recruit either directly or through agencies.

The Indian government introduced a compulsory Recruitment and Placement of Seafarers' Licence (RPSL), which agencies must get from the shipping ministry. The licence aims 'to maintain the transparency and record of agencies and their respective principals'.

If a seafarer is worried about

their terms of employment, the government can ask the licensed agency to submit the details of the client for whom it is providing manning services, as it relates to seafarer security, insurance, wages and wellbeing.

So that seafarers can sit their examinations in India, licensed agencies have to present the director general of shipping with a 'record and genuine experience' letter for each seafarer they recruit. The RPSL also aims to ensure that seafarers are adequately insured in line with the Maritime Labour Convention, the International Bargaining Forum and ITF collective bargaining agreements.

However, non-RPSL agencies are increasing, partly because shipowners are reluctant to follow the rules. They recruit seafarers unlawfully, putting

them at risk and perpetuating corruption in the industry. That's why my union has started an awareness raising campaign throughout India against these agencies. We have a clear message for seafarers: do not approach the non-licensed agencies as they cannot legally give you a post.

A seafarer recruited by a licensed agency who, for example, is not paid or suffers harassment, knows the government can hold the agency to account by withholding its licence and cancelling its registration.

But in the case of unlicensed agencies, the government may not be able to take action for a long time, or possibly at all. These agencies go to great lengths to avoid government action – they change their

location, withhold documentation from the seafarers they appoint, announce temporary closures or simply deny having recruited a particular seafarer.

We need to tell seafarers that it is only by working through licensed agencies that their interests can be safeguarded. We print leaflets in six local languages and post them to seafarers' home addresses, use social media and regularly publish articles in the shipping and national media and on our own website. We also arrange workshops, and our officers visit seafarers' hostels.

Many international shipping companies prefer and even demand RPSL agencies, knowing that they provide reliable crews, as the government keeps an eye on them. ■



Ver.di and AMOSUP sign bilateral agreement

Two giants among seafarers' trade unions – ver.di in Germany and AMOSUP in the Philippines – signed a bilateral agreement at the ITF's congress in 2014, in line with the Mexico City policy. The ITF's maritime operations secretary, John Canias, and strategy implementation assistant, Evelin Thomson, explain the benefits



The ITF-approved collective bargaining agreements set minimum labour standards for FOC vessels, and co-operation between trade unions is essential to secure access for seafarers to a range of union services, membership and representation. Unions participating in the FOC campaign have to comply with the ITF's Mexico City policy, agreed by congress in 2010 to establish a new set of minimum standards for non-domiciled seafarers employed on national-flagged ships.

Under their new bilateral

agreement, as the union in the country of beneficial ownership, ver.di has an equal interest in representation of all crews aboard vessels which are beneficially owned or controlled by corporations, entities or persons in Germany. As the union in the labour supply country, AMOSUP has a close relationship with Filipino seafarers and their families who benefit from the union's existing welfare programmes and membership services. It therefore has a continuing, practical interest in the right to representation in collective bargaining agreements for

Filipino seafarers.

With the signed bilateral agreement both unions recognise the other's interest in the spirit of co-operation, mutual respect and equality. Ver.di will offer advice and guidance to AMOSUP with regard to the interpretation of German laws, rules and regulations, while AMOSUP will offer reciprocal advice and guidance on relevant Philippine laws. Both unions will contribute to and participate in negotiations for future agreements.

The two unions also exchange

Ver.di and AMOSUP sign bilateral agreement *continued*

information about FOC collective bargaining agreements and other agreements, legislation and decisions made by maritime authorities that may affect either the terms and conditions of the bilateral agreement or related training of shop stewards or workplace union delegates.

"Together, our position is stronger, both at negotiations and in resolving legal disputes", says Torben Seebold, ver.di maritime co-ordinator and member of the ITF fair practices committee.

"We have long-standing co-operation with many unions in all regions. It's a no-brainer. All seafarers deserve access to quality trade union representation in their home country, as well as protection and support by the agreement signatory union. Establishing bilateral agreements is a sign of recognition and commitment to partnership that is not to be feared but honoured with good intentions, hard work and mutual respect." ■

Flagging out on the rise

Steve Todd, RMT national secretary for shipping and offshore, examines the practice of flagging out

The practice of 'flagging out' to a flag of convenience by European shipping companies is on the up and is doing seafarers down.

It involves shipowners registering their vessels in a country where they are not beneficially owned or operated. This means they can avoid certain regulations laid down by the flag state to which they belong. It also means they can avoid paying minimum wages and applying standards by employing labour from poorer countries, where wage expectations are considerably lower. So they can employ a seafarer at USD2.50 an hour compared with the sterling equivalent of roughly USD15-USD22 an hour they'd probably pay in the UK.

It's easy to see why flagging out is on the rise. Shipowners can flag out vessels and still qualify for concessions under tonnage tax schemes operated by European governments which generally lack links to jobs or training for domestic officers and ratings. These state aid programmes

increase tonnage registered in Europe but do not disturb the exploitative crewing practices employed by companies that cut labour costs and make the most of tonnage tax concessions.

The UK's Chamber of Shipping stated that there was no need for a link to seafarer ratings training in the UK tonnage tax, as the very introduction of the scheme would lead to 25 percent year-on-year increases in the number of UK ratings being trained. Yet shipping companies in the UK currently train less than a quarter of the number of ratings they did in 1999.

It is a fact that European seafarers are paid more than their colleagues in, say, the Philippines, but that is relative to living costs. European seafarer unions are immensely frustrated that the industry is permitted to effectively shop around the world for the cheapest crew, particularly among ratings, but increasingly among officers.

European governments are engaging in an irresponsible race to the bottom that threatens their countries' merchant fleets. For example, the UK government is now effectively competing with FOC countries by slashing registration costs and even marketing the UK flag, or Red Ensign as it is known, on the grounds that it is cheaper. Losing the merchant seafaring capacity would not only be a tragedy for seafaring communities; it would undoubtedly have extremely serious economic and security implications.

We're also worried about the impact of flagging out on the process to determine safe manning levels on ships. For example, in the UK it is carried out on a vessel-by-vessel basis between the shipowner and the safety regulator, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency,

instead of by class and size of vessel, which would be more efficient. This not only excludes trade unions from a crucial stage of these safety-critical discussions but also enables the employer to chip away at what constitutes safe manning levels. We believe this risks putting costs and profit margins above seafarers' rights and, potentially, passenger safety.

The number of UK seafarer ratings has plummeted by over 70 percent to just over 8,500 in the last 30 years, a trend being repeated across Europe. The evidence from avoidable sinkings and crew deaths continues to point toward the role of slack regulation and other shortcomings when tonnage is registered under a FOC.

The industry claims that low-cost crewing models are justified because they are so economically vital. But we argue that it is too risky to allow global capital to dictate the shipping needs of states and citizens. It is time that flag state registries started making the case for a sustainable shipping industry where the risks inherent in open registries are simply not worth taking.

That's why the RMT supports the ITF's long-running campaign to end FOCs. The political aim of the campaign is to obtain an international governmental agreement to ensure a genuine link between the flag a ship flies and the nationality or residence of its owners, managers and seafarers.

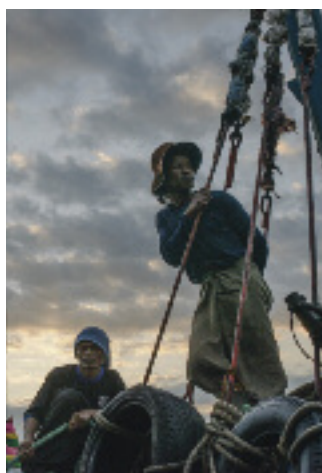
We believe that this could be achieved through renegotiating the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Such an agreement would eliminate the flag of convenience system entirely to the benefit of seafarers, passengers, taxpayers and even politicians. ■



Slavery revealed in Thai fishing industry

A six-month undercover investigation by UK newspaper The Guardian in 2014 revealed the horrors of slavery in the Thai fishing industry. The paper's South-East Asia correspondent Kate Hodal writes from Bangkok of what she encountered

Photo: Chris Kelly



Vuthy, a former monk from Cambodia, was heading to a new job on a construction site when he was driven instead to a fishing port in southern Thailand, sold to a boat captain, and forced to work 22-hour days trawling fish on the high seas for no pay and under the constant threat of violence.

Beaten, starved and at times chained to the deck under the hot tropical sun, the 33-year-old began to suffer from recurring nightmares and crippling anxiety. "I thought I was going to die," says Vuthy. "They sold us like animals, but we are not animals — we are human beings."

Roughly 500,000 people are thought to be enslaved within Thailand's borders. The Thai government estimates that some 300,000 people work in its fishing industry, 90 percent of whom are migrants, susceptible to being duped, trafficked and sold.

Most of the migrants hail from neighbouring Burma, Cambodia and Laos. Enticed by Thailand's strong economy and vast supply of unskilled jobs, they pay brokers to help traffic them over the border and find them construction, factory or

agricultural work. But many are sold instead by their brokers onto commercial trawlers to fill a gaping labour shortage in Thailand's USD8 billion seafood industry.

With nearly 50,000 registered fishing vessels, Thailand has one of the world's largest fishing fleets, but dwindling fish stocks are forcing boats into international waters. Thai boat captains claim the falling workforce means they have little choice but to buy slaves, for whom they pay brokers as little as £250 — a fee passed on as 'debt' to the labourer once he is on the boat. The slaves can spend years at a time at sea without ever coming back to land and effectively receive no pay.

All 15 current and former slaves we interviewed described life on board as violent, brutal and unpredictable. Ten had witnessed a fellow fisherman being murdered by his boat captain or net master; one described watching 20 colleagues killed in front of him, one tied limb by limb to the bows of four boats and pulled apart at sea.

Slaves are often fed just one plate of rice per day and fed methamphetamines to keep working. Those too ill to work are thrown overboard, while others who dare to take lavatory breaks can be viciously beaten. Slave ships avoid public scrutiny by being so remote that they are serviced by cargo boats travelling from Thai ports to fetch the ships' catch and drop off supplies.

Those who try to escape face certain death and are often killed in front of the others as a threat. "One night, two guys tried to escape," said one Burmese slave, Aung Myo. "The skipper caught one, beat him, tortured him and gave him electric

shocks. Then he shot him and kicked him into the sea."

These slave ships catch fish and shellfish for domestic and international markets: the Guardian investigation found that slaves forced to work on Thai fishing boats are integral to the production of farmed prawns sold in the UK, US and EU.

For years, the US State Department warned Thailand that it wasn't doing enough to stem the problem. It finally relegated Thailand in June 2014 to the lowest rung possible on its annual human trafficking index, ranking it alongside Saudi Arabia, North Korea and Iran for its lack of willingness to combat trafficking and slavery. The report cited 'systemic failures' and corruption 'at all levels' as reasons why government officials, boat owners and captains so regularly go unpunished for their crimes.

The Thai government is now desperately trying to instigate reforms ahead of the next trafficking report. Prime minister Prayuth Chan-ocha has appointed himself head of anti-human trafficking and illegal fishing policies and chair of subcommittees on migrant labour and fishing manifests. But researchers on the ground say very little has changed and point to a laughable new plan to send prison convicts to work on trawlers to fill quotas.

"From what I can see, trafficking is still in full force," said one activist who helps vulnerable seafarers. "A Burmese slave recently escaped from a [fishing] boat and said there were many others like him still out at sea."

Thai slaves are also often found on other South-East Asian fishing fleets, and industry officials allege

slavery on fishing boats is as old — and as widespread — as piracy. But activists like the ITF's Ken Fleming say it is time this stopped for good: "If the industry needs to survive on slavery," he recently told reporters, "then the industry needs to go."

Some names have been changed to protect the fishers' identities. ■

Liz Blackshaw, leader of the Catcher to Counter programme, comments:

The Guardian's exposé was the first to name the retailers involved and highlighted the importance of total transparency and corporate social responsibility across the supply chain. Publicity helps to keep pressure on governments, criminal justice bodies and the industry but real change will only come if more retailers demand improvements and if workers are able to exercise their rights and organise themselves.

That's why the ITF and the International Union of Food, Agricultural and Hospitality Workers are collaborating to tackle forced labour and human trafficking in the fishing industry. We are calling for:

- wider ratification of ILO work in fishing convention 188;
- more fishers to be covered by collective agreements with land-based fisheries workers, and fishing vessels to have a collective agreement on board; and
- all ILO member states to ratify the new protocol to the ILO forced labour convention.

New opportunities on the docks

Women on the waterfront

Monique Verbeeck, BTB union secretary in the Port of Antwerp, believes the growth of women dockers in the world's ports can make a difference for all dockworkers



We've seen big changes in the port industry over the last 10 years or so.

In many ways, the job of a dockworker has become less physical. This explains why in the port of Antwerp more and more women have become interested in becoming dockworkers.

We've now got around 300 women working there. Most work in the warehouses as logistic registered port workers, fruit sorters and tally clerks but we also have one female foreman, some straddle carrier-drivers, some assistant-chief tally clerks and a few maintenance workers.

But what is most striking to see is that it is not only the more women-friendly jobs which are attracting women. More and more are now applying to be general dockworkers to load and unload vessels – and they're doing the work equally as well as men. Since 2000, we've seen an increase from three to thirty and there is no sign of this slowing. Yes, it's still a low rate but we must not

forget that the port sector is one of the most male dominated transport sectors.

This shift hasn't happened by chance. In Antwerp, unions and management have worked on a number of initiatives. Safety clothing for women dockworkers has improved a lot and sanitary facilities have been adjusted, but there is still a lot to do, especially on the older general cargo terminals, for both men and women. Both unions and employers recently signed a new safety charter 2020 for the port, aimed at halving the rate of accidents in the workplace by 2020 and creating a clean work environment.

As ITF women's representative for the dockers' section, in co-operation with both the section and the women's department, I enthusiastically back the campaign to promote female employment in the port sector. I was pleased that this was taken up at the ITF congress in August last year and a great example is the work of the ILWU in Canada.

Importantly the ETF (European

Transport Workers' Federation) and the other government and employer social partners in Europe recently agreed and signed recommendations to encourage European port employers to make the sector more attractive for women and to implement guidelines on this at national and port level.

Since 1984, I have represented both male and female dockworkers in my union and have witnessed first-hand the changes in the port industry. The desire to see more women dockworkers is not about pursuing quotas but to create fair and equal opportunities for women who want to take the challenge to become part of this man's world.

Having more women working in our ports is also good for all dockworkers. Men and women working together can create a positive image for the whole port sector. Working together with the other maritime sections we can create a positive image for the whole maritime industry: seafarers, dockers and fisheries. And women

dockworkers can also strengthen their unions.

What is ultimately important, of course, is that we continue to ensure that both men and women have the necessary training, resources and facilities at the workplace that make it possible for them to work together in a safe, healthy and harassment-free environment. ■

“More and more [women] are now applying to be general dock workers to load and unload vessels – and they're doing the work equally as well as men”

A brighter future with Liverpool 2

Collaboration between the ITF and its affiliate Unite in Liverpool, UK is proving a game-changer for dockers in the world-renowned port. Seafarers' Bulletin finds out more from ITF UK and Ireland co-ordinator Ken Fleming and Unite regional docks and waterways officer Terry Teague



Liverpool was the setting for one of Britain's longest industrial disputes, after the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company dismissed 500 dockers who refused to cross a picket line on 29 September 1995. Their struggle was against casual labour and deregulation, the same issues dockers around the world still confront in today's globalised industry.

Since then, says Terry Teague, Liverpool had become "a haven for cheap labour", with dockers feeling there was little they could do to change things. It was this which prompted Unite and the ITF to explore working more closely together in the port.

Unite asked the ITF for assistance with dealing with port authority Peel Ports and labour supply company Drake Port Distribution Services, over using seafarers to handle cargo and threatening to cut 25 of the 250 dockers' jobs.

"The shop stewards and union activists instructed me to launch a union campaign to help those being made redundant. I thought the best way to get help immediately was to bring in the ITF, because of the international aspects of dock work," explains Teague.

Ken Fleming worked with Teague to identify what the union could bargain with to stop the redundancies and win a commitment to end using seafarers to do dockers' jobs.

"Collectively the union members took a below-inflation pay rise and suspended higher rates of overtime payments for three months, and we saved all 25 jobs," says Teague. "They were genuinely happy to make the sacrifice. Since 1995 it had become normal to sack workers at the drop of a hat whenever there was a short-term fall off in work. We shocked the company by saying we wouldn't accept our members being sacked just to get them out of a financial hole that the employers had created."

This experience inspired Ken Fleming to focus more closely on Liverpool. "When I took over as co-ordinator in January 2012, it was clear that as the ITF we had no real muscle power to assist seafarers who were being forced to handle cargo. We did some work in Ireland which had led to the setting up of a national contact committee, and I thought we could do similar work elsewhere."

So Fleming, Teague and Tommy Molloy, the ITF inspector for North West England, organised

a couple of workshops to decide the shape and timing of an event to bring together dockworkers and tugboat crews, port maintenance workers, pilots and clerical staff. The resulting evening in The Casa, the home of the Liverpool dockers, was a fantastic success with very positive feedback, says Fleming.

"We hope to return Liverpool to the vibrant port it was, where good, trade union working class people can enjoy a great future and sustain their families"

For Teague it was a pivotal moment. "It brought different groups together who hadn't met for years. They could share experiences from their own sections of the port and discuss what Unite and the ITF could do locally and globally to support them, through international solidarity."

He says it gave a clear message to the dockers: "You're not on your own and you don't just have to accept what the employer says. Workers should start standing up for themselves. Through the international port workers' movement we can call on help from all the ports around the world that trade with Liverpool."

That event also coincided with the setting up of the River

Mersey Combine, a workers' hub for regular meetings to build and establish solidarity and communication links. The meetings attract a good cross-section of port workers.

Things have since moved on. Unite is negotiating hard to protect the pay, terms and conditions of the 300 Liverpool port and dockworkers now that Drakes has lost the labour supply contract to another firm, Blue Arrow.

But the future is looking good. Peel Ports Liverpool is developing a brand new deep river facility – Liverpool 2 – which is expected to be operational in September 2015, doubling the port's existing container capacity. It will create an initial 300 docker and ancillary staff jobs, with the potential for thousands more across the port. The ITF and Unite are working together to make sure that all the new jobs are fully unionised and organised.

Teague describes this ambition as "the main aim after small steps" and believes it is achievable, in no small part due to the ITF's professional relationship with Peel Ports, which has made it easier for Unite to hold positive discussions with the company. He adds that the relationship between the ITF and Unite is really good – "the type of relationship the trade union movement should be all about".

The last word goes to Fleming. "We hope to return Liverpool to the vibrant port it was, where good, trade union working class people can enjoy a great future and sustain their families." ■

Automated ships:



The idea of automated ships is a controversial one that is promoted by some elements in the maritime industry. It is viewed with a mixture of concern and scepticism by the ITF and its affiliates. **Seafarers' Bulletin** hears from research associate Wilko Bruhn from research project MUNIN (Maritime Unmanned Navigation through Intelligence in Networks) and presents reactions from the ITF seafarers' section and other key industry figures

People are growing used to automated and fully or partly unmanned vehicles. Driverless metropolitan train systems feature in many cities. Self-steering cars are being trialled on public roads. And passenger airline pilots commonly transfer control for much of the flight to advanced autopilot systems.

In the marine environment, however, the application of autonomous systems is currently limited to navy vessels or scientific survey submarines, which both need human supervision. They show, though, that automated seaborne transportation might be technically feasible.

Many organisations – such as shipyard enterprises, machinery manufacturers and shipping companies – are increasingly interested in the potential of further automation in merchant shipping and are developing concepts for its application. These include short-sea and deep-sea shipping and alternative propulsion,

maintenance and navigation methods.

We believe the idea of unmanned and autonomous shipping offers vast potential. The use of enhanced technology and further system integration on board will lead to increased system reliability and produce more resilient information. Business opportunities will also emerge, such as for remote monitoring and maintenance services, so creating attractive new maritime jobs ashore. Above all, the general safety of lives and property at sea and the marine environment will benefit.

With European Union funding, we are developing a concept which envisions a fleet of ships self-reliantly travelling the seas while being supervised by a land-based monitor and control station.

Each ship will be equipped with a weather station and an advanced sensor system of proven navigational devices, such as radar/ARPA, AIS, echo

sounders and ECDIS. It will have an automated lookout appliance, fitted with daylight and infrared cameras to constantly monitor the ship's surroundings. The information gathered will create a perception of the ship's vicinity which will be used as a basis for an automated navigation system. As a ship approaches coastal waters, a boarding crew will embark and lead it to its destination port.

This concept therefore comprises two basic professional fields for bridge and engine staff.

First, supervision. The shore control centre needs to be sufficiently manned with experienced, highly qualified maritime professionals. One centre will be responsible for monitoring and controlling 24/7 a particular size fleet navigating worldwide waters while being interconnected via satellite links. A department will be responsible for tasks such as route and maintenance planning, which already happens in the cruise

liner industry. Individual operators will be responsible for ensuring the safe and efficient progress of an assigned number of ships. If a ship encounters a situation which the onboard systems can't resolve, the operator's help will be requested. If things become more serious, a team of specially trained maritime professionals will remotely control the ship from a bridge-like environment.

Second, the boarding crew. Depending on the specific circumstances, such as distance from shore, traffic density or environmental conditions, an onboard control team will embark the ship, resume direct control and guide the ship into port. This is envisaged for both relatively short periods like pilotage and for passages up to a couple of days while transiting congested and/or near-coastal waters. Throughout the manned part of the voyage, the onboard crew will benefit considerably from the ship's advanced sensor technology. More precise and reliable data, along with object

fact or fantasy?

Industry responses

Fabrizio Barcellona, assistant secretary, ITF seafarers' section

Background image © Rolfs Royce

"The concept of automated ships is not new and is occasionally brought back, promising enormous benefits and huge savings for shipping operators."

The ITF firmly believes that technology is necessary to assist seafarers to make ships safer, to help professional seafarers continue to transport safely and efficiently the 90 percent of the world's goods they convey. But we do not believe automation can or should replace professional, skilled seafarers.

In reality the matter of autonomous ships is more complex. It seems more of an aspirational dream than MUNIN's revolutionary way of transportation. It is not by removing the crew and filling a ship with sensors, infrared cameras and sophisticated automation that issues like safe navigation, risk management, environmental threats and accident prevention are seriously addressed.

MUNIN and others like them

conveniently ignore the professionalism and fundamental role seafarers have in safe and secure trade, no matter how sophisticated the automation. MUNIN has also failed to address many of the issues regulating shipping, such as the variability of ocean conditions and how they affect ships, international pollution and safety instruments, the legal framework of the law of the sea and social responsibilities toward seafaring nation economies.

The existence today of automation applications does not amount to evidence that automated ships are either viable or desirable. There is a fundamental difference between a 19,000 teu ship or a remotely controlled fleet sailing in the variable ocean and a metropolitan train which runs on solid, pre-determined and limited track.

There are countless examples of failed automation which professional seafarers on board have had to rectify to avoid catastrophic consequences for the environment, entire

coastline communities and above all lives.

The future of shipping as envisaged by MUNIN looks like a global video game, where a limited number of controllers will move ships from one place to another. Even if the new generation of jobs to support remote operations or guide ships into ports were possible, we fail to see where or how workers required to manoeuvre the ships will be trained or how safe it would be for them to board ships in rough seas.

The handful of jobs suggested by MUNIN compares poorly to today's global seafarer workforce. It is in fact another attempt to lower labour standards further and use cheaper, lower skilled and less professional seafarers.

The ITF disagrees with MUNIN's claim that ships without crew will produce the suggested savings for ship operators. The costs of building and equipping automated ships will be huge and maintaining

such a sophisticated ship will be more expensive than maintaining a much more secure, modern ship fully manned by seafarers.

MUNIN's examples of engine rooms not manned at night or the moving ashore of routing and maintenance monitoring are possible only because there are on board skilled, professional seafarers ready to rectify any fault immediately.

No-one can guarantee a 100 percent failure-free system, regardless of the complexity of technology. There are also questions about the security of remote control stations, where they would be located and what protocols they would have for dealing with a loss of control between shore and ship.

There is undoubtedly increased interest by the shipping community for more advanced technology. It is not, however, to remove seafarers from ships but to reduce fuel consumption and make ships ever safer and greener." ■

Automated ships: continued

detection capabilities not available on conventional ships, will significantly improve navigation safety. The boarding crew will disembark once the navigationally more demanding waters are passed and transfer to another ship departing from the harbour.

Today's ships have already been automated to a high degree and further system integration, as well as closer links to shore-based stakeholders, are evolving. In ships' engine rooms, this development has relieved the crew from night watches. The bridge, however, still needs to be manned 24/7, for obvious reasons. But standardisation, system automation and integration have also changed the face of watchkeeping, and the IMO's e-navigation strategy and the EU's e-maritime initiative are supporting further such developments. Presently, there are technical and legal barriers to unmanned ships but there is still an overall tendency to shift originally ship-board tasks to shore side, such as remote maintenance monitoring or weather routing assistance.

Widespread application of fully autonomous systems in commercial shipping is certainly not at hand. But it is very possible that a first generation automated ship might go on sea trial before 2020.

Systems developed during current research will undoubtedly provide valuable assistance to mariners, by relieving them of tedious tasks, improving machinery reliability and making navigation safer. Issues such as fatigue and low situation awareness repeatedly lead to maritime accidents, sometimes with disastrous consequences. The use of automation systems for manned ship navigation has considerable potential to reduce the crew's workload, and closer ship-shore interconnectivity will also improve the onboard working environment. ■

Industry responses continued

Peter Hinchliffe, secretary general, International Chamber of Shipping and International Shipping Federation

"The days of completely unmanned ships in large numbers crossing oceans and delivering world trade are a far off dream.

It is clear that technology will play an increasing role in undertaking some of the mundane repetitive tasks on board, and this is probably to be welcomed. However, the big flaw in MUNIN's concept is that while MUNIN quite rightly accepts that close to shore there is a need for on board manned intervention, it assumes that transferring these crew members on and off the ship is easy. Often weather conditions make such transfers impossible either by boat or by helicopter and frequent delays like this could have major commercial impacts and raise safety issues.

I also worry about the idea of controlling a large ship from a shore based simulator. So much about the operation of a ship is informed by the motion received through the soles of the master's feet and what can be heard of the reaction of the ship to its environment. A remote operator will never have that immediacy – or that regard for personal wellbeing – that is so vital to safety at sea." ■

George Quick, vice president, International Association of Masters, Mates and Pilots

"The possibility of unmanned ships has been discussed for decades. Electronic navigation systems are still an emerging technology, prone to anomalies and subject to failures. They provide useful decision support information, but that information must be verified as reliable against observations of the real world. Aside from the navigation issues, ships' main propulsion and auxiliary machinery are complex systems that cannot be relied upon to operate flawlessly over long periods of time without human intervention.

Given the enormous investment in a modern ship and its cargo, the dynamic conditions and high risks encountered in ocean voyages, and the relatively small costs of crews within the overall cost of shipping, it is unlikely we will see unmanned ships in the foreseeable future." ■

Branko Berlan, ITF accredited representative to the International Maritime Organization

"It's true that many automated technologies have been applied on board and benefit the seafarer. However, most technology used onshore and in the air could not be utilised at sea, particularly in severe weather and several hundred miles away from proper direct control.

I'm mainly concerned about two aspects of MUNIN's concept. First, how to sufficiently ensure shore based control centres have experienced and highly qualified maritime professionals when we have a growing shortage of people on board ships. This work cannot be learned as a video game or by simulator. Second, seafarers

would lose many of their professional skills, with supervision by land based monitors and control stations, while continuing to hold masters and crew liable. The combination of manned and unmanned ships on the open sea would surely create extreme and chaotic situations in terms of safety, security and insurance.

For these reasons, I believe that the original intention of implementing modern technology on board to make maritime transport more safe and secure would become more focused on creating more lucrative business for technology producers ashore." ■

Capturing the essence of the Mediterranean

For seven years, Mattia Insolera, an internationally awarded documentary photographer, has travelled the shores of the Mediterranean in a bid to capture a world inhabited by seafarers and dockers, smugglers and migrants. We take a look at his journey as he prepares to turn his experiences into a published book



Mattia Insolera's life changed the day he sailed away from Italy with a friend who wanted to cross the Atlantic Ocean on a sailboat. He quickly realised he was more interested in life on the shore and was inspired by a visit to the Strait of Gibraltar to begin a comprehensive photographic project about Mediterranean culture.

He visited 13 countries, travelling on any kind of boat, and covered 25,000 km with his motorbike. For Insolera, it was about scratching beneath the tourist cliché of the Mediterranean holiday paradise to capture the true essence of the space.

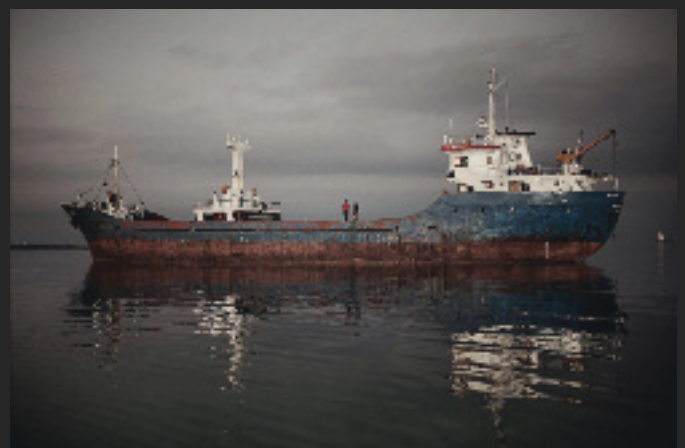
He says: "Today, the Mediterranean has become divisive: a barbed wired fence between the north and the south of the world. It is also the basin where the major conflicts of the world are taking place, a dangerous passage for those who flee from misery and war and even a cemetery for 20,000 migrants who have sunk in its waters in the last 20 years.

"In the past this inner sea was inclusive: a bridge connecting shores and different cultures, a fertile soil for the very first civilisations. According to the Turkish writer known as the Fisherman of Halikarnassos, it was a sixth continent, distinct from the arbitrary five continents of geographers, assimilating people coming from the antipodes of the earth, turning them into Mediterraneans."

Insolera wanted to find out if something remained of that time, so he focused his camera on people who still use the sea as a surface for transportation, working and mixing with other cultures – people who still experience the sea as a sixth continent.

The Sixth Continent Photobook will be published through crowd funding. To see more of Mattia Insolera's photographs for the project, visit

www.indiegogo.com/projects/6th-continent-photobook-on-mediterranean-culture ■



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