

the global

SEAFARER

Wherever you are, so are we

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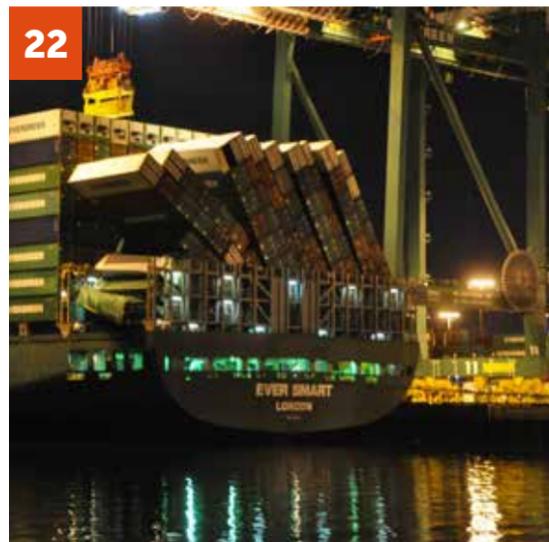
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A new social contract for seafarers

For too many in this business – from shipowners to charterers, and, most depressingly, the flag states that have the responsibility to enforce fundamental social and employment rights – seafarers are just commodities



Nautilus Federation
director
Mark Dickinson

As I reflect on world events, having seen a number of innocent seafarer deaths in the Red Sea as vessels have been hit by missiles fired by Houthi rebels, it is difficult to be anything other than pessimistic about the situation that our maritime professionals face just going about their business.

The newly elected secretary-general of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Arsenio Dominguez was right to point out that seafarers should never become collateral victims. Unfortunately, it seems all too often that is what they are.

It is so wrong, but for too many in this business, shipowners, managers, charterers, insurers and most depressingly the flag states that have the responsibility to enforce fundamental social and employment rights, seafarers are just commodities and collateral.

Most seafarers don't come from the country of the flag of the ship upon which they serve, and neither do the owners of the ships. This engenders an 'out of sight, out of mind' mentality (sometimes referred to as 'sea blindness'). But bemoaning this depressing state of affairs is often fruitless. We must redouble our efforts to drive home the message that shipping and seafarers, and all our maritime professionals, are key workers. They are crucial to supply chains and for maritime resilience and security.

There is hope that the tide is turning. The IMO and International Labour Organization (ILO) have

pledged to redouble their cooperation and agreed a programme of work in a Tripartite Joint Working Group to address seafarers' issues and the 'human element'. In 2023 we grappled with the abandonment of seafarers, and last month they discussed bullying and harassment – including sexual assault and sexual harassment. Later this year we will tackle the continued criminalisation of seafarers.

The Just Transition is a core issue for Nautilus and it is important to acknowledge that this is widely understood in the maritime industry. Last month the IMO formally agreed to launch a comprehensive review of STCW. Finally, next year we will again gather in Geneva at the ILO Special Tripartite Committee to consider further amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention.

There is also much hope that on the back of Covid-19, and the shocking treatment of seafarers, there are shipowners that see the world as we do. They share our concerns and want to work together to advance the employment conditions of seafarers.

As an industry there is growing recognition of the need for a new social contract for seafarers and for measures to support good shipowners to enhance the standing of seafarers and go beyond minimum standards. If these measures translate into meaningful action and garner the support from governments and other stakeholders, then I remain hopeful that we can see real recognition and an end to the treatment of seafarers as mere commodities and, yes, collateral victims.

Maritime professionals – all our seafarers and those ashore – are key workers. They deserve a future that is secure, with skills for now and for the years ahead. A diverse, inclusive, and equitable industry that respects and celebrates the roles of maritime professionals.

There is growing recognition of the need for a new social contract for seafarers that goes beyond minimum standards and recognises good employers

Nautilus advocates for safer seas as industry addresses bullying and harassment

Nautilus has advocated for safer workplaces at sea and end to bullying and harassment at a joint meeting of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) Tripartite Working Group. After the meeting, the IMO announced it is developing training requirements to combat bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, in the maritime sector.

The Union's head of international relations Danny McGowan was one of three industry vice chairs at the meeting, which took place from 27 to 29 February. It considered future steps needed to combat bullying and harassment at sea, covering legislation, mechanisms and policies for reporting and addressing mistreatment in the maritime sector. The working group also considered



CREDIT: ITF

draft amendments to the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW). The findings and recommendations from the meeting will be submitted to the IMO Maritime Safety Committee at its next meeting in May 2024 and to the ILO Governing Body.

'The recommendations made by consensus at the joint ILO/IMO Tripartite Working Group are a step in the right direction to dealing with violence and harassment, including sexual assault, bullying and sexual harassment in the maritime industry. By looking at instruments such as STCW, and at the ISM Code, alongside conventions such as the Maritime Labour Convention and C190, we have ensured that this will remain an important safety matter and seafarer issue to be considered in both the IMO and ILO,' Mr McGowan said.

'We look forward to continuing to work with shipowners and governments to put these recommendations into action for the benefit of all seafarers, on all ships, and creating a safe working culture of zero tolerance for these behaviours.'

Matt Parsonage, a new member of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) inspectorate goes onboard during his ITF field training in Liverpool. Inspectors must learn how to ensure the welfare of seafarers and promotion of union values on vessels flying flags of convenience. They also need to know everything from the role of P&I clubs to the application of the Maritime Labour Convention and human rights law, plus how to deal with cases of abandonment. With Mr Parsonage is fellow ITF inspector Kenan Dinç, inspector for Mersin, Turkey



CREDIT: ITF

OPINION

Ending bullying and harassment for all seafarers



Nautilus Federation coordinator
Danny McGowan
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Earlier this year I was the seafarers' spokesperson at a meeting of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) Joint Tripartite Working Group, providing input on bullying and harassment at sea. Nautilus joined with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and other trade unions from around the world to form a united front in discussions with shipowners and governments.

As a result of this meeting, important steps forward for our members and all seafarers have been identified to combat bullying, harassment, sexual assault and sexual harassment.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO BUILD UPON

Our industry is one in which everyone should feel able to enjoy a career without the fear of these behaviours. However, there are unique challenges to achieving this for maritime professionals.

Trade unions representing seafarers have worked on this topic for some time. Indeed, Nautilus International and the UK Chamber of Shipping began the work on this issue, which then led to the European social partners European Transport Workers Federation (ETF) and European Communities Shipowners' Associations (ECSA) adopting guidelines on the eradication of shipboard harassment and bullying. This was adapted by the International Chamber of Shipping and the ITF and went on to be referenced in the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC).

More recently, we have seen the adoption of the ILO Convention 190 and Recommendation 206 on Violence and Harassment, the culmination of years of campaigning and lobbying by trade unions, which also recognises that some workers are disproportionately affected. By adopting these international standards, worker and employer organisations alongside ILO member states have made it clear that violence and harassment in the world of work can no longer be tolerated.

PROGRESS FOR SEAFARERS

This meeting came up with proposals for a collaborative approach in both the IMO – looking at instruments such as STCW and at the ISM Code – and at ILO with conventions such as the MLC. They will help us to build on the work that has been done, developing reviewed, revised, and possibly new ways of ensuring a zero-tolerance environment for the behaviours that were discussed.

This will positively impact the working and living environments of those vulnerable to these types of behaviours – underrepresented groups including women and LGBT+ seafarers, for example – but importantly, this work will positively impact the working and living environments of **all** seafarers.

The meeting also emphasised the necessity of social dialogue, social partnership and tripartism. We will need the participation of unions like Nautilus, government and industry to maintain the safe, equitable and human-centred industry of the future – key elements of the Just Transition, where we hope to ensure decent work, leaving no-one behind.

● If you would like to find out more, please contact me via dmcgowan@nautilusint.org



CREDIT: Nautilus International

Nautilus Federation expresses condolences on death of former AIMPE president Terry Snee

Terry Snee OAM, former leader of Nautilus Federation affiliate the Australian Institute of Marine and Power Engineers (AIMPE), has passed away following a short illness.

Mr Snee represented AIMPE at a number of early meetings of the Nautilus Federation, working with director Mark Dickinson. He also worked with Brian Orrell, former general secretary of Nautilus International, and

Peter McEwen, former deputy general secretary.

Reflecting fondly on their work together, Mr Dickinson said: 'Terry was an uncompromising Yorkshireman, never afraid to speak his mind, but importantly he had an inner compassion. No one could say he was not a passionate advocate for Australian marine engineers!

'He was a long-time friend

of Nautilus, he very much lit the spark for the Federation, and will be greatly missed.'

AIMPE federal president John Hartree said: 'Terry was AIMPE president for 25 years from 1993 to 2018. He led the union through difficult times and handled many industrial disputes.

'Terry was a man who didn't back down and fought forcefully for what he thought was right.'

Singapore union official honoured for distinguished service to seafarers

Mary Liew, general secretary at the Nautilus Federation affiliate the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU), has been honoured with the Distinguished Service (Star) award.

The Star is the most prestigious award of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) of Singapore.

Since assuming the leadership role as the first female general secretary of SMOU in 2013, Ms Liew has been a tireless advocate for the welfare and rights of seafarers. She has championed initiatives aimed at improving their working conditions and ensuring they receive the support and representation they rightfully deserve.

Beyond her pivotal role within SMOU, Ms Liew's influence extends to various labour and



CREDIT: SMOU

governmental entities, notably serving as the president of NTUC from 2015 to 2023. She also represents Singapore in global organisations such as the International Transport Workers' Federation, where she holds

the distinction of being the first woman from Southeast Asia to serve on the executive board.

SMOU's assistant treasurer, Tan Geh Ting, was also honoured at the awards with the Comrade of Labour award.

US union official honoured for defending mariners' rights

An official working for Nautilus Federation affiliate union, the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P), has been honoured for her seafarer advocacy.

Randi Ciszewski was presented with an award by non-profit Lutheran maritime mission Seafarers International House for her work on behalf of US civil service mariners at a ceremony in New York City on 18 April.

Ms Ciszewski is the MM&P government group representative and has advocated for the rights of civil service mariners for well over 40 years: first as the labour relations director for Military Sealift Command – the organisation that controls the replenishment and military transport ships of the United States Navy



CREDIT: MM&P

– and for the past 22 years as an MM&P official.

'My goal has always been to advocate for human rights as well as union rights,' she said. 'Every worker has the right to show up for work and be accepted. No employer should be a safe harbour for intolerance or hatred of any kind.'

Ms Ciszewski has become a powerful voice on maritime issues. She relies on

her extensive experience in employment law, negotiation, and conflict resolution to administer federal terms and conditions of employment.

She is also the recipient of numerous professional honours, including the Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

Paying tribute, MM&P president Don Marcus said: 'There is no more knowledgeable, dedicated or resolute representative in our organisation than Randi Ciszewski. She is foremost in protecting our members' rights.'

Head of the ITF Seafarers' Trust Katie Higginbottom was also recognized for her work at the New York ceremony. She works in close cooperation with international maritime unions and other organizations on issues that affect seafarers' wellbeing.



CREDIT: SHS

SHS conference panellists L-R: Michelle Chance (HFW), Sandra Welch (SHS), Tim Springett (UK Chamber of Shipping), Jan de Boer (International Maritime Organization), Dave Watkins (CHIRP), Danny McGowan (Nautilus International)

TOWARDS A BETTER MARITIME WORKPLACE

An industry conference has investigated what the future of the maritime workforce could look like – from the seafarer's perspective.

Deborah McPherson reports

With industry events so often about introducing new technology or increasing profits, February's **Sustainability at Sea**

conference had a refreshing focus on the importance of treating workers well.

Hosted by the Seafarers Hospital Society (SHS) at Trinity House in London, the event explored challenges and opportunities in recruitment and benchmarking for creating and implementing good workplace policies and company cultures. Also high on the agenda were supporting the physical and mental health of maritime workers, and best practices when it comes to advancing maritime workers' careers.

To kick off the programme of panel discussions and presentations, there was an opening address by former UK maritime minister Nusrat Ghani, now the minister of state for industry and economic security, who told attendees that her department was doing all it could to protect seafarers at home and abroad.

REPRESENTING MARITIME PROFESSIONALS

Nautilus Federation coordinator Danny McGowan took part in the conference's first panel discussion, which addressed the many challenges the maritime industry has faced over the last four years: the Covid-19 pandemic; rising geopolitical risks and

economic instability; regulatory pressure; and the transition to decarbonised and digitalised operations.

Also in attendance were Nautilus International head of professional and technical David Appleton in his capacity as an SHS trustee, and Andrew Jones, Nautilus International director of welfare and care.

RESILIENCE VS ENDURANCE

During a point on building resilience among crews, Mr McGowan pointed out that 'enduring' poor conditions and pay was not the same thing as resilience. Seafarers accept that mental resilience is needed for their line of work, in order to deal with long separations from family and friends. But this resilience should not include the need to 'endure' poor conditions and pay, or abuse. The perception that 'resilience' involves suffering mistreatment without complaint is a barrier to young people choosing seafaring careers at a time when the industry needs to increase recruitment.

'Seafarers should have the same rights and enjoyment of life in their careers as shoreside workers,' he continued. 'Whether shipowners are regulated to do this, or through moral obligations, at some point the situation will be forced into it, otherwise we won't get people to come and work in our industry.'

PRIORITISING SEAFARERS' LIVES IN CONFLICT ZONES

In the context of vessel transits of the Red Sea, Mr McGowan commented: 'Seafarers need to be put before profits.'

Dave Watkins of CHIRP said it was important for the maritime industry to be more transparent in showing what it was doing to 'recover its people' being attacked in high risk areas – such as the crew of the *Galaxy Leader*, who were taken hostage in the Red Sea.

Jan de Boer from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) commented there were 57% fewer ships transiting the Red Sea since



CREDIT: SHS

Nautilus Federation coordinator Danny McGowan stressed the importance of putting seafarers' wellbeing before profit

the latest Middle East conflict. In terms of security, however, he said the IMO's role was limited to political lobbying to try and ensure seafarers were out of harm's way and that more ships were not sent into warlike zones: 'We cannot unfortunately send in the SAS, but the British government is a superb example of [how to] send in [a national] force.'

LISTENING TO CADETS

Attendees also heard from a handful of cadets from Warsash Maritime School and City of Glasgow College, who were asked what they would change about the industry if they could. Their wish list echoed Nautilus International's campaigning work for members: free internet connectivity; a reduction of harassment and abuse; better recreational facilities onboard; and a mentor allocated to each cadet offering guidance on how to adapt to life at sea.

There were some specific suggestions to make more use of artificial intelligence (AI) by having access to online chat tools for 24 hour assistance – although this would again depend on the free availability of wi-fi. Frustration was expressed that the maritime industry is so far behind shoreside companies, in terms of tackling workplace abuse and bullying.

'Seafarers accept that mental resilience is needed but this should not include the need to endure poor conditions'



EUROPEAN SAFETY STAYS ON COURSE

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Read the report at bit.ly/EMSA_2023

CREDIT: Wikimedia Commons

Encouraging downward trends in onboard accidents have been identified by the latest annual report from the European Maritime Safety Agency. **Lucy Chapman** reviews the data

The maritime industry still seems to be on the right track in improving seafarer safety, according to recently published data from the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA).

Issued towards the end of 2023, the latest **Annual Overview of Marine Casualties and Incidents** provides a detailed analysis of maritime safety within EU member states or involving EU-flagged vessels during 2022. The report also compares the 2022 figures with previous years, dating back to 2014, in order to identify trends.

The aim of EMSA's yearly report is to enhance maritime safety, prevent pollution, and reduce the risk of future incidents by investigating the root causes of accidents at sea.

Key findings

The report highlights a reduction in various accident indicators in 2022 compared to the previous year.

After a dip in maritime traffic in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, 2021 saw a resurgence in activity, particularly in cruise ships and ferries, returning to pre-pandemic levels in 2022, so it is striking that the increase in vessel movements did not correspond with an increase in accidents

In 2022, a total of 2,510 marine casualties and incidents were reported, representing a reduction of 182 compared to 2021.

The total number of marine casualties and incidents reported from 2014 to 2022 was 23,814, with an annual average of 2,646. After a peak of serious casualties reported in 2018, there has been an overall decrease in the annual average of occurrences, ships lost, fatalities, and injuries.

Casualties and incidents in different sectors

The report breaks down the data by ship type, revealing that cargo ships and fishing vessels experienced a decreasing trend in the number of casualties and incidents. Passenger ships and cargo ships had the highest average ship occurrence indicators, with 201 and 152 respectively.

From 2014 to 2022, 'internal waters (port area and other)' accounted for more than half of reported marine casualties and incidents, followed by 'territorial sea' and 'open sea.' Geographically, EU waters in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea reported the highest number of occurrences.

Figure 2.3-3 Marine casualties and incidents for the period 2014-2022, organized by navigational area and ship type



All graphics: EMSA report

Reduction in incident investigations

EU member states' investigative bodies launched 1,090 investigations from 2014 to 2022, with 909 safety investigation reports made public. However, in 2022, there was a notable decrease of more than 21% in the number of investigations compared with the preceding years.

In terms of consequences, the report highlights a significant reduction in the number of ships lost, damaged, and considered unfit to proceed in 2022 compared to previous years. There was also a decrease in reported pollution incidents, with a notable reduction in pollution by cargo.

The human element as a contributor to incidents

The report underscores the crucial role of the human element in maritime incidents. Over the period from 2014 to 2022, 59.1% of accident events involved human action, and 50.1% of contributing factors were related to human behaviour.

When considering both human action events and human behaviour contributing factors, the human element played a role in 80.7% of investigated marine casualties and incidents across all ship types.

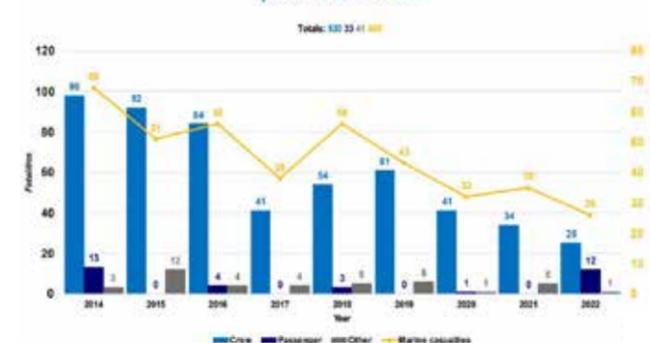
Fatalities and injuries

Examining the human toll, the report notes a decrease in fatalities in 2022, with 38 recorded, the lowest annual total since these analyses started in 2014. Crew members represented 65.8% of the victims, with 'slipping/stumbling and fall' and 'fire/explosion' identified as the main events resulting in fatalities.

Injuries also saw a decrease in 2022, with 597 reported, the lowest in the entire 2014-2022 period. The main events resulting in injuries were 'loss of control' for occurrences with persons and 'loss of control-loss of propulsion power' for occurrences with ships.

The report provides insights into the environmental

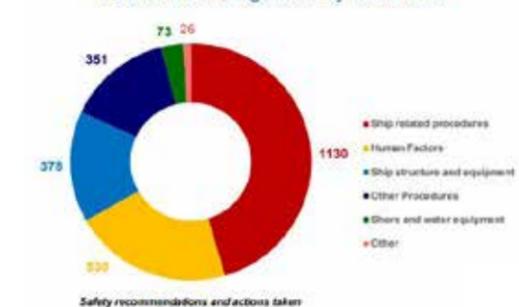
Figure 2.5-1 Evolution of fatalities, organized by category of the person on board



impact of marine casualties, highlighting a significant decrease in reported pollution incidents since 2019. The influence of the human element is pervasive, with shipboard operation being the most important contributing factor to accidents.

Safety recommendations

Figure 2.8-1 Evolution of safety recommendations and actions taken, organized by focus area



EMSA issued a total of 2,488 safety recommendations and actions taken from 2014 to 2022, with 45.4% of them focusing on ship-related procedures. The report emphasises the need for continued efforts to improve maritime safety, reduce pollution, and enhance overall environmental sustainability in European waters.

What's the problem with flags of convenience?

Sarah Robinson takes a closer look at the flag of convenience system, and explains why maritime trade unions want to see the back of it



CREDIT: Apostleship of the Sea

Seafarers from a flag of convenience vessel (the Marshall Islands-flagged Hyundai Tacoma) having a well-earned burger meal after an ITF inspector helped arrange their repatriation to Myanmar from the UK. The seafarers had been under pressure to sign extended contracts during the Covid-19 pandemic

Long ago, countries were proud to have their own merchant fleet. Commercial vessels owned in a particular nation would be on that nation's shipping register and fly that nation's flag.

However, during the 20th century, changes were made to many shipping registers that loosened the required link between the country of ownership and a vessel's flag. Shipowners began to pick and choose which flag their vessels would fly, based initially on cost savings, but later also on the prospect of an easy ride from certain flag states when investigations took place. This is what came to be known as choosing a 'flag of convenience' (FoC).

THE IMPACT OF FOCS ON SEAFARERS

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) defines a flag of convenience ship as 'one that flies the flag of a country other than the country of ownership'. Some FoC registers are better than others, but the very existence of the system creates a lack of transparency and accountability that lowers standards and harms seafarers.

According to the ITF, workers onboard FoC vessels are more likely to experience:

- very low wages
- poor onboard conditions
- inadequate food and clean drinking water
- long periods of work without proper rest, leading to stress and fatigue

Meanwhile, by 'flagging out', shipowners can take advantage of:

- minimal regulation
- cheap registration fees
- low or no taxes
- freedom to employ cheap labour from the global labour market

The ITF believes there should be a 'genuine link' between the real owner of a vessel and the flag the vessel flies, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). 'FoC registries make it more difficult for unions, industry stakeholders and the public to hold ship owners to account,' stresses the Federation.

Nautilus supports this view, arguing that members' interests are best served by the genuine link principle.

MITIGATING THE EFFECTS OF FOCS

Flags of convenience have become so prevalent in the industry that most Nautilus members have probably sailed on an FoC vessel at some point. Because there are so many seafarers affected, the ITF acknowledges that action is needed to improve the daily lives of thousands of seafarers onboard FoC vessels today – while still holding onto the aim of eventually eliminating the system.

To mitigate the effects on seafarers, the Federation works in several ways to improve the standards onboard FoC vessels. Through bodies such as the International Bargaining Forum,

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ITF maritime coordinator Jacqueline Smith gives her take on flags of convenience in one of the latest episodes of the Nautilus podcast **Off course**. Download from wherever you find your podcasts.



the ITF negotiates agreements with maritime employers and crewing agencies to secure minimum standards and conditions for larger groups of seafarers.

ITF-approved collective agreements set the wages and working conditions for all crew on FoC vessels, irrespective of nationality. All vessels covered by an ITF-approved agreement get a certificate which signifies the agreed wages and working conditions onboard.

In addition, the ITF's Mexico City policy commits affiliated unions to provide all seafarers with proper union representation and protection. They work together to provide collective agreement coverage for all seafarers, irrespective of their nationality or country of origin.

The global network of ITF inspectors also helps to improve the lot of crew members on FoC vessels, who are more vulnerable than the average seafarer to being abandoned without pay.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

There's no doubt that these measures improve the pay and conditions of seafarers on FoC vessels, yet the ITF has never lost sight of the goal of driving vessels to bona fide national flags. The Federation's anti-FoC campaign has been going for over 75



The top three ship registries in the world by tonnage are flags of convenience: (top to bottom) Liberia, Panama and the Marshall Islands

CREDIT: Pixabay/Pexels

Some FoC registers are better than others, but the very existence of the system creates a lack of transparency and accountability that lowers standards and harms seafarers

years, but the desire to win this battle burns as brightly as ever in the hearts of trade unionists.

'Together with our colleagues at the ITF, we are campaigning at a national and international level to restore the link between a vessel's country of ownership and the flag it flies,' Nautilus Federation coordinator relations Danny McGowan says.

'To achieve this aim, we are in regular talks with policy-making bodies such as the International Maritime Organization and International Labour Organization. We seek to look not only at UNCLOS but also at other conventions that would help us to achieve our aims for the benefit of all maritime professionals.'

Registries currently listed as flags of convenience

The following ship registries have been declared FoCs by the ITF's fair practices committee (a joint committee of ITF seafarers' and dockers' unions), which runs the ITF campaign against FoCs. The list is **correct** as of **July 2024**, and can be found online at: www.itfseafarers.org/en/focs/current-registries-listed-as-focs

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Bermuda
- Bolivia
- Cameroon
- Cayman Islands
- Comoros
- Cook Islands
- Curacao
- Cyprus
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eswatini
- Faroe Islands
- French International Ship Registry (FIS)
- Gabon
- German International Ship Registry (GIS)
- Georgia
- Gibraltar
- Honduras
- Jamaica
- Lebanon
- Liberia
- Malta
- Madeira
- Marshall Islands
- Mauritius
- Moldova
- Mongolia
- Myanmar
- North Korea
- Palau
- Panama
- San Marino
- Sao Tome and Principe
- Sierra Leone
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Vincent
- Sri Lanka
- Tanzania (Zanzibar)
- Togo
- Vanuatu



Nautilus Federation director Mark Dickinson addressing the Joint IMO/ILO Conference on Work at Sea



SAFETY STARTS WITH THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

If the shipping industry is serious about seafarer safety, it's time for employers' commitment to their crews to equal their pledges on good governance and environmental protection. Nautilus made this point very strongly to a joint conference of the International Labour Organization and International Maritime Organization

Overleaf, we look at how the new ITF Manning Policy will foster a better understanding of safe crewing levels, and we investigate how employers should be supporting crews in an emergency

Nautilus Federation director Mark Dickinson has called on governments, shipowners and maritime unions to form a 'coalition of the willing' to learn the lessons of Covid-19 and deliver a new social contract for seafarers.

Speaking at the November 2023 Joint IMO/ILO Conference on Work at Sea, he said: 'This can be achieved with a genuine commitment from governments to support tripartism and to strengthen social dialogue between shipowners and managers and seafarers' unions.'

Mr Dickinson took part in the first session of the day, themed around Ensuring Rights at Sea, and

'This is something that the ITF is very clear about, and we have developed an ITF Manning Policy that fully takes account of IMO regulations and requirements. Adopting this would represent a major step forward and represent a genuine attempt at best practice, rather than the continuation of the race to the bottom and competition between flag states to offer the lowest crewing levels.'

GOING BEYOND THE MINIMUMS

Mr Dickinson reminded delegates that there is another set of minimum conditions in the shape of the ILO Maritime Labour

'Together we can deliver a new social contract. This will represent a new era of best practices and reward seafarers for their status as key workers'

was representing the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) on a panel tackling Best Practices for Responsible Ship Management

THE RIGHT TO ONBOARD SAFETY

In his speech, Mr Dickinson said that Covid-19 had exposed many seafarers to 'unacceptable' disregard for, and ignorance of, their fundamental social and employment rights.

Onboard safety is among these fundamental rights, he stressed, adding: 'One would expect that, in terms of best practice, responsible shipowners and managers would at the very least subscribe to the minimum requirements outlined in IMO and ILO instruments.' However, merely adhering to 'minimums' is not at all conducive to safe operations, he argued.

Convention (MLC). Yet some ship owners and managers 'conveniently forget that the MLC was not a destination but the start of a journey'.

To go beyond these all these minimums and truly value seafarers as essential key workers, the maritime sector needs to join the leaders of the UN and ILO in calling for a new social contract for all workers.

The ITF is already onboard, but now governments and shipowners need to do their part, Mr Dickinson concluded. 'Together we can deliver a new social contract for seafarers. This will ultimately represent a new era of best practices, turn well-meaning platitudes into action and reward seafarers for their status as key workers who move the world.'

SOUND GUIDANCE FOR SAFER CREWING

Nautilus Federation director Mark Dickinson recently announced to a top-level maritime safety conference that a revised version of the ITF Manning Policy is on the way this year. **Andrew Lington** explores what the policy is about, and how it will improve seafarer safety

The new ITF Manning Policy will help companies make a better assessment of how many crew members are needed onboard for safe operations

Nautilus is at the forefront of a new drive to encourage ship owners and managers to run 'best practice' operations, abiding to global standards governing the way in which their vessels are crewed.

In November 2023, Mark Dickinson told a joint conference of the International Maritime Organization and International Labour Organization (IMO/ILO) that the industry needs to end the longstanding and damaging competition among flag states to offer the lowest possible crewing levels (see pages 16-17).

At the heart of the campaign to combat poor practices is a new version of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Manning Policy – developed with the aim of making sure that ships have sufficient seafarers onboard to meet the reality of modern-day operations.

ITF affiliate unions such as Nautilus see the new policy as being particularly significant because it is directly linked to international regulations – including the STCW and Maritime Labour Conventions

The new policy – which is set to be adopted at the ITF Congress in October 2024 – was endorsed by the ITF Seafarers' Section conference in Santiago in December 2023. It will form a central element of the agreements the Federation puts in place to enforce decent wages and conditions onboard flag of convenience ships.

It's the first time in more than 20 years that the ITF Manning Policy has been overhauled, and work on the review was approved in 2018, with a focus on the analysis of how practical and effective the previous policy had been.

THE LATEST THINKING ON SAFE CREWING LEVELS

The review also examined new research into safe crewing levels – much of it drawing from the experience of seafarers at the sharp end – and also assessed the impact of new technologies and automation.

Although the ITF Manning Policy working group was affected by the disruption

caused by the Covid pandemic, it managed to complete its work in 2020. The proposals have subsequently gone before the Federation's Maritime Safety, Seafarers' Section and Fair Practices Committees for further input before the final version goes to the ITF Congress for approval.

ITF affiliate unions such as Nautilus see the new policy as being particularly significant because it is directly linked to international regulations – including the STCW and Maritime Labour Conventions, safety management and security codes, as well as collision prevention and safety of life at sea rules.

During the Manning Policy review work, it was noted that the IMO minimum safe manning principles provide a decent platform for regulating crewing levels – but the problem has been the effective implementation of the rules. By basing the new ITF policy on such regulations, it is hoped that

there will be greater common understanding and cooperation between ITF ship inspectors and port state control authorities to ensure that proper standards are in place.

PUTTING SEAFARERS AT THE CENTRE OF SAFETY ASSESSMENTS

The new policy is divided into two parts – one dealing with the general principles and the second setting out specific guidelines for different types of ship. At the heart of the policy is the principle that humans should be at the centre of any developments, with all ships covered by ITF-approved or national agreements being 'sufficiently, effectively and efficiently' crewed to ensure:

- safety and security of the ship, safe navigation and operations at sea
- safe operations in port
- prevention of human injury or loss of life
- the avoidance of damage to the marine environment and to property
- the welfare and health of seafarers through the avoidance of fatigue



Nautilus Federation director Mark Dickinson (left of picture) spoke about the new ITF Manning Policy as part of an ILO/IMO conference session with fellow panel members

CREDIT: IMO

Companies responsible for the operation of a ship should develop their crewing levels based on an assessment of the tasks, duties, competence and responsibilities required for safe operations, security of the crew and protection of the marine environment – as well as for dealing with unforeseen events or emergency situations. This analysis should involve trade union and safety representatives.

A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF VESSEL OPERATIONS

To avoid the risk of excessive working hours and fatigue, companies will also have to identify all the functions to be undertaken onboard during a representative voyage or operational period, and to determine how many crew would be needed to undertake the relevant tasks and duties under both peak and routine workload conditions.

The policy says safe crewing levels should take into account such factors as:

- the size and type of ship

- the number, size and type of main propulsion units and auxiliaries, and high voltages
- the level of ship digitalisation, automation and complexity
- construction and equipment of the ship
- method of maintenance used
- cargo to be carried
- frequency of port calls, length and nature of voyages to be undertaken
- trading area(s), waters and operations in which the ship is involved
- extent to which training activities are conducted onboard
- catering needs
- watchkeeping arrangements
- duties in connection with cargo handling in port and at sea

It sets out detailed elements to be considered for the safety of navigation, engineering, cargo operations, electrical, electronic and control engineering, radiocommunications, maintenance and repair, and the safety and security of the ship and all onboard.

The ITF says it is not safe to operate with a lone officer in charge of the navigational watch during periods of darkness or reduced visibility, and the certified deck watch/lookout ratings should be part of the crew to maintain a three-watch system

Crewing level assessments need to include dealing with unforeseen events or emergency situations, and the analysis should involve trade union and safety representatives

OVERHAULING THE WATCH SYSTEM

The policy stresses the importance of adopting a three-watch system to ensure that masters and chief engineers are not asked to stand regular watches. The ITF does not consider it safe to operate with a lone officer in charge of the navigational watch during periods of darkness or reduced visibility, and the policy states that the certified deck watch/lookout ratings shall be part of the crew to be able to maintain a three-watch system.

The new policy also notes the diverse working patterns and operational cycles of certain ship types and says companies need to ensure that their crew complements reflect the particular working pattern, rotation and/or work schedules of seafarers, the particular operational requirements of a ship or group of ships, and any call-out requirements of a port, harbour or other organisation.

Special attention should be paid to the crewing requirements of offshore vessels, tankers and passenger and ro-ro ships, it adds.

PLANS TO MODERNISE TERMINOLOGY

At a time when so much work is going into breaking down gender barriers at sea, the question arises of

why the term 'manning' has been used for the policy. Nautilus Federation coordinator Danny McGowan has the answers: 'The name has been kept as the ITF Manning Policy, rather than "Crewing Policy", in order to align with IMO naming conventions and references to the policy.'

'The ITF is conscious that the term crewing should be used where possible and will work to ensure that the necessary alignments are made to enable it to be renamed when possible.'

A CAMPAIGN TOOL FOR SAFETY AT SEA

Mr Dickinson said the new policy represents an important step forward and offers the shipping industry a valuable opportunity to end the pernicious 'race to the bottom' on crewing. 'It is also an important policy in the IMO context, when the ITF pushes for attention to be paid to fatigue and the long hours culture, he added.

It is also hoped that the new policy will provide ITF affiliates with an effective platform for lobbying nationally, addressing minimum safe manning requirements, and influencing company-level negotiations on such issues as safety management and working hours.

A container stack collapse
onboard the UK-flagged vessel
Ever Smart in 2017

THE RIGHT MOVES WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Maritime unions are pushing for a new social contract for seafarers, putting crew safety and wellbeing at the heart of global shipping. Many argue that 'best practice' should become the norm, not an added extra, but what exactly would this look like, and how can we keep standards high under the most testing conditions?

Sarah Robinson reports

Shipboard accidents are every seafarer's nightmare. Far from shore, there's no one apart from you and your crewmates to tackle a shipboard fire, and you also have to be prepared for any incident that puts lives in danger, from a container stack collapse to a major ingress of water.

Even if everyone has stayed safe and well during an incident, you'll be aware that the situation could have put your career in jeopardy, especially if you are a master or senior officer. However, if your company handles things the right way and you take advantage of Union support, things don't have to deteriorate into criminalisation.

BEST PRACTICE IN PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES

So what should your company be doing when things go wrong? There are some good examples to follow, according to Jacob Damgaard of Britannia P&I Club.

As an insurance company, Britannia P&I covers third party liability claims to shipowners, but it also advises on loss prevention and incident management. 'We advise our member companies to prepare well in advance of any incident by having an emergency response team of senior people,' Mr Damgaard explains. 'Crisis management training should be provided, and it should be clear who has the authority to take the necessary decisions during an emergency, such as signing off on a salvor.'

'Everyone involved – at sea and ashore – should know who does what in an emergency. Communication skills should be considered, and be supported by proper training. The emergency response team should plan ahead by considering different scenarios and carrying out drills accordingly.'

➤ A former marine officer himself, Mr Damgaard knows what it's like to be on the shipboard side of an emergency. He points out how important it is for companies to have in place robust contingency plans to support the crew so they can focus on dealing with the onboard aspects of the incident. Part of this preparation is for the shore office to be ready to handle the media or maritime authorities, so that this pressure is taken off the crew.

Another aspect of good practice is to hold a debrief after the emergency is over, and it's important to listen to everyone involved in the incident – including the seafarers – so that lessons are learned, says Mr Damgaard.

'We do a lot of training for shipping companies on learning from what went wrong in the past, and we highlight the necessity of shoreside support when safety-critical decisions are required, such as restow of containers that haven't been loaded correctly. This may take time and come with a cost, but it's better than having a container stack collapse.'

WHAT YOU SHOULD EXPECT FROM YOUR EMPLOYER

For Nautilus director of legal services Charles Boyle, good practice means that a company should have a 'just culture'. This means that an employer is open to workers reporting mistakes without being penalised, so that safety lessons can be

'We do a lot of training for shipping companies on learning from what went wrong in the past, and we highlight the necessity of shoreside support when safety-critical decisions are required'

Jacob Damgaard
Former seafarer and now head of loss prevention at Britannia P&I Club



implemented. The opposite of this is a situation where workers are disciplined or criminalised, and become scapegoats for wider failings in a company. 'Employers should not be too quick to judge, and they should prioritise supporting their own employees,' he says.

Companies should also encourage employees to access the support that unions can offer members in an emergency, including having witnesses present in interviews.

'We can help members understand which kind of organisation they are talking to in an investigation, and whether that body can bring criminal prosecutions'

Nautilus International director of legal **Charles Boyle**



CREDIT: Brad Wakefield

JASON: supporting members under threat of criminalisation

Members of Nautilus Federation unions have access to the Joint Assistance and Support Network (JASON), supported by Nautilus 24/7, our round-the-clock multilingual helpline.

Through JASON, the Nautilus Federation facilitates mutual assistance and support for seafarers who are members of a Federation union. So if you are involved in an incident in a country where the local union is part of JASON, that union can help with choosing a local expert lawyer and guidance on local investigation and legal procedures.

Support may also involve access to translation services and consular services, and the local union will be able to liaise with your own union, so that it can optimise the support it can extend to you.

You may not even need to be physically in the country in question, as JASON support applies to those involved in an

incident within a port, territory, territorial waters or onboard a vessel flagged in one of the countries covered by the agreement.

In addition to JASON, the Federation has produced a guide on the joint **IMO/ILO Guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the Event of a Maritime Accident**, detailing what maritime professionals can expect in terms of support and assistance if they are unfortunate enough to be involved in a maritime incident.

Alongside this is the **Nautilus Federation Fair Treatment Checklist** for maritime professionals to quickly remind themselves about their rights and how they can get advice and assistance if they become involved in a maritime incident.

● There's more on JASON in the Support section of the Nautilus Federation website www.nautilusfederation.org

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