



International Christian Maritime Association

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20 March 2020

**JOINT OPEN LETTER TO UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS
FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN MARITIME ASSOCIATION
FACILITATING CREW CHANGES AND ACCESS TO PORT WELFARE FACILITIES
THROUGHOUT THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

To:

Director General, United Nations International Labour Organization
Secretary-General, United Nations International Maritime Organization
Director General, World Health Organization.
Ministers of Transport, National Governments

It is vital that intergovernmental organisations and national governments ensure that seafarers are given international "key worker" status and provided access to maritime welfare providers whilst in port during the pandemic.

I am writing to you on behalf of the International Christian Maritime Association, the international organisation representing 27 seafarers' welfare organisations operating in more than 450 ports in over 65 countries.

We write to endorse the Open Letter from the International Chamber of Shipping and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) which calls on all parties to work to keep ports open and to facilitate necessary crew changes. Every month, around 100,000 seafarers need to be replaced from the ships which they operate in order to comply with relevant international maritime legislation. Most seafarers will work long contracts, away from family and friends and the social structures on which we all depend to live happy, healthy lives. Seafarers are suitably proud of their role in keeping international trade moving, however such roles come with significant personal cost to them and their families. In a recent study commissioned by the ITF Seafarers' Trust, 20 per cent of seafarers said that in the course of their work they had suffered from thoughts of self-harm and suicide ideation.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to bring disruption and concern to everyday life for so many, we implore you to recognise the vital contribution seafarers make in keeping international trade moving, particularly when many of them will be worried about their families at home and will have irregular opportunity to keep in touch with their loved ones. In view of their vital role, we endorse the call for seafarers to be treated as international key workers, such as airline crew and medical personnel, enabling them to travel to and from their families safely. In addition, we call on the international community to consider the need for port-based welfare facilities and to permit these to be open during the pandemic. These facilities – often run by charitable institutions and church communities – provide much needed rest and relaxation facilities for visiting seafarers and vital communication links with

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families & dependants worldwide"

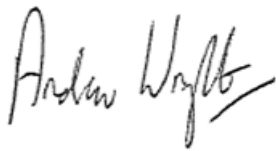
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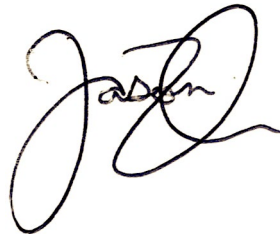
home. Such facilities help to keep crews in touch with their families, alleviate stress and ensure that crews are suitably rested to take on their next voyage.

As you deliberate these important topics at your high-level meetings, we ask you to remember that seafarers are caught in the middle of an international pandemic and need to be properly supported during this time.

Yours faithfully,



The Revd Canon Andrew Wright
Chairman, ICMA



Dr. Jason Zuidema
General Secretary, ICMA

Member organisations:



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