



# Seafarers' Bulletin

International Transport Workers' Federation

no. 26/2012

● **A CHARTER FOR SEAFARERS** ● SHIPPING EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS FOR 2012 ● **THE TECHNOLOGY REVOLUTION** ● SEAFARERS AND COMMUNICATIONS



## ROBBED OF THEIR WAGES

ITF TAKES ACTION OVER UNSCRUPULOUS CREWING AGENCIES

English

# FLAGS OF CONVENIENCE



ANTIGUA & BARBUDA



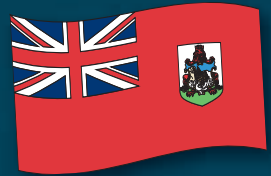
BAHAMAS



BARBADOS



BELIZE



BERMUDA



BOLIVIA



BURMA/MYANMAR



CAMBODIA



CAYMAN ISLANDS



COMOROS



CURAÇAO



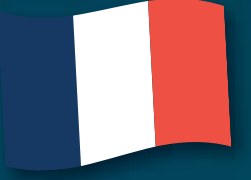
CYPRUS



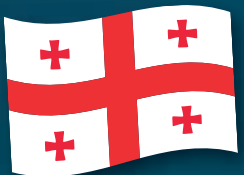
EQUATORIAL GUINEA



FAROE ISLANDS (international register)



FRANCE (second register)



GEORGIA



GERMANY (second register)



GIBRALTAR



HONDURAS



JAMAICA



LEBANON



LIBERIA



MALTA



MARSHALL ISLANDS



MAURITIUS



MOLDOVA



MONGOLIA



NORTH KOREA



PANAMA



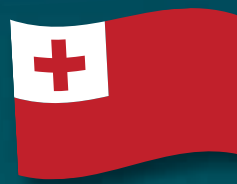
SÃO TOMÉ & PRÍNCIPE



SRI LANKA



ST VINCENT & THE GRENADINES



TONGA



VANUATU

These are the maritime flags that the International Transport Workers' Federation has declared to be flags of convenience. In addition to these flags, there are certain shipping registers whose vessels can be regarded, on a ship-by-ship basis, as operating under a flag of convenience

# NO PLACE TO HIDE





**2**011 was a packed year for the maritime industry, with various economic ups and downs but with achievements for seafarers in a number of international forums.

First of all, in endeavours to combat the threat of piracy, we established an international agreement on private security guards as part of continuing the protection of seafarers against the piracy threat. The International Maritime Organization has sent out guidelines for their use, but this is not seen as a long-term answer to the continuing problem. Also, best management practice (BMP4) guidance was released for ships to comply with specifically in the Somalia region.

Along with our partners, we have also launched the new humanitarian response programme to piracy in support of victims of piracy and their families and with industry groups set up Save Our Seafarers to pressure governments to do more to combat piracy. See page 8 for more information.

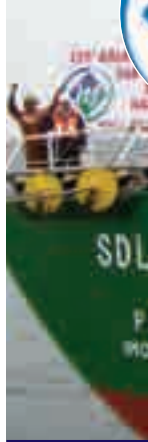
At the most recent meetings of seafarers' and dockers' representatives, the ITF declared two new flag of convenience registers in Moldova and the Faroe Islands. This is never a joyful task for us but, after a rigorous process, is something we must do as part of the protection of seafarers' jobs and the maintenance of minimum standards.

On a high note, we are very pleased to report a negotiated pay increase on all agreements. Firstly with the International Labour Organization minimum, then also the International Bargaining Forum (IBF) and the other ITF agreements that followed. The IBF agreement (see page 9) was concluded at the end of several years of negotiation on improvements, in a very difficult financial climate.

We are all proud of our achievements for this last year and look forward to the next, where amongst other challenges we hope that the Maritime Labour Convention is finally ratified (see page 6). The most recent development shows the Netherlands and Australia joining those already signed up.

Long may our positive collaboration continue.

**David Heindel**  
Chair  
ITF seafarers' section



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**ITF Seafarers' Bulletin**

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**Cover photo**

Crew of the *Philipp* (see page 7).

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# THE ITF FLAG OF CONVENIENCE CAMPAIGN

**The ITF's activities in the maritime industry are spearheaded by the campaign by seafarers' and dockers' unions around the world against the transfer of ships to flags of convenience (FOCs) to evade national laws and conditions and trade unions.**

**The campaign has two sides: politically the ITF fights with governments and international bodies to ensure that there is a "genuine link" between the owner of a ship and the flag it flies; industrially ITF unions have fought to establish acceptable minimum wages and social standards on all FOC ships.**

**In effect, the unions seek to agree conditions which at least reach the standards laid down by the ITF fair practices committee – the joint seafarer and docker body that sanctions the FOC campaign. In recent years, the ITF has negotiated an international collective agreement with a large and growing group of ship operators within the International Bargaining Forum, which provides comparable standards but with more flexibility.**

**Seafarers who are hired to work on FOC ships are often given strict instructions not to make contact with the ITF. Some are made to sign contracts in which they promise not to do so. There are even some employers who will sign an ITF agreement and then defraud their crews by paying lower wages – a practice known as double book-keeping.**

**FOC seafarers who have problems with their pay and conditions, or any other grievance about the way they are being treated, can either get in touch with the ITF directly (see our addresses and numbers on page 21) or can contact one of our inspectors based in ports around the world (see map on centre pages and more details on the reverse of the map).**



ITF inspectors visited a total of **8,078** ships during 2011.



During 2011 the ITF flag of convenience campaign resulted in a total of nearly **US\$25.8 million** being recovered in back wages and compensation for crews.

The number of on-board jobs covered by ITF agreements in 2011 was **209,553**.

# **A HELPING HAND FOR SEAFARERS**

[www.itfseafarers.org](http://www.itfseafarers.org)





Seafarers and families at the Manila convention.

## Sign up to MLC, urges ITF

The work of seafarers must be given the same recognition as any other category of worker, regardless of where their vessels are registered. That was the message delivered by the ITF at the first international seafarers' families' convention in Manila in August 2011.

It was therefore important, said the ITF, for governments to sign up to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), known as the "seafarers' bill of rights", and to the International Labour Organization convention 185 on seafarers' identity documents.

Present at the event was Rosalinda Baldoz, secretary of the Philippines department of labour and employment. She assured the ITF that the Philippines was in the process of signing convention 185 and had also started the process of tripartite discussion on the MLC, which she hoped would soon be signed.

The Manila convention welcomed some 1,350 delegates and was supported by the ITF Seafarers' Trust through the International Committee on Seafarers' Welfare.

# 'BILL OF RIGHTS' LIKELY TO BE IN FORCE SOON

With the ratification of the 2006 Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) by Luxembourg in September 2011, Kiribati in the following month and Australia and the Netherlands in December, 22 member states of the International Labour Organization (ILO), representing well over half the world's gross tonnage of ships, were signatories to the convention by the end of 2011.

Setting out minimum standards and fair working conditions for seafarers worldwide, the convention is expected soon to be ratified by the additional eight countries required for it to come into force. The ITF hopes this will be in 2013.

ITF inspectors are likely to play an important role in enforcing the MLC's

complaints procedures, as well as providing expert guidance to seafarers on their rights under the convention and to port state authorities.

Under the MLC, port state inspectors will be obliged to investigate and follow up complaints from seafarers and their representatives, with responsibilities to detain vessels in the event of serious, recurrent deficiencies.

The ITF is working with the ILO and Maritime Labour Academy on development of a training programme for unions, which would start in the summer of 2012.

In addition a range of fact sheets for seafarers is being prepared.

➔ See: [www.itfseafarers.org/ILOMLC.cfm](http://www.itfseafarers.org/ILOMLC.cfm)

## What the Maritime Labour Convention does...

The International Labour Organization's 2006 Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) provides minimum standards and protection at work for the world's 1.2 million seafarers.

The MLC says that seafarers have a right to a safe and secure workplace, fair terms of employment and decent living and working conditions.

Among other things, the convention specifically gives seafarers the right to:

- an employment agreement, guaranteeing decent on-board working and living conditions, to be signed by the seafarer and the shipowner, or a representative of the shipowner.

- monthly pay, in full and in accordance with the employment agreement and any applicable collective agreement.
- a 14-hour work limit in any 24-hour period; 72 hours in any seven-day period.
- repatriation in case of illness, injury, shipwreck, insolvency, sale of ship and so on.
- specific requirements for living accommodation and recreational facilities – including minimum room sizes, and satisfactory heating, ventilation, sanitary facilities, lighting and hospital accommodation.
- access to prompt medical care when on board and in port.



International Transport Workers' Federation

# ON THE RADAR CREWING AGENTS

THE MARITIME LABOUR CONVENTION (MLC) AIMS TO RAISE THE STANDARDS OF SEAFARERS' LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS. ALL THE MAJOR FLAG STATES HAVE ALREADY SIGNED UP AND THE MLC IS EXPECTED TO COME INTO FORCE SOON.

THE MLC STATES THAT ALL PRIVATE CREWING AGENCIES MUST BE REGULATED AND PROVIDE AN EFFICIENT, ADEQUATE AND ACCOUNTABLE SERVICE THAT PROTECTS AND PROMOTES YOUR EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS.

IN PARTICULAR IT IS PROHIBITED TO:

- CHARGE FEES TO SEAFARERS FOR FINDING POSITIONS ON BOARD;

- MAKE ILLEGAL DEDUCTIONS FROM WAGES;
- CREATE SEAFARER BLACKLISTS.

SHIPOWNERS MUST MAKE SURE THEY USE CREWING AGENTS THAT MEET THE MINIMUM STANDARDS OF THE CONVENTION.

THE ITF IS CARRYING OUT RESEARCH INTO CURRENT EMPLOYMENT PRACTICE. IF YOU HAVE OR HAVE PREVIOUSLY HAD PROBLEMS WITH CREWING AGENTS, WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

EMAIL [CrewingAlert@itf.org.uk](mailto:CrewingAlert@itf.org.uk)

VISIT [www.itfseafarers.org](http://www.itfseafarers.org)



*The Tai Yuan 227 was hijacked for 14 months by Somali pirates.*

## Home at last for African crew in double ordeal

After being captured and held as hostages by Somali pirates for eight months and then trapped for 14 months in Sri Lanka, a group of African seafarers were finally able to travel home with the help of the ITF.

More than two years after they set sail from Singapore and with the ordeal of being prisoners of Somali pirates behind them, eight African crew members finally left Colombo in July 2011 for their native homelands.

When the fishing craft *Tai Yuan 227* left Singapore in September 2009 for the Arabian Sea, little did the crew know what awaited them.

They were hijacked and taken prisoner by Somali pirates on 17 May 2010 and held captive until 23 January 2011.

Ten days later the *Tai Yuan 227*, along with its 27-strong crew of Chinese, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Burmese and Africans, arrived in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Except for the eight Africans – six from Kenya and two from Mozambique – the



*Crew members receive their US\$7,500 pay-out in Sri Lanka.*

crew left Colombo to return home. The Africans, however, remained on board until they were paid their back wages and compensation.

But the craft's Taiwan-based owner declared bankruptcy, after which the local agent cut off food and other supplies to the remaining crew.

So, via the National Union of Seafarers Sri Lanka, the seafarers contacted the ITF.

Local ITF inspector Ranjan Perera immediately started to organise supplies to the vessel. Meanwhile, the ITF made sure that proceeds from the sale of the boat, which had been seized on a court order, were used to pay the fishers.

Eventually they were each given US\$7,500 and their fares home.

### COVER STORY

A Filipino crew was robbed of wages recovered for them by the ITF after they were ambushed as they were leaving Manila airport in October 2011.

Seven of the crew of the Gibraltar-flag container vessel *Philipp* were forced into two vans and driven to the office of the crewing agent, Vega Crewing. There, their money was taken from them under duress. One crew member escaped after he left the airport via a different exit.

Earlier in the month, the crew received back pay owed to them totalling US\$230,000 after UK-based ITF inspector

## Filipinos were robbed of wages at Manila airport

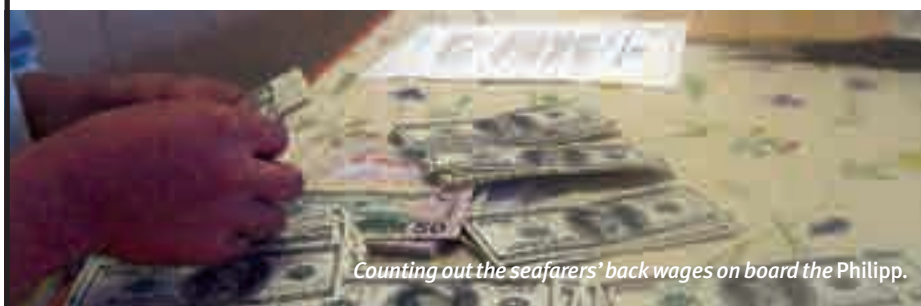
Tommy Molloy had uncovered deliberate double book-keeping on the vessel.

Although the German owners of the vessel, Vega Friedrich Dauber, and its subsidiary agreed to make the payment in Liverpool on 4 October, the owner's representatives took the money back. This

was reported to the Gibraltar maritime authorities, who ordered the company to repay the crew. Payment was overseen by the ITF and witnessed by United Kingdom port state control on behalf of the Gibraltar register on 18 October in Liverpool.

"Someone told me yesterday that he had been in this business for more than 30 years and thought he had seen it all," said Molloy. "But he was surprised to discover that he still had the capacity to be shocked and appalled at the treatment meted out to some seafarers."

Molloy added: "The company has never denied the fraud. They've actually paid back the stolen wages twice now, simply on the basis of the evidence we have against them. Whether Vega Crewing has acted alone or under instructions by taking the money back yet again in Manila I don't know. If it's the former then we would expect Vega to take the appropriate action. If they don't, then we will be looking for the Gibraltar Maritime Administration and others to take the necessary action against the German owner."



*Counting out the seafarers' back wages on board the Philipp.*

## Unions and shipowners unite for piracy campaign



The ITF has joined all sides of the shipping industry in a campaign to harness “people power” to tackle piracy.

The SOS Save Our Seafarers campaign was launched in March 2011 by the ITF and international bodies representing shipping companies.

Backed by a website and advertisements in the world’s leading newspapers, the campaign aims to encourage millions of people to put pressure on their governments to crack down on piracy.

SOS Save Our Seafarers urges governments to wake up to the piracy crisis. For example, Somali pirates are holding some 800 seafarers hostage – and doing so with increasing brutality.

The campaign makes six requests to governments: provide greater protection and support for seafarers; authorise naval forces to detain pirates and deliver them for prosecution; criminalise all acts of piracy under national laws and trace the organisers and financiers behind the criminal networks.

➔ See [www.saveourseafarers.com](http://www.saveourseafarers.com).

## ITF BACKS NEW SCHEME TO HELP VICTIMS AND FAMILIES

The Maritime Piracy: A Humanitarian Response (MPHR) scheme has been launched to help seafarers and their families cope with the anguish of piracy. Funded by the ITF Seafarers’ Trust and TK Foundation, the new programme is backed by an alliance of unions, shipowners, managers, crewing agents, insurers and welfare associations representing the entire shipping industry.

Over the past eight years, nearly 4,000 seafarers have been attacked by pirates or have been victims of armed robbers. But there has been little coordinated help for those victims and their families. Now that will change, say MPHR backers. With the help of those in the industry who want to do their best, a network of first responders and counsellors for affected crews is being set up.

Seafarers contacted by the ITF who have been held captive say that the level of care they receive is very varied. Some companies put them into hotels, give them medical care,

arrange new clothes and shoes and then fly them home.

Others, however, have been kept on the ship and then flown home with the clothes they have been wearing for months.

Evidence shows that if hostages are released quickly and properly when they are released they recover much quicker and are less likely to suffer problems.

➔ See [www.mphrp.org](http://www.mphrp.org) or email: [piracyresponse@btinternet.com](mailto:piracyresponse@btinternet.com)



Pirates usually board ships from speedboats.

### TOP 20 FLAG FLEETS

Ranked by tonnage  
1 January 2011

	No. of ships (over 100gt)	Gross tonnage (millions)	GT (m) 1 January 2010	Average age (ships)
1 Panama*	7,986	201.3	190.7	17
2 Liberia*	2,726	106.7	91.7	10
3 Marshall Islands*	1,622	62.0	49.1	8
4 Hong Kong (China)	1,736	55.5	45.3	9
5 Bahamas*	1,384	50.4	48.1	13
6 Singapore	2,667	44.9	41.0	8
7 Greece	1,433	40.8	38.9	21
8 Malta*	1,724	38.7	35.0	12
9 China	4,080	34.7	30.1	22
10 Cyprus*	1,014	20.7	20.2	11
11 Italy	1,649	17.0	15.5	22
12 Japan	6,150	16.9	14.7	16
13 United Kingdom	1,638	16.5	17.0	19
14 Germany	931	15.3	15.2	22
15 Norway (NIS second register)	521	13.8	13.9	14
16 South Korea	2,913	12.5	12.9	26
17 United States	6,371	11.9	12.0	27
18 Isle of Man (United Kingdom)	385	11.6	10.2	9
19 Denmark (DIS second register)	524	11.5	10.8	15
20 Antigua & Barbuda*	1,293	10.7	10.0	10

Source: Lloyd's Register of Shipping. \* Denotes flag of convenience.

### TOP 20 SHIPOWNING COUNTRIES

Ranked by tonnage  
1 January 2011

	No. of ships (over 1000gt)	Gross tonnage (millions)	Average age (ships)
1 Japan	3,796	132.0	8
2 Greece	3,213	118.1	13
3 Germany	3,827	85.4	8
4 China	3,651	67.2	18
5 United States	1,972	43.0	16
6 United Kingdom	1,128	40.7	12
7 Norway	1,986	33.8	13
8 South Korea	1,189	30.0	15
9 Denmark	980	26.4	11
10 Hong Kong (China)	713	23.4	10
11 Taiwan	662	20.9	13
12 Singapore	1,021	20.0	12
13 Italy	836	17.7	13
14 Russia	1,892	14.3	25
15 Canada	436	13.2	20
16 Turkey	1,214	12.4	17
17 Malaysia	526	10.9	13
18 India	534	10.8	16
19 France	467	8.7	10
20 Belgium	249	8.0	12

Source: Lloyd's Register of Shipping.



# Three-year pay deal for flag of convenience crews

The ITF and major employers on flag of convenience ships have signed a three-year pay agreement that increases rates from 1 January 2012, with further rises on the same date in 2013 and 2014.

The new International Bargaining Forum (IBF) agreement was negotiated by the ITF and employers at talks in Miami in July 2011 and ratified in London in November at a meeting of representatives of ITF-affiliated maritime unions.

As a result, a 2 per cent increase will be applied on 1 January this year, followed by a 2.5 per cent rise on 1 January 2013 and a final 3 per cent increase on 1 January 2014.

Details of how the increases will be applied to officers and ratings were left to be determined in further talks involving national unions.

The issue of piracy was also discussed in Miami and a revised text was agreed on warlike operations and high risk areas.

In addition, a revised agreement was signed covering principles to assist companies with the development of disciplinary and

grievance procedures and bullying and harassment procedures, along with commitments to maintain future officer supply through cadet training and the provision of training berths on board IBF-covered ships.

Speaking at the conclusion of the IBF negotiations, Dave Heindel, chair of the ITF seafarers' section, commented: "The last few years have put a great pressure on both sides of the IBF. The collapse in the world financial market has led to employers wanting to minimise their cost increases in difficult times; and has put pressure on those who represent the seafarers to understand this financial situation, whilst ensuring that they are protecting the interest and livelihoods of their members."

He added: "The final agreement that we have reached has demonstrated the ability of the two sides to work together being both constructive and representative. This agreement bears testament to the strength of the IBF process and its ability to reach conclusions in difficult times, on difficult issues."

## NEW ZEALAND FISHING STANDARDS UNDER FIRE

The ITF is calling for an overhaul of the way that the fishing industry is regulated in New Zealand. Unions in the country are also pushing for action following the case of the *Oyang 75*, a Korean fishing vessel abandoned in Lyttleton with the Indonesian crew claiming underpayment and physical and verbal abuse.

Twenty-six charges against Korean officers have resulted from an investigation into the case. The ship was reportedly chartered by New Zealand-based Southern Storm Fishing, the same company that chartered the *Oyang 70*, which sank in 2010, killing six crew members.

An inquiry into the foreign charter of vessels in the New Zealand fishing industry began in October 2011. The Maritime Union of New Zealand is urging the phasing-out of foreign-chartered vessels, which, it says, are often hotbeds for sweatshop conditions and safety contraventions.

Jon Whitlow, ITF seafarers' section secretary, said: "It is not just New Zealand authorities that need to act. Other countries should also improve conditions on board fishing vessels, including through ratification and implementation of the 2007 International Labour Organization Work in Fishing Convention No 188."



# 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.**

**What you must do first is contact the local representative of the ITF. 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, talk to local ITF representatives before you do anything. Working together, we can win the battle for justice and basic rights.**



International Transport Workers' Federation

# Look carefully before you sign

## ITF advice on your contract to work at sea

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



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



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



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



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



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



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



Make sure that the contract clearly stipulates how **overtime** will be paid and at what rate. There could be a flat hourly rate payable for all hours worked in excess of the basic. Or there may be a

monthly fixed amount for a guaranteed number of overtime hours, in which case the rate for any hours worked beyond the guaranteed overtime should be clearly stated. The ILO states that all overtime hours should be paid at a minimum of 1.25 x the normal hourly rate.



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



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



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



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



Be aware that an individual employment contract will not always include details of **additional benefits**. Therefore, try to obtain confirmation (preferably in the form of a written agreement or

contractual entitlement) of what compensation will be payable in the event of:

- sickness or injury during the contractual period;
- death (amount payable to next of kin);
- loss of the vessel;
- loss of personal effects resulting from the loss of the vessel;
- premature termination of the contract.



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



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



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



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



**International Transport Workers' Federation**

[www.itfseafarers.org](http://www.itfseafarers.org)



# WORKING TOGETHER SEAFARERS AND DOCKERS

*Union activists joined together for weeks of action in September and October 2011 in south Asian and Asia/Pacific ports, including Russia (also below).*

**By Gemma Walker**

Dockers and seafarers play a key role in the global supply chain. When acting together they have the ability to make a unique impact on global trade operations, giving them a greater chance of safeguarding their jobs and ensuring they are not subjected to sub-standard working conditions.

Solidarity between dockers and seafarers has played a major role in the success of the flags of convenience (FOC) campaign. Port workers are frequently the first point of contact for seafarers in trouble. Now, with the drive to raise the profile and influence of the ITF's ports of convenience work programme, dockers will be calling on seafarers more than ever before for support.

But then this is nothing new. The ITF was forged by the strong links between dockers and seafarers and the conviction that better results can be achieved if the two groups act in solidarity with one another. That was true in 1896 when the ITF was founded, and it is still true today.

Weeks of action have long been a way for the ITF to draw attention to the work being done by its inspectors and unions in protecting the welfare of seafarers. But, as

the latest ITF weeks of action have shown, they're now also about highlighting the need for even greater solidarity between dockers and seafarers.

### Weeks of action in Asia

Seafarers and dockers showed their collective power in December 2011 when Indian dockers downed tools to support seafarers requesting an ITF agreement improving their conditions.

The ITF-affiliated Transport and Dockworkers' Union of Kandla targeted the Panama-flag, Turkish-owned *Belde* after the union found that crew members were



working excessive hours for wages far below the international standards.

Negotiations started and representatives from the ITF in Delhi, Turkey and London all stepped in to help. After 40 minutes of solidarity activity by dockworkers, the shipping company agreed to sign an ITF agreement giving better pay and conditions for the ship's crew and also transferred the necessary payments, thus securing ongoing better wages and conditions for the seafarers onboard – all thanks to the solidarity of the dockers' union.

Union general secretary Manohar Bellani said it was a victory for dockers and seafarers and a great example of how the two groups could support each other to get real, tangible results: "Kandla is sending a strong message to the shipping companies that seafarers rights are protected in Kandla and dockers are helping seafarers in getting their basic needs. All the 19 crew members on the vessel will now have enhanced wages and other social protection."

### Campaign to save BMW jobs

At the request of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT), ITF union members and inspectors organised

EVELIN TOMSON AND RAUL SINIALLIK ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ESTONIAN SEAMEN'S INDEPENDENT UNION (ESIU), WHICH ORGANISES SEAFARERS AND DOCKERS IN ESTONIA. HERE, THEY GIVE THEIR ACCOUNTS OF THE BALTIC WEEK OF ACTION FROM THE RESPECTIVE POINT OF VIEW OF SEAFARERS AND DOCKERS.

## THE ITF PORTS OF CONVENIENCE CAMPAIGN

Ports are key hubs in the global freight distribution system and are at the core of the global economy. Port and dock workers provide a vital service in supporting the strategic supply chains necessary to multinational companies.

ITF unions are leading the fight for acceptable standards for men and women working in ports and docks around the world – one of the most hazardous working environments. This work is known as the ports of convenience campaign.

A port of convenience is a port or terminal where health and safety standards or working conditions are below what is considered acceptable by the ITF and its affiliated unions.

Multinational companies operate global supply chains and are often focused on profit margins and increasing their share of the market. To get the best results some companies are casualising labour and allowing safety standards to fall. Some global companies are opting to use ports where labour is cheaper and where they don't have to observe health and safety standards or recognise organised trade unions.

The ITF campaign aims to ensure that standards acceptable to ITF dockers' unions apply in ports and terminals around the world.

The approach of the ITF dockers' section is to ensure the 350,000 workers it represents can benefit from their potential power to fight for rights and deliver fair treatment for port workers – and for all workers, internationally.

➔ Find out more about the campaign and the work of the ITF dockers' section at: [www.itfglobal.org/dockers](http://www.itfglobal.org/dockers)

### SEAFARERS



**ESIU organisation secretary Evelin Tomson was the union's first employee when it was founded in 1995.**

● *Why is it important for seafarers to see the kind of high profile action going on, as they saw during the ITF Baltic week of action in October 2011?*

The most effective way for seafarers to understand the role of the union and the role of the ITF is to witness them both in action. Many seafarers don't immediately understand that we are there to safeguard their interests. They may have been warned against unions and often they are concerned over possible complications.

The weeks of action help to make the power of collective protection more visible to seafarers and, for us, it's an opportunity to make contact with new potential activists. It is also a chance to expand our circle of supporters and demonstrate that maritime unions are cooperating with each other to achieve better futures for workers.

For example, I led a team that visited the *Princess Anastasia*, travelling between St Petersburg, Tallinn and Stockholm, which is the first flag of convenience ferry in Tallinn for many years. We spoke with crew members and described what the union did and invited them to join.

Besides giving out campaign leaflets and union magazines, we explained what a collective bargaining agreement was and gave out copies of the signed agreement.

● *Why is solidarity between seafarers and dockers so important?*

All union organising is based on solidarity between workers. Many employers are constantly looking for ways to divide workers and make money out of people's ignorance. Without the support of dockers, seafarers would often not be able to stop vessels in port; striking at sea is illegal, so they have to be able to do this.

● *What feedback do you get from seafarers about the ITF's flag of convenience and port of convenience campaigns?*

Seafarers who have needed help know the FOC campaign very well through the worldwide network of ITF inspectors. Their feedback is predominantly positive and some new members join as a result.

But there are still plenty of seafarers who don't know about the collective agreements or the union work behind FOC

vessels; some tend instead to believe that everything falls magically from heaven!

With regards the ports campaign in the Baltic, it is still early days. I believe, if asked, seafarers would be willing to support better regulation, safer work environments and union presence in ports, because it contributes to fair employment practices across the board.

### DOCKERS



**Raul Siniallik is an ESIU executive committee member and a former dockers' representative.**

● *Why is it important for dockers to see high profile action going on in ports?*

It's important that dockers see the ITF in action and the organisation's potential with their own eyes. The ITF becomes more real and close to them through these kind of actions – not just as a name on a piece of paper. They see how the ITF can take care of seafarers and this will encourage them to get involved too.

During the recent week of action, union leaders and inspectors gathered into groups and visited ships. Once on the vessels we divided into two smaller groups – one checking ship documents and book-keeping, the other, led by me, visiting crew members' living areas, kitchens, stores, mess-rooms etc.

We gave them information bulletins about what we were doing and we talked with them about their living conditions, their opportunities for free time and asked them about any problems they might have been having.

● *Why is solidarity between dockers and seafarers so important?*

Dockers and seafarers work so closely with each other that sometimes seafarers are doing dockers' work, which has been the main theme of the last series of weeks of action. Acting in solidarity with each other helps them to keep their jobs and pay separate – as well as helping them to better protect their rights.

● *What feedback do you get from dockers about the ports of convenience campaign?*

At a recent meeting in Riga with dockers from Latvia, Lithuania and Russia, almost all of them understood the importance of the campaign. We devoted the last day of the Baltic week of action to visiting local stevedoring companies and talking to dockers about the week of action and the campaign, which was really well received.

## Working together

➔ rallies worldwide at major BMW vehicle shipper ports.

Using the combined influence of seafarers' and dockers' unions, workers at locations in Australia, Belgium, Germany, Mexico, Netherlands, South Africa, Thailand and United Kingdom were able to show a coordinated display of support for fellow workers.

An agreement was finally brokered between the car manufacturing giant, BMW and the IBT, which saved at least 70 jobs.

### Baltic week of action

In October 2011, members of dockers' and seafarers' unions joined together to check conditions and pay on ships in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia and Sweden and to spread the word about the the ITF's ports of convenience work programme and FOC campaign across the region.

See the interviews on our facing page to get first hand accounts from a seafarers' and a dockers' perspective on how working together makes everyone stronger.

### Examples

These are just a few examples of dockers and seafarers acting together in solidarity, but as the global market becomes more and more competitive and technology threatens to make many jobs in ports and onboard ships obsolete, it is going to be more and more important for these two groups to stick together.

↳ Gemma Walker works with the dockers' section at ITF head office in London.



An ITF week of action was held in Baltic ports in northern Europe in October 2011.

# WHICH DIRECTION FOR SHIPPING JOBS IN 2012?



## OPINION

### DAVE OSLER LOOKS AT HOW LABOUR DEMAND IN SHIPPING IS BEING HIT BY THE GLOBAL RECESSION.

Anyone concerned with employment prospects for seafarers can hardly be looking forward to the year ahead, which seems set to rank among the worst the shipping industry has ever seen.

As those who have been around long enough to remember previous downturns will recall, it is at times like these that the ITF and the individual unions of which it is comprised demonstrate their indispensable role.

Ironically, the main studies of seafarer labour supply, compiled by shipowner bodies such as BIMCO and the International Shipping Federation (ISF) or by private sector consultants such as Drewry and Precious Associates, suggest that the underlying picture is mildly encouraging from a job security standpoint.

Supply and demand for ratings is more or less in balance. However, there is a shortage of fully qualified officers, particularly for certain ranks and ship types such as tankers and offshore support vessels.

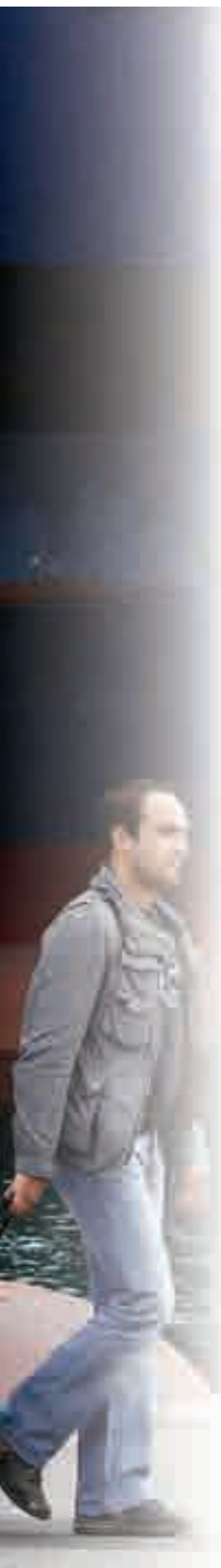
The BIMCO/ISF survey, for instance, puts demand for officers at 637,000 and ratings at 747,000, based on the size and make-up of the world fleet and estimates of crewing levels and back-up ratios applicable to fleets of different nationalities.

### Estimates for 2012

That compares to data estimating the global supply of seafarers in 2012 at 624,000 for officers and 747,000 for ratings, based on the number of seafarers holding Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Code certificates.

Supply is increasing not only in the Far East but

“Supply and demand for ratings is more or less in balance. However, there is a shortage of fully qualified officers.”



➔ also in several Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, with training of new entrants maintained or increased in the second half of the 2000s.

But as with all research of this kind, everything hinges on the assumptions adopted. Crucially, most such models work on the basis that either the moderate growth in world trade since the post-Lehman Brothers great recession of 2008/9 will be maintained, or that any downturn will be limited.

Unfortunately, developments at the end of 2011 indicated that even projections painstakingly compiled little more than 12 months ago simply do not capture how bad things are likely to prove in 2012. The “worst case” scenarios may turn out not to be worst case enough.

The shipping industry is already beset by a major oversupply of ships, high fuel prices, difficulties in securing finance, huge debts accrued in the boom to pay for new vessels, and freight rates that have fallen through the floor.

Put them together and you arrive at a spectacularly toxic combination. Some commentators believe that the fortunes of shipping as a whole stand at their lowest ebb since the mid 1980s, with none of the major sectors immune from these problems.

### Companies going bust and selling ships

Let's just run over some recent *Lloyd's List* stories. At the time of writing, one of the world's largest tanker operators had just gone bust, while another large concern was renegotiating debts with its bankers. One dry bulk specialist effectively admitted that its shares were worthless.

A number of Chinese companies were simply not paying their charter bills, and even the strongest containership giants were losing money on an enormous scale. One state-owned container carrier is selling its fleet and exiting the business.

Bankers are no longer lending money to buy new ships,

“  
**The shipping industry is already beset by a major oversupply of ships, high fuel prices, difficulties in securing finance, huge debts accrued in the boom to pay for new vessels, and freight rates that have fallen through the floor.”**

and are reluctant to roll over existing loans. In some instances, they have pulled the plug on borrowers, resorting to repossession and forced sales, despite the knowledge that they will recoup only a fraction of their outlay.

Somehow this situation has arisen even though most major economies are still displaying positive growth, if only by the most slender of margins. There is no guarantee that this will continue, and the chances of a return to recession are all too real.

### Unions campaign to save jobs

The labour movement internationally in many countries is already engaged in important campaigns on such bread and butter trade union questions such as job security and defence of the living standards of its members.

ITF affiliates have traditionally been at the forefront in such struggles, and with good reason.

It is bad enough for any worker to lose his or her job. But for seafarers, the consequences of an employer going under can be far more dramatic than they are for most. Even in boom times, many end up stranded in ports around the world, with no means of support and no money for an air ticket home. Unfortunately the best guess has to be that abandonment will increase markedly in the coming period.

Adding to the uncertainty is any number of known unknowns. For instance, increased vessel sizes – such as the latest generation of 18,000 teu containerships and 400,000 tonne ore carriers – will decrease demand for labour.

On the other hand, regulatory change, especially in the face of environmental challenges and the piracy threat, could see mandates for larger crew sizes.

Meanwhile, the impact of the Maritime Labour Convention – which is likely finally to be ratified in the course of 2012 – is unclear.

The European Commission has concerns about the quality of training in the Philippines, the world's most important labour supply country. Among the options being considered is derecognition of newly issued seafarer qualifications, a sanction previously adopted against Georgia.

However, such is the dependence of European Union shipowners on Filipinos that few observers believe that it could take such a step, even if it decided that such a measure was necessary. The Philippines government has reportedly responded by shutting down a number of training establishments that it believes were below par.

### Modest wage rises likely

Economic uncertainty also means that open market wage increases are likely to be modest, and some employers will no doubt seek to bring down payroll costs.

The ITF benchmark rate for ratings will increase by 2 per cent from 1 January 2012 from US\$1,675 per month to US\$1,709.

But that will not match inflation in many countries, and let us not forget that there are all too many workers at sea earning less than a third of that level. If anybody needs a union card, they do.

☞ *Dave Osler is the industrial correspondent of the London-based maritime daily newspaper Lloyd's List. He writes here in a personal capacity.*

# DO YOU NEED HELP?



If so, you can get in touch with the ITF by contacting one of our inspectors (see the list on pages 21-24) or contact the ITF Seafarers Support Line

by email [help@itf.org.uk](mailto:help@itf.org.uk)

by phone **+44 (0)20 7940 9285**

by fax **+44 (0)20 7357 7871**

Here is the checklist of the minimum information that you should provide

## About you:

- Name
- Rank
- Nationality
- Contact details – telephone and/or email

## About the ship:

- Name
- Flag
- IMO number
- Current location
- Number of crew and their nationalities

## About the problem:

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



**International Transport Workers' Federation**

Illustrations: Clive Wakfer



# THE SEAFARERS' CHARTER

## ITF AND UNIONS MAKE PLEDGE TO YOU

**A**ll over the world there are thousands of ships that are covered by ITF collective bargaining agreements. These are legally binding contracts negotiated between shipping companies and ITF unions that set minimum employment standards on board.

Signing an ITF agreement binds the union and the employer to commit to give the seafarers employed on that particular ship a minimum level of pay and other working conditions.

### Union pledge to seafarers

In 2010, ITF unions adopted the seafarers' charter policy. In doing so they committed to seafarers and agreed to fulfil certain responsibilities to the crew members on board ITF-covered vessels.

Some seafarers are not union members in their own country, but under ITF agreements they still enjoy union protection.

Under the new policy, the ITF union signing an agreement on a flag of convenience ship will provide certain benefits and



**When ITF unions adopted the seafarers' charter policy in 2010, they made a formal commitment to seafarers serving under their ITF agreements. Now that the policy has come into force, ANNA LLEWELLYN highlights the benefit this will have for crew members.**

support to the seafarers that are covered by the agreement.

### Your entitlements

**Union membership card:** The union will provide you with an appropriate form of membership card. It is important for you to have proof that you are a member of the union and for the union to know who you are and how best to get in contact with you.

**Union publication:** The union will also provide



you with a newsletter, journal or magazine, so that you can keep up to date with the union's activities and other developments.

**Contacts directory:** You will also receive contact details of your union officials, either in the form of a contacts directory or included in the membership card and/or the union publication.

**Assistance with claims:** If you have any claims the union will assist you with that claim. It could be that the company owes you wages. Maybe you suffered an injury on board. Whatever the problem, if you have a claim under the collective agreement, the union will





# TECHNOLOGY at sea goes global



support and assist you. This is one of the most important things that a union can do for its members and one of the biggest benefits of being a union member.

**Participatory rights:** The union should give all the seafarers they represent the chance to participate in the affairs of the union. This involvement will reflect the special nature of their membership and the level of participation will depend on the circumstances.

**Ship visits:** Where possible, the union will send a representative to visit the ship, to see if the crew are doing OK. Of course, in some cases, depending on the trade pattern of the vessel and the location of the union itself, this may not be possible. But in those cases one of the ITF's worldwide inspectors will be able to visit the ship on behalf of the union (see details on page 19).

**Shared responsibilities:** The union is often in the country of the ship's owner but many seafarers are members of the union in their own countries. There is now an agreement between these unions to share the responsibility of representing seafarers covered by an ITF agreement, this situation is covered under the bilateral arrangements guidelines.

The unions will decide which of them is responsible for the duties laid out above; this is recorded in a bilateral arrangement and the ITF is kept informed of any changes.

If the union is unable to assist you, for any reason, the ITF can provide assistance in liaison with the union through its inspectorate network.

The charter will come into force on 1 January 2012 but unions have until 1 January 2014 to meet the standards fully.

## OPINION

**THE REVOLUTION IN COMPUTER AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY IS TRANSFORMING THE WORKING LIVES OF SEAFARERS, SAYS HELEN SAMPSON – FOR BETTER AND FOR WORSE.**

This is truly the age of information and communications technology and even the sometimes remote world of the ship, and the seafarer, is being affected by innovation and transformation.

Many of these changes are positive. For example, a number of companies have introduced internet access on board cargo ships. In these cases, seafarers are free to surf the web, maintain social networking sites and directly email family and friends. The difference that this is making to seafarers is immeasurable.

Other companies that have not gone as far as the introduction of the internet on board have nevertheless introduced limited access to email for seafarers which serves, at least, to provide better communication between seafarers and their friends and families.

Added to this, advances in mobile phone technology are allowing seafarers to circumvent ship communication systems and SMS (text message), or call relatives and friends from aboard any time they are within range of a mobile network signal. Since the enforcement of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code, while approaching port the talk aboard vessels is more likely to concern at which point a signal is likely to be received than plans for going ashore.

Technology has also been beneficial in relation to navigation and engine maintenance. On the bridge, automatic radar plotting aid (ARPA/RADAR), and subsequently the electronic chart display and information system (ECDIS) have offered watchkeepers more sophisticated means of identifying and tracking navigational hazards and planning safe passages. While on the lower decks, technology in support of "unmanned engine rooms" is releasing engineers from 24-hour working.

Useful innovation does not only occur in relation to communication technology and computerisation, however. Revolutions in materials technology has allowed for the development of textiles providing longer protection for seafarers immersed in cold water as survival suit performance has been enhanced alongside "user friendliness". Similarly, innovation in ship design has been said to have led to improvements in structural integrity. →



Notwithstanding these very many benefits, there are also a number of potential disadvantages to seafarers that are associated with innovation.

For example, containerisation has been one of the major innovations in cargo transportation in the past 100 years. Widely heralded as of great benefit in speeding up the process of shipment, containerisation has also resulted in the faster turnaround of vessels and the development of major new ports away from city centre locations. Both of these often serve as barriers to seafarers enjoying short periods of necessary shore leave.

Improvements in communications technologies have made vessel captains less autonomous, and seafarers may feel de-skilled as a consequence of developments such as shore-side computer-based cargo planning (including stress calculations).

For many seafarers the job at sea has changed beyond recognition as a consequence of innovation and not all are happy about such transformations, feeling that the job now involves less skill or “seamanship”.

There is also a danger that contract workers – as seafarers frequently are – involved in remote residential working may not be in receipt of the training they require to effectively, and safely, make use of new technology aboard.

At the Seafarers International Research Centre, we recently conducted a questionnaire-based study of training and new technology funded by the Lloyd’s Register Educational Trust. This demonstrated that training is regarded as important by seafarers in relation to the acquisition of knowledge regarding new equipment and the onboard application of new technology.

Such training is not always optimal, however, and seafarers report that it is often provided after they have first been required to use equipment and that they are rarely involved in the identification of their own training needs. In almost half of the cases reported, officers were required to meet part or all of their own training costs, and over a

quarter of them stated that they were never compensated for lost leave time when training.

➤ *Professor Helen Sampson is the director of the Seafarers International Research Centre, based at Cardiff University, United Kingdom. See page 35: Survey into seafarers and communications.*

“  
**Advances in mobile phone technology are allowing seafarers to circumvent ship communication systems.**”



Justin Tallis/reportdigital.co.uk

## FAMILIES

# Reading programme for children of absentee parents

By **Pauline de Lange**

The Gig and the Amazing Sampaguita Foundation Inc (GASFI) is a union-backed organisation in the Philippines that advocates reading 20 minutes at children’s bedtime. But it’s not just about reading: it’s also about spending time together as a family, telling stories and getting to know each other.

The reality though is that a lot of children in the Philippines now grow up in absentee parent homes because one or both parents are abroad working to provide them with a good education and better opportunities.

Marissa Oca understands that and with seafarers and overseas Filipino workers in mind she set up GASFI in memory of her son, Gig, who died aged 17 in 2008.

Last year, her father, Gregorio Oca, founder

of the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) also passed on. Now, more than ever, the collective efforts of AMOSUP and GASFI for seafarer families move forward towards captain Oca’s vision of wellbeing and quality of life for all.

Gig was my classmate in high school. He was an extraordinary young man who loved life, learning and books.

Founded in March 2009, GASFI now serves communities all over the Philippine

archipelago. The goal is to find seafarer families and tell them to read together, but it doesn’t end there. GASFI also encourages seafarer children and their families to come and participate in outreach programmes to benefit children with little or no access to books.

What began as a simple book donor programme has become a vehicle for amazing things.

➤ See [www.amosup.org](http://www.amosup.org) and [www.gasfi.org](http://www.gasfi.org). Pauline de Lange is a GASFI volunteer.

Right: GASFI reading books for Filipino children.



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Contact one of our inspectors if you need help and you work on either a flag of convenience ship or on a foreign-flag ship not covered by a union agreement. If an inspector is not available, contact the actions team at ITF head office or your nearest ITF office (see left).

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ITF coordinator Annica Barning (left) of the SEKO Swedish seafarers' union and ITF inspector Susan Linderkamp of the German union Ver.di.

Maritime union women activists meet to discuss leadership roles

# AIMING FOR THE TOP IN UNIONS

By Bojana Manojlovic

What makes a good union leader? What is the key to a successful union organising strategy? How can we reverse the global trend of declining union membership, unite transport workers and use collective action to create a better future for them all over the world?

These were only some of the many questions addressed when 37 women maritime trade unionists from 25 countries met in October 2011 at the Paul Hall maritime training centre in Piney Point, Maryland, in the US. The centre is run by the ITF-affiliated Seafarers' International Union.

The six-day ITF maritime women's strategic leadership and organising conference also allowed participants to share experiences about the everyday challenges for women working in the predominantly male shipping industry.

Under the guidance of conference leader Elaine Bernard, executive director of the labour and worklife programme at Harvard Law School, the conference examined the key role of union organising strategies and union education.

All participants agreed that, without education and knowledge, women seafarers cannot hope to achieve the aims of better working hours, shorter working contracts, longer maternity leave and a safer working environment.

➔ Bojana Manojlovic works for the SPH Croatian seafarers' union.

## 'ANYONE WHO WANTS THE BEST OF LIFE – GO TO SEA!'

One of the most active participants at the ITF conference for women in maritime unions, Becky Sleeper (right), is a port agent in St Louis for the North American Seafarers' International Union (SIU). She has 27 years of union experience.

Women seafarers with long experience at sea can influence young women to choose this extraordinary vocation, she says. It is indeed hard work, but with unions standing right next to them and serving as a constant support, it can lead to an exciting and fulfilled life – for women and for men.

She adds: "At the age of 28 I became the first



female official for the union and was sent on a mission to Illinois to help organise the casino boats. It was an exciting experience. Slowly but surely I worked my way up and today I represent SIU. I keep learning and growing. It's a great life and anyone can do it.

"My son went to college for a year, returned home and said that it wasn't the life for him. He asked me if he could go to sea. Of course, I said, you can go to sea, and the same thing I've said to my 15-year-old daughter, who expressed the same wish. Anyone who wants the best of life – go to sea!"

# The importance of family-friendly contracts

**JACQUELINE SMITH (BELOW) HAS BEEN PRESIDENT OF THE NORWEGIAN SEAFARERS' UNION SINCE 2006.**

**What should unions primarily concentrate on in the near future?**

Seafarers' unions need to work for decent working and wage conditions for seafarers and it also has to be a level playing field, so that we don't have seafarers from labour-supplying countries being used to undermine the conditions of those from traditional maritime countries. We all need each other. We need to work together to ensure that there are decent wages and working conditions, that seafarers are not discriminated against and that there is equal pay for equal work.

**What can we do to improve working conditions for women seafarers?**

If you want to get more women seafarers out there you need to ensure that they are put on board vessels where there are already women. Why? Because working on a ship is lonely enough as it is, especially on smaller cargo ships, where there are usually no women on board. There are more women in the industry in



general, but we need to ensure that they are not isolated on board.

We should also try to shorten the length of contracts, because today it is usually around nine months. When it comes to international contracts, when a seafarer signs on, they are employed, but when they sign off they are no longer employed. That is definitely not family-friendly, which means that we should push forward continuous employment and a 2:1 or 4:2 leave system. This could open up the possibility for women seafarers to have a family.

At present many women work on board up until the moment they give birth and, unless they have a family structure at home, it is virtually impossible for them to go back at sea.

**What can maritime unions do to push for activism and leadership at all levels within the union?**

We need to challenge our members to participate and be responsible for their own life and working conditions. We need to educate them because education is the key: members should be given tools so that they feel that they are able to represent themselves and others. They need to know their rights and they need to know how to advocate them.

## When I visited my first ship, the captain thought I wasn't important enough to meet

**BETTY MAKENA MUTUGI (BELOW RIGHT) IS AN OFFICIAL OF THE DOCKWORKERS' UNION OF KENYA. SHE IS ALSO THE NEWEST ITF INSPECTOR IN A TEAM OF 11 WOMEN INSPECTORS – MORE THAN DOUBLE THE NUMBER FIVE YEARS AGO.**

Betty has been a docker in the port of Mombasa for more than 22 years and has long been active in ITF women's and youth work, which has helped to develop her skills.

How did she get involved in union activities? "Working in a field dominated by men, lots of women think we should leave it to the men, but I say we need to try it. For many years in Africa there was sympathy for women and sometimes they would be given token roles in unions, but with the dockers there is no sympathy."

She explains: "I went for my position and I fought for it. The percentage of women dockers in Mombasa is very little and the challenges for men and women are different but if men see that you are someone who has the trade union in their heart and someone

who can present their issues in front of management they will support you."

The first time she went on board a vessel in her role as an inspector, the captain first of all refused to come down and talk to her, thinking, says Betty, that as a woman she could be fobbed off.

But Betty stood her ground and eventually managed to speak to the captain and solve the seafarers' pay problem that she went on board to address.

She says: "The captain was looking at me and thinking that because I am a woman I am not important. But I am important, both as a woman and as an ITF inspector".

Betty says she's seen a great deal of progress during her two decades on the docks when it comes to how seriously women are taken as union representatives. She explains that in the past even if women had token roles they weren't listened to and were discouraged from taking part in national or international meetings.

But now, with the help of more progressive union leaders, women are

realising that they have an important role to play. Betty says: "Historically lots of women have felt that they are expected always to be in the kitchen, but now they are coming out... you have to come out."

➤ Watch a full interview with Betty: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ia1jzAbbT4o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ia1jzAbbT4o).



Erik Nielsen



# UNION LAYS CLAIM TO NEW OFFSHORE JOBS

By **Norrie McVicar**

Chair of the ITF offshore task force group

Since securing independence from Indonesia on 20 May 2002, Timor-Leste (East Timor) has emerged as a precarious democracy. Properly managed, its economic and political saviour may be the discovery of large deposits of oil and gas reserves on land and at sea.

The ITF, through its international trade union seafarers' development programme in conjunction with the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA), has given practical support to Timorese workers to help them consolidate their own trade union movement, in particular in the maritime and offshore oil and gas sectors.

A major initiative came in 2006 when the ITF was invited by Konfederasaun Sindikatu Timor Leste (KSTL) trade union centre and the SMETTL maritime, energy and transport workers' union to organise a seminar with the aim of persuading the Timor Leste government to ensure jobs and training for indigenous workers in the maritime and offshore industries.

At that time there were hardly any Timorese seafarers or skilled offshore workers available for employment. Moreover, companies such as Conoco Phillips, which had secured the contract with the government for the exploration and development of East Timor oil and gas fields, appeared uninterested in training and hiring local workers.

The breakthrough came in 2008 when, at a meeting with the natural resources minister Alfredo Pires, the ITF was assured that the government had accepted the advice from the unions and countries such as Norway and Australia to apply models of good practice in the exploration and development of its oil and gas.

The ITF then set up a Timor development and coordination committee to promote training for seafarers, port workers and offshore oil and gas workers. The committee also aimed to lay the foundation for best employment practices, not just in the new offshore sector but in all Timorese industries.

Support was secured from the Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia (KPI) seafarers' union to assist in the training of Timorese fishers up to the level of the International Maritime Organization's Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping Convention.

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**Companies such as Conoco Phillips, which had secured the contract with the government for the exploration and development of East Timor oil and gas fields, appeared uninterested in training and hiring local workers.”**



Activists of the Timorese SMETTL union were joined at their second congress by members of the ITF offshore task force group.

In collaboration with the ITF and the KPI, the Norwegian energy workers' union Industri Energi (IE) supplied the main funding for the first 25 trainees to be sent to Jakarta Maritime Academy in 2009.

Double that number of students enrolled in October 2011. The class of 50 are now joint members of SMETTL and KPI.

With support from the ITF and the KPI, the IE also organised a seminar in October last in the Timorese capital, Dili, on job opportunities in Timor Sea.

Welcoming these developments, ITF maritime coordinator Stephen Cotton said that he was very proud of the work of the ITF and affiliates from Norway and Indonesia in Timor-Leste. "They have come together in the meaning of true solidarity and support for the Timorese unions and the workers."

He added: "This is an ITF success story in the making, in which unions can make sure that oil and gas exploration can be a blessing and not a curse, as it so often has been in other countries."

☞ *The ITF's international trade union seafarers' development programme has also been assisting a new maritime union in Madagascar: see overleaf.*

ITF MARITIME TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT SUPERVISOR **LESLEY HOSSNER** DESCRIBES HOW THE ITF AND THE CONFÉDÉRATION FRANÇAISE DÉMOCRATIQUE DU TRAVAIL (CFDT) FRENCH TRADE UNION CENTRE ACTED AS MIDWIVES FOR THE CREATION SYGMA, A UNION FOR MALAGASY SEAFARERS, DOCKERS AND FISHERS.

# BIRTH OF A MARITIME UNION

In October 2002, when RH Lucien was chief officer on the Panama-flag *Elven*, he and 12 other seafarers from Madagascar threatened to strike for an ITF agreement. French-based ITF inspector François Caillou met Lucien and suggested he create a trade union for Malagasy seafarers.

After a delegation from the Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT), the French trade union centre, visited the island and later a joint one with the ITF, the Syndicat Général Maritime de Madagascar (Sygma) was created in May 2003 and affiliated to the ITF later that year.

During the CFDT mission in February 2003, Caillou met M Gilbert and 20 other Malagasy workers in Toamasina on the French-flag *Marinon Dufresne*. They were not even classed as seafarers, paid well below International Labour Organization rates and they claimed discrimination. The ship was due to dry dock in Brest, France, and, after several attempts to meet the managers, all the Malagasy seafarers went on strike. After four days, the company signed the collective agreement.

Sygma now has about 2,000 members across the maritime sectors. Now their general secretary, Lucien has worked tirelessly to build the union in a country where the infrastructure is challenging, communications difficult and only 10 per cent of the population have internet access.

In September 2011, 50 maritime workers – seafarers, dockers and fishers – attended a three-day seminar organised by the ITF in Toamasina.

They were asked what they wanted from the seminar and from their union. The answers were virtually unanimous: they wanted to know their rights as seafarers and how being part of the union and the ITF would help them protect those rights.

The first two days of the seminar were spent learning about the ITF and the flag of convenience campaign, their rights under current international conventions and the new

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**The answers were virtually unanimous: they wanted to know their rights as seafarers and how being part of the union and the ITF would help them protect those rights.”**



Maritime Labour Convention, along with what is contained in their collective bargaining agreement and how they can ensure that their rights are enforced.

Participants also heard about the ITF's seafarers' charter, part of its 2010 Mexico City policy on flags of convenience, and were assured that Sygmma already fulfils the union obligations outlined in the charter.

Seminar proceedings were conducted mainly in French, with some Malgache translation from Lucien for the few whose French was not so strong, and there was some role-playing in English for the seafarers to practise asking for their rights when dealing with officers who only speak English. There were some impressive performances, as the participants threw themselves into the roles of captain and AB.

Moving testimonials from those who had taken part in industrial action included one from one of 19 seafarers who had received seven months' salary with the help of the ITF and Sygmma after a year-long struggle. There was also a brave speech from a widow who had been helped by the union to claim compensation after her husband was lost at sea.

There was an excited buzz of anticipation throughout the last day of the seminar. First, participants swapped ideas during a session on union organising led by Lee Cash, of the ITF's maritime union development programme.

But the day finished with everyone demonstrating how having "one voice with the same song" was much more effective. They achieved this with their rousing rendition of union songs, including a favourite at ITF gatherings, "Solidarity Forever".

During the day, delegates said what they wanted a well-organised, dynamic and responsive Sygmma to look like. They were unanimous in agreeing that their active involvement was essential in turning these plans into reality.

Mario Rakotondramanana, the union's secretary based in Toamasina, also talked about the work he had started on mapping the port, and the participants could see how vital it was for union growth that they kept contributing information.

All agreed that this first workshop clearly proved the importance placed by the ITF on supporting democratic, vibrant and organising unions such as Sygmma. With their committed officials and growing base of activists, the ITF believes that Sygmma is emerging as an example for other transport unions across the region and beyond.

*Right: Participants at the ITF-organised training seminar in Toamasina. Speaking (bottom photo) is ITF inspector François Caillou.*





*Left: In La Réunion, the new vehicle for ship visiting in front of the seafarers' centre.*

*Right: Chittagong's new drop-in centre, opened in 2011.*



# WHAT THE TRUST IS DO

## MEETING SHIPPING CHIEFS IN BANGLADESH



Tom Holmer of the ITF Seafarers' Trust (third from left) meets the Bangladesh shipping minister Shahjahan Khan (centre) in March 2011 to agree a port levy to support seafarers' welfare in Bangladesh. The meeting followed the opening of a drop-in centre for seafarers in the port of Chittagong by Admiral Mitropoulos, secretary-general of the International Maritime Organization. Also pictured are shipping secretary Abdul Mannan Howlader (third from right), Bazlur Rahman, the director general of the shipping directorate (second from left), Emdadul Haque Chowdhury, chair of the International Committee on Seafarers' Welfare South Asia (right), Shafiqur Rahman, president of the Bangladesh Seamen's Association (second from right), Mafuzul Qader of the seamen and emigration welfare directorate (left).

### By Tom Holmer

ITF Seafarers' Trust administrative officer



Have you ever been in a seafarers' centre? Have you ever been collected from your ship in a van belonging to one of the missions? Or have you made a phone call or used the internet in a port? If so, the chances are that you have benefited from grants given by the ITF Seafarers' Trust. Look out for our stickers and name plates – it is seafarers' money that has contributed to these services.

The ITF Seafarers' Trust is the charity side of the ITF. We provide money for projects which help seafarers and their families. The trust does not give money directly to seafarers, but we help the frontline services that meet you, transport you and provide a home from home in port.

The trust was 30 years old in 2011. In those three decades, we have carried out projects in 92 different countries to benefit

seafarers and have spent over US\$200 million to provide facilities to make sure that there is a welcome for you around the world.

We understand that you are professionals and not in need of charity. However, we know that certain services that we all take for granted on shore are not there for you: a cheap telephone call to your family; a quick visit to the shops, a club or a place of worship; or someone in the port who will bring these things to you if you cannot leave the ship. It may be a luxury to have a conversation with someone who does not work on board the same ship as you.

We want to see these basic things provided in many ports around the world, and thankfully many others work towards the same goal.

### New centre in Taichung

In 2011 a new seafarers' centre opened in Taichung. This venture of the National Chinese Seamen's Union and the Apostleship of the Sea is providing communication services for seafarers in the port, and is very close to the berths. They

## DID YOU KNOW?

The seafarers' emergency fund exists to help seafarers in trouble. The fund gives quick grants of up to US\$5,000 for emergencies that merchant seafarers face. It has helped fly relatives to the hospital of a seafarer who is ill; it has provided assistance to seafarers in trouble with the law and in need of food and shelter due to circumstances beyond their control in a foreign country. Access to the fund is through ITF inspectors, port chaplains and other bona fide welfare agencies, so it is important that you contact them and they are involved in your case if you need help. The fund is jointly financed by the ITF Seafarers' Trust and the TK Foundation.



Ship visiting at Abidjan, Ivory Coast, another key trust-sponsored service.



Apinja Tajit, manager of the seafarers' centre in Sri Racha, Thailand.



Enjoying internet facilities at the Hamburg Altona Cruise Ship Centre.

# ING FOR YOU

## VISIT US – AND LEAVE FEEDBACK

➤ Visit our website to see more of what the ITF Seafarers' Trust does and to see a full list of the grants the trust has given: [www.itfglobal.org/seafarers-trust](http://www.itfglobal.org/seafarers-trust)

➤ Better still, leave a comment on the ITF Seafarers' Trust blog. There must be something there that you feel strongly about. We welcome email feedback from any seafarers on: [trust@itfglobal.org](mailto:trust@itfglobal.org)

can pick you up with their vehicle, provide good entertainment in their small centre and drop you off again afterwards.

The trust has recently given a grant to the German Seamen's Mission and Stella Maris Centre in the Brazilian port of Santos to buy new computers and furniture. Seafarers have found it difficult to get ashore there recently but this does not stop the ship visiting. One of the ship visitors reports: "This is an activity that I do with great care, because it gives me the ability to communicate with people from different countries, cultures, religions and languages every day."

In 2011 we have given grants for vehicles in 26 ports from Bali to Trinidad; we have provided funds for the improvement of 12 seafarers' centres from Brazil to Tuvalu; we have provided furniture in the Philippines

and games in Germany. We have supported over 90 different projects: all of them geared to helping seafarers.

There is a trust-sponsored programme to improve seafarers' welfare facilities in Indonesia, Vietnam, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia and the Philippines. This is run by the International Committee for Seafarers' Welfare (ICSW). Nyoman Budiasa, the regional coordinator, was recently in Manila for the handing-over of computers and a vehicle for the Seamen's Christian Friend Society centre there. These are already being used for services for visiting seafarers to Manila, home of the largest group of seafarers in the world.

We also help the people who help you. We have paid for training courses for seafarers' centre managers and port chaplains, for twinning of seafarers' centres, and for awards to encourage companies, seafarers' centres and ports to give outstanding service to seafarers in terms of welfare through the ICSW welfare awards, held in December 2011 and hosted by the International Labour Organization.

### Week-long course in Singapore

A recent training course for welfare workers took place in Singapore. During the week the delegates were encouraged to plan and budget for their work, to carry out ship visiting as a daily activity and to make friends with the seafarers in their ports. Roy Paul of the ITF Seafarers' Trust said that ship visiting "was about friendship, which leads to a relationship and means we work in partnership with those in the maritime community".

Course participants considered the world of shipping, health of seafarers and the use of the ICSW health campaign material, HIV/AIDS in the transport sector, 10 golden rules of a successful seafarers' centre and working with volunteers. There was also a very powerful presentation on the forgotten seafarers who have taken low paid fishing jobs only to find they are easily abused and mistreated.

We still have much to do. Not only are we working to improve facilities for seafarers in ports, but also to make sure that our money goes to improving the lives of seafarers and their families by addressing health issues, the effects of pirate attacks, isolation, bullying and harassment and the lack of cheap or free communication facilities. The generosity of unions, and the cooperation of others in the industry will help us to achieve a better environment for seafarers.

**BRAZIL, CAMBODIA, GERMANY, INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES, SINGAPORE, TAIWAN, THAILAND, TRINIDAD & TOBAGO, TUVALU, VIETNAM...**

... countries where there have been projects funded by the ITF Seafarers' Trust over the past 12 months.

# Coming soon!



**The ITF is set to launch a 24-hour, seven-days-a-week telephone referral service to give seafarers on flag of convenience ships easier access to the ITF's worldwide support and assistance network.**

**The ITF global support line will be a global, one-stop referral system in which multilingual operators will provide initial advice and refer problems and queries to the most appropriate ITF resource for attention. These resources include the more than 130 ITF inspectors in ports around the world.**

**Seafarers can also receive help and advice from the ITF head office in London or our affiliated maritime unions in over 150 countries.**

**Additionally, the ITF and its unions maintain collaborative relationships with not-for-profit seafarer welfare agencies and governmental maritime agencies around the world.**

## **ITF GLOBAL SUPPORT LINE**

**Helping seafarers 24-hours a day and seven days a week**

**By Asif Altaf**

ITF HIV/AIDS coordinator

Some groups of workers are particularly vulnerable to acquiring and transmitting HIV because of the nature of their work. The working conditions of seafarers – a group of highly mobile workers composed almost exclusively of men of sexually active age who are away from home for extended periods of time – can induce high-risk behaviour.

At the same time, their working conditions may make it harder for them to access information about HIV prevention and medical and related services.

While most research has focused on land-based transport workers, evidence shows that seafarers have unusually high rates of HIV compared with the population in their community of origin. Studies also suggest that seafarers have lower levels of knowledge about HIV transmission and risk factors.

A joint study by United Nations agencies UNICEF and UNAIDS estimates that 22 per cent of seafarers in the Mekong region in south-east Asia may be infected with HIV. A UNAIDS report in 2007 shows that in the Philippines 35 per cent of total reported HIV infections are among overseas workers and 33 per cent of these were seafarers.

The global HIV/AIDS epidemic has seen significant progress in prevention and treatment over the past 30 years, but the total number of new HIV infections remains high, at about 7,000 per day. According to the latest estimates from UNAIDS, 34 million people were living with HIV and nearly 30 million have died from AIDS-related causes.

The ITF insists that HIV/AIDS is a core union issue. We believe that the workplace is a gateway for access to prevention, treatment and care. HIV/AIDS has become an integral



*Event organised for 2011 International AIDS Day by the Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia seafarers' union.*



Cadets campaigning at the National Maritime Academy, Odessa, Ukraine.

# FIGHTING FEAR AND PREJUDICE

part of ITF ship inspectors' training. Soon we will distribute HIV/AIDS materials produced through the seafarers health information project to seafarers' centres around the world.

The numbers of ITF seafarers' unions that have workplace HIV/AIDS programmes either on their own or jointly with others is increasing steadily.

- The Mexican union Asociación Sindical Oficiales de Máquinas de la Marina Mercante Nacional has started an HIV awareness programme for cadets of the nautical school of Tampico, with plans to extend the same programme to nautical schools throughout Mexico.

- Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia and the Norwegian seafarers' union organise pre-departure education on HIV/AIDS. They also organise HIV/AIDS awareness sessions for the family members of the seafarers.

- The youth committee of the National Union of Seafarers of India also regularly stage HIV awareness campaigns in different parts of India.

- During this year's World AIDS Day, the Marine Transport Workers' Trade Union of Ukraine organised a campaign to promote safe sex among maritime students at the

Odessa National Maritime Academy, which has some 4,000 students.

- The Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines has produced an HIV/AIDS comic book, "Shore Leave", which talks about the factors behind HIV vulnerability at sea, how to remain safe from the infection and how to live and work while being HIV-positive.

As long as people not only lack correct information but suffer from mistaken beliefs and the pressure of shame and taboos, the fears which help create stigma will go unchallenged.

Unions and the ITF are working hard to counteract the prejudices facing HIV-positive workers.

“

**The workplace is a gateway for access to prevention, treatment and care.”**

## HIV POSITIVE, BUT...

### BREAKING THE SILENCE

Liton Saha, a 33-year-old young man from West Bengal, India, used to be a seafarer. But his life completely changed in 2004 when he tested HIV positive during a pre-departure medical test.

He was given no counselling and was refused a job. He tried in vain to find work with other companies, telling them that he could do everything expected of a seafarer.

He then decided to reveal his HIV status publicly and from 2009 started working with the ITF to help seafarers in their fight against HIV.

He has a simple message to all seafarers: "Know about the basic facts of HIV/AIDS. Challenge stigma and discrimination. Have safe sex and don't forget to tell your friends about this deadly infection. One day surely we will be able to control HIV/AIDS."

### GOING BACK TO SEA

The ITF was contacted by an Indian seafarer who had been denied employment by various agencies and shipowners over a long period of time due to his having HIV.

The ITF was able to contact a responsible shipowner who agreed to interview the seafarer. He was successful in obtaining a contract, having been judged solely on his ability and qualifications, not by the stigma of HIV.

The seafarer since has had his contract renewed and the employer has ensured that the status of the seafarer has remained fully confidential.

The seafarer has been able to continue to support his family financially, ensure that he is able to maintain his health, to work and to socialise with his friends and colleagues.

The ITF believes that selection for employment based on HIV status is unacceptable and is already illegal in many countries.

If seafarers are denied employment because they are HIV-positive, they should contact their union or the ITF.

**your port of call online!**



**www.itfseafarers.org**



**Keep in touch  
– choose Chinese,  
Russian, Spanish  
or English**

**A website for  
seafarers from a  
source you can  
trust**

- ❖ Find out what your rights are
- ❖ Get information on your ship
- ❖ Learn where to get help in a crisis
- ❖ Discover what a union can do for you
- ❖ Link up online with fellow seafarers
- ❖ Get in touch with the ITF

**Advice on  
piracy and  
hostage  
survival**

**Download  
the ITF guide  
A Seafarers'  
Bill of Rights**

**Text-only  
version for  
slow internet  
connections**

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



The world's largest fish market at Tsukiji, Tokyo.

# FROM CATCH TO RETAIL: MORE UNION INFLUENCE IS NEEDED

Tom Parker/reportdigital.co.uk



**A GLOBAL DRIVE TO UNIONISE THE FISHING INDUSTRY WAS LAUNCHED IN JANUARY 2011 FOLLOWING AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ITF AND THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF FOODWORKERS (IUF). HERE, PROGRAMME LEADER LIZ BLACKSHAW EXPLAINS THE THINKING BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN, WHICH AIMS TO GIVE MORE WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRY THE PROTECTION OF A UNION-NEGOTIATED COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT.**

**G**lobalisation and an increase in the human consumption of fish have had a huge effect on the structure of the fishing industry, and many companies now operate on an integrated and commercial basis. This means they catch, process and prepare the fish for retail.

This is why the joint approach between the ITF and the IUF – representing unions throughout the supply chain in the fishing, transport and food processing industries – is of such importance.

The need for union organisation is underlined by the fact that within integrated commercial fisheries less than 1 per cent of the overall workforce is unionised, let alone covered by collective bargaining agreements.

Fishery workers at sea should have had the benefit of a number of International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, recently subsumed into ILO convention 188, which, according to the ILO seeks to ensure that “fishermen receive the same level of protection as seafarers”.

ILO convention 188 was passed in 2007 but, by the end of 2011, only two countries had ratified it.

It also important to note that, as the International Maritime Organization reports, there is an annual death rate of 24,000 workers in the fishing industry. Whilst some occupational hazards associated with fishing are contributory factors, a lack of access to domestic or international enforcement of standards is also a major factor behind this terrible loss of life.

Working conditions in the processing sector are theoretically covered by domestic employment and safety

standards. But the reality is that working conditions are subject to little enforcement and plants are often located in developing countries where many workers feel too vulnerable and insecure to fight for their rights.

Whilst in Europe and Latin America there are some excellent cases of campaigns to win rights and union recognition, 85 per cent of the world’s consumed fish is farmed and processed in the Asia Pacific region.

Recent site visits have found some appalling working conditions:

- 1,300 workers without any gloves skinning, gutting and boning fish;
- a workforce of 400 without regular pay or other benefits who are told by text call when to come to work;
- workers moving produce between temperatures of -15C and +30C without any protective clothing or thought for health implications;
- an unofficial national employer agreement to bust any attempts by workers to join a union, including sackings, setting up anti-union structures and blackmailing workers into leaving the union.

There is another vital element to ITF/IUF programme – the social and environmental dimension. There is much discussion globally about the sustainability of fish as a food resource. Unions will need to work with other organisations to make sure that labour standards are factored into their campaigns.

“**A lack of access to domestic or international enforcement of standards is a major factor behind this terrible loss of life.**”

## KEY OBJECTIVES

The ITF/IUF union campaigns will aim to:

- neutralise anti-union and union-avoidance practices within multinational companies in the industrial fishing and fish processing sector;
- exert influence and pressure on governments and companies to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing in conjunction with other organisations and pressure groups;
- press for ratification of ILO convention 188.

# NEW RIGHTS IN UPDATED COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS



Paul Box/feportdigital.co.uk

**FABRIZIO BARCELLONA**  
**OF THE ITF MARITIME OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT**  
**EXPLAINS THE ITF'S POLICY GUIDELINES ON AGREEMENTS COVERING SEAFARERS WORKING ON CRUISE SHIPS.**

Originally created in 1994 to help ITF-affiliated national trade unions signing collective agreements for seafarers in the cruise ship sector, the ITF's Miami guidelines were revised in 2011 and are now part of the official maritime policy of the ITF.

The new guidelines take into account the latest international instruments of International Maritime Organization and the International Labour Organization. This will ensure that collective agreements signed with cruise operators are in line with the labour and maritime conventions.

In particular, the recommendations of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 are now incorporated into the Miami guidelines and will provide seafarers with benefits in respect of living conditions and contractual terms of their collective agreements.

Importantly, now all workers on a cruise vessel are defined as seafarers. This means that contractual terms will have to be harmonised, with benefits previously enjoyed by the nautical crew now applicable to all groups of workers on board – many of whom in the past were covered by contracts with different rights and obligations.

In addition, the MLC imposes strict rules on working organisation and hours of rest, creates a complaints procedure allowing seafarers to report cases where collective agreements are not complied with and regulates the manning agencies that supply seafarers to cruise operators.

The reasons behind the creation of the Miami guidelines date back to the time when the cruise market emerged as a highly competitive and deregulated sector of shipping compared with the rest of the industry.

Seafarers working on cruise vessels

**“ Nearly 92 per cent of the seafarers in the cruise ship sector are covered by an ITF-approved agreement. ”**

formerly did not enjoy the same contractual terms as their colleagues on other types of ships. For example, the hospitality crew – in the hotel, catering and related departments – needed agreements to guarantee security and decent conditions.

As a result, the efforts over many years of the ITF-affiliated unions in negotiating agreements with cruise operators have brought benefits to the seafarers that are not limited to wages but include, among other things:

- better living spaces on board, such as recreational areas designed specifically for seafarers to relax in;
- tours of duty and hours of work that take into account the busy schedule of today's cruises;
- special provision for pregnant seafarers;
- better regulation of the manning agencies system;
- grievance and arbitration procedures that allow seafarers to be represented in case of an industrial dispute.

The ITF estimates that by the year 2014 there will be some 302 cruise vessels operating in the cruise market – 402 if expedition and coastal cruise vessels are counted.

The number of seafarers employed on cruise ships stood at the end of 2010 at 193,000 at any one time. When those on vacation, undergoing shore training, on sick or maternity leave are included, the total is between 250,000 and 270,000.

The largest deployment of such seafarers is found on Bahamian-registered vessels, with approximately 58,000 seafarers, followed by 37,000 on Panamanian-registered ships. Next come Malta (23,000 seafarers), Italy (21,000), Bermuda (17,000), Netherlands (8,500), United Kingdom (6,000) and US (1,300).

Nearly 92 per cent of the seafarers in the cruise ship sector are covered by an ITF-approved agreement based on the Miami guidelines.

Seafarers working on cruise ships should have their employment contact made available to them at the time when they sign on.

The ITF has undertaken to provide them with a booklet of the collective agreement. In addition, representatives of our affiliated unions regularly visit those cruise ships for which they hold a collective agreement and, in some companies, there are appointed union representatives on board who can deal with crew problems.

The ITF and its affiliated unions do not have a magic solution to all crew problems. But we need your feedback on issues that need to be addressed. Contact the union in your country or the ITF to help us to help you.

# SEAFARERS AND communications

**THE INTERNET AND MOBILE AND SATELLITE PHONES ARE CHANGING THE WAY THAT SEAFARERS COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILY, FRIENDS AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD, A NEW STUDY COMMISSIONED BY THE ITF HAS FOUND.**

Despite advances in digital communications and increasing availability ashore, internet access remains limited at sea. So seafarers who can afford to do so depend mainly on satellite phones for contact with home.

Email is used more widely at home and in port, says the ITF-backed survey, with 80 per cent of seafarers saying they are able to use the internet on shore leave and more than 95 per cent while at home.

These findings appear in a report, "Seafarers & Communications", commissioned by the ITF Seafarers' Trust under the direction of Professor Erol Kahveci. Carried out by London Metropolitan University's Working Lives Research Institute, the survey was conducted by researchers in Belgium, Netherlands, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Over 1,000 seafarers from 58 different countries took part in the study, the results of which were published by the ITF in 2011.

Among the key findings are:

- Some 80 per cent of seafarers, including 97 per cent of ratings, said they had no access to the internet

## Conditions of access to email onboard

	Ratings (no.=561)	Officers (no.=368)
No access	379 (68%)	102 (28%)
Yes, every crew member has a private email account	64 (11%)	88 (24%)
Yes, although I have no private email account	28 (5%)	103 (28%)
Yes, I can send but cannot receive	63 (11%)	22 (6%)
Yes, limited number of emails that can be sent	27 (5%)	41 (11%)
Yes, but not allowed any attachments	34 (6%)	14 (4%)
Yes, but I do not use it	9 (2%)	3 (1%)

## Barriers to communication with the outside world while onboard (number of respondents: 1,007)

	No.	%
Access to communication facilities	741	74
Cost of communication	685	68
Finding time	426	42
Other	95	9
None	47	5

## Use of internet while at sea (number of respondents: 991)

	No.	%
I have no access to the internet	800	81
Everyday	26	3
Couple of times a week	25	3
Couple of times a month	12	1
Rarely / Seldom	9	1
I don't use the internet	119	12

## While onboard, how do you communicate with your family members ashore? (number of respondents: 1,023)

	No.	%
Telephone from seafarers' centres	871	85
Mobile phone calls	842	82
Mobile text messages	761	74
Telephone from ports (phone box)	637	61
Email ashore	594	58
Satellite phone onboard	566	55
Email aboard	457	45
Letters / postcards	29	3
I don't communicate	2	-
Other	14	1

# Major ITF survey finds big increase in internet use – but access at sea remains limited



Internet access at the seafarers' centre in Apapa port, Lagos, Nigeria.

➔ while at sea. Where access was available it was expensive, they said.

- Onboard access to email has risen three-fold since 2007 but remains limited. Fifty-two per cent of seafarers, and 68 per cent of ratings, said they had no access to email on board.
- Limited access to email facilities at sea has increased seafarers' reliance on satellite telephone communication.
- The most popular ways for seafarers to communicate with their friends and family while at sea was by phone from seafarers' centres (85 per cent), through mobile phone calls (82 per cent) and via SMS (74 per cent).
- Almost every seafarer uses the internet at home for various purposes including communication, social networking, news, bank transactions, downloading music, movies and games.
- Senior officers' access rate to onboard email and internet facilities is significantly higher than ratings.
- Access to onboard email also varied according to the vessel type – for example, 67 per cent of the seafarers on board dry bulk carriers and 65 per cent on board general cargo vessels had no email access at all.
- Seventy per cent of respondents used social networking sites. Facebook was the most popular, while 78 per cent of Chinese seafarers used QQ.
- Officers were much more likely than ratings to use the internet, mobile phones and social networking sites, whether at sea or at home. For example, 82 per cent of the officers accessed the internet every day when they were at home, compared with only 39 per cent of the ratings.
- Ratings relied more often than officers on phones in seafarers' centres or public phone boxes while on shore leave.

**While working onboard, how do you communicate with your friends ashore?**  
(number of respondents: 1,023)

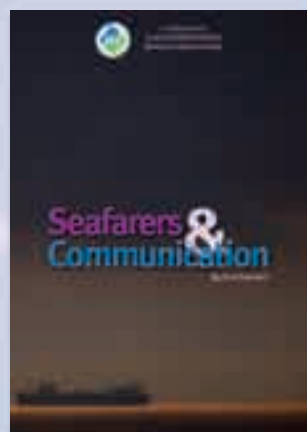
	No.	%
Telephone from seafarers' centres	641	63
Mobile phone calls	615	60
Mobile text messages	599	59
Email ashore	477	47
Telephone from ports (phone box)	476	47
Email onboard	321	31
Satellite phone onboard	242	24
Letters / postcards	97	10
I don't communicate	32	3
Other	8	-

## Changes in internet connectivity

- However officers and ratings had similar levels of access to email when they were on shore leave.

Commenting on the survey findings, Professor Kahveci said the impact of the internet in terms of facilitating communication had been highly significant. "The low cost of information, communication, and interaction on the web offers trade unions the chance to improve services and attract members," he added. "Unions can use the web to improve services to members, aid in industrial disputes, and strengthen the international labour community."

The survey questionnaire was prepared in English and Chinese, but the interviewers included native speakers of various other languages including, Greek, Hindu, Russian, Tagalog and Turkish.



➔ The ITF has made the survey results and report (left) available online in its full form (in English only) and also as an electronic (and hard copy) leaflet. They can be seen at [www.itfglobal.org/seafarers/communicating-with-seafarers.cfm](http://www.itfglobal.org/seafarers/communicating-with-seafarers.cfm)

# Keeping in touch with your union

Communications between seafarers and their national unions were also probed in depth as part of the ITF study.

What emerged was a strong desire among seafarers to keep in touch with their unions, which were particularly important to them for protection and certain benefits. But their conditions of work meant that, despite wanting to keep in touch with their unions, they had a distant relation with them.

Seafarers' preferred method of contact with their national union was telephoning the office or paying a personal visit. Contact by email or over the internet did not feature much. However, most thought that the best way for their national unions to contact them was by email.

Reading seafaring-related magazines and other publications – and websites when on shore leave – was very high. The ITF *Seafarers' Bulletin* in particular was regularly read by many.

In addition, a significant number of seafarers knew about the existence of the ITF Seafarers website through ITF publications, leaflets and posters, but their access to it was rather limited. For seafarers who visited the site, the main attraction was reading news

about ships and seafarers, getting general information about seafarers' welfare and news.

Over half of all respondents were union members, but only a third of them were in regular contact with their unions. Awareness of the ITF was high, with 70 per cent reading *Seafarers' Bulletin*.

The best opportunity for communicating with seafarers was either when they were at home or on shore leave. Some 40 per cent of seafarers said the best way for unions to contact them was by email, although ratings marginally preferred a phone call. Home telephone (29 per cent) and mobile phone (18 per cent) were the next most popular options.

Steve Cotton, ITF maritime coordinator, commented: "These results set us – and every seafarers' union – a challenge: how best to serve workers who spend a great part of their working lives at sea. Thankfully the technologies are there; the task is to make sure they are as available as possible."

He continued: "We trust that this research will interest people in unions and beyond. Potentially it has lessons for the whole industry."

“These results set us – and every seafarers' union – a challenge: how best to serve workers who spend a great part of their working lives at sea.”



## Listening to your views

**A BIG THANK YOU** to all readers who filled out the questionnaire about *Seafarers' Bulletin* in our last issue. It really does help us to know what you think about this unique publication – the world's only multilingual magazine for all seafarers, regardless of nationality, religion, rank or type of ship.

We will study your responses carefully and make whatever improvements we can as a result. Here are some of the key findings:

- ★ Over 80 per cent of respondents said they read *Seafarers' Bulletin* to see what was happening to seafarers around the world.
- ★ Over 60 per cent said seafarers' rights was the most important part of the magazine.
- ★ Over 80 per cent wanted to see more personal stories from seafarers, interviews with crew members, perhaps in the form of letters, poems, reviews etc.
- ★ Half of all respondents received their copy of *Seafarers' Bulletin* mailed to their home address. Nearly a quarter of them got a copy from their union, one in five from an ITF inspector.
- ★ The favourite language was English, followed by Russian, Tagalog and Spanish.
- ★ Top issues of concern were pay, health and safety and seafarers' rights.

### This is what some of you said when asked about your favourite part of *Seafarers' Bulletin*...

- “ I like stories about crew and about conditions on-board and stories about ITF actions. Successful actions are something that encourage people to join a union.”
- “ I especially like to see stories about successful crew complaints and how they were resolved. Also stories about really substandard ships that have escaped detention until the ITF got involved.”
- “ I like features on the world fleet, ITF campaigns, alerts and information for seafarers and other safety and legal issues.”
- “ I tend to read from cover to cover. Piracy seems to be the issue right now.”
- “ Just finding out what is going on.”
- “ The favourite part of the bulletin is the list of the countries and ports with inspectors' names and contact details so that any seafarers requiring assistance can contact an ITF inspector for help.”
- “ Seafarers' rights – it's of vital importance for every seafarer to know his rights.”

### SEND US YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Half of those taking part in the survey said they wanted to see more contributions from readers. We agree. So please send us your letters, poems, stories, photos – anything you think might interest fellow seafarers. Send your contributions to: ITF Seafarers' Bulletin, ITF, 49/60 Borough Road, London SE1 1DR, United Kingdom or email: [mail@itf.org.uk](mailto:mail@itf.org.uk). Please note that any items posted to us cannot be returned, so make sure you have your own copy of any documents or photo you send us. We look forward to hearing from you!

## Make sure you get the next issue of *Seafarers' Bulletin*

We have scrapped our old mailing list and we're starting from scratch for our 2012 issue.

**Make sure you are on the mailing list for the next issue.**

Return this form to us by post to:

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# MARITIME ACCIDENTS

*Seafarers  
- be aware!*

If your vessel is involved in a maritime accident, then be aware that there are international guidelines in place to ensure that you are treated fairly if an investigation is carried out and/or if you are detained by a State following the accident.

These guidelines are the IMO/ILO Guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the event of a Maritime Accident.

The Guidelines require that seafarers should be treated fairly by the port or coastal state, the flag state, the seafarer state and shipowners.

It is important that you understand your rights under these Guidelines so that if you are questioned or detained following a maritime accident, you know what to do and how to protect your interests.

If you are questioned about a maritime accident involving your vessel:

- If you think it is necessary, ask for a lawyer before answering any questions or making any statements to port, coastal or flag State investigators since these could be used against you in future criminal or other legal proceedings
- Contact your company and/or union for advice and assistance
- Make sure you fully understand everything that you are asked

- If there is anything you do not understand:
  - ask the authorities to stop the questioning
  - request the assistance of an interpreter, if necessary

It is important to ensure that you protect your interests first. Therefore, follow the advice you receive from your company, union or lawyer, and importantly, when advised to provide information, be truthful with investigators.

*Protect your interests following a maritime accident  
Read the Fair Treatment Guidelines  
Know your rights  
If in doubt, ask for advice!*



# International Transport Workers' Federation

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is an international trade union federation of transport trade unions, representing 4.5 million transport workers in 154 countries.

Founded in 1896, it is organised in eight industrial sections: seafarers, railways, road transport, civil aviation, ports, inland navigation, fisheries and tourism services. It represents transport workers at world level and promotes their interests through global campaigning and solidarity. The ITF is one of 10 global union federations allied to the

International Trade Union Confederation and is part of the Global Unions group.

