

Secretary-General's Information Bulletin for Member States during COVID-19

Period covered: 18 May – 5 June

1. Meetings

1) IMO Official meetings

- *New informal discussions to keep IMO Initial Strategy momentum*

Informal preliminary discussion sessions on short term measures for reduction of GHG emissions from ships have been scheduled for 6 to 10 July 2020.

The sessions were proposed by the Secretary-General after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of MEPC, as well as the Chair of ISWG-GHG, and aim to keep the momentum on the implementation of the IMO Initial Strategy going ahead of future deliberations at ISWG-GHG 7 and MEPC 75.

The virtual meeting will enable interested Member States and international organizations to exchange views. Participants are expected to note recent developments, including progress on the informally coordinated work on the two approaches (e.g. technical and operational approach, see paragraph 32 of document MEPC 75/7/2) and impact assessments, as appropriate. Given the informal and preliminary nature of the virtual meeting, participants are not requested to take formal positions on the proposals submitted to the ISWG-GHG 7, and that the virtual meeting is not expected to take any decisions. Detailed arrangements for the meeting can be found in Circular Letter No.4297.

2) Other meetings such as a meeting with PRs

- *Secretary-General's Briefing to Permanent Missions*

The second informal briefing to Permanent Missions will be held on Tuesday, 9 June 2020 from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. London time, to update the missions of the ongoing work of the Secretariat. The briefing will focus particularly on major policy issues of the Organization and updates regarding virtual meetings.

- *IMO-Goodwill Maritime Ambassadors (GMAs)*

The IMO-GMAs meeting was held on 3 June 2020 to update the Goodwill Ambassadors on the ongoing work of IMO and COVID-19 related matters. The Secretary-General delivered the opening remarks to the 34 Ambassadors, representing 18 Member States and four NGOs, who were in attendance. The primary focus of the meeting was to enlist IMO-GMA support for the annual Day of the Seafarer campaign, the theme of which is "Seafarers are Key Workers".

- *Second video meeting with port State control (PSC) regimes*

Following requests made during the first PSC video meeting with PSC regimes and the issuance of Circular Letter No.4204/Add.19 "Guidance for flag States regarding surveys and renewals of certificates during the COVID-19 pandemic", the Secretariat is organising a second video meeting with PSC regimes. The meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place during the week starting 15th June 2020. It is anticipated that IACS will introduce the guiding principles for the provision of technical and implementation advice to flag States when considering whether to permit statutory certificate extension beyond three months. Additionally, the ILO Secretariat is expected to provide information on specific issues related to MLC and PSC.

2. Cooperation with UN systems / External Organizations

1) with UN, WHO, ILO, etc.

- *High-level virtual meetings to support the implementation of SDG 14*

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, the [2020 UN Ocean Conference](#) to support the implementation of SDG 14 (planned for the 2-6 June 2020) was postponed by the UN General Assembly. However, to sustain the momentum on issues related to the protection of the ocean and SDG 14, several high level events were held during the week of 1-5 June.

IMO provided assistance in the preparation of the Online High-Level Meeting on Sustainable Ocean Business (2 June). The meeting was organised around the [5 Tipping Points for a Healthy and Productive Ocean by 2030](#). Findings from the [Ocean](#)

[Stewardship 2030 report](#) were presented during the meeting and the Secretary-General delivered remarks during the Set Sail for Decarbonized Shipping session.

IMO assisted in coordinating the Virtual Ocean Dialogues (4 June). The Secretary-General delivered remarks and took part in the session on Building Sustainable Ocean Economies. The Dialogues stems from an initiative by the Friends of Ocean Action (Peter Thomson, Special Envoy for the Ocean, and Ms Isabella Lovin, Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden), through its secretariat at the World Economic Forum. Other participants were the secretariat for the HLP, the UNGC, OECD, the IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development), the Environmental Defence Fund, and the World Bank. Topics discussed included: decarbonising the ocean economy; just transition for SIDS/small scale and informal enterprises; job opportunities, inclusive sustainable supply chains (i.e. fishing, energy, shipping) and gender equality in the sustainable ocean economy.

Additionally, staff from the IMO Marine Environment Division participated in a panel on ocean governance and BBNJ, providing insight into IMO's work related to biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

- *IMO contributes to new Africa UN Knowledge Hub on COVID-19*

IMO has participated in the development and adoption of a dashboard for information sharing, data and knowledge on UN activities on COVID-19 in Africa, including an advocacy and communication strategy. The [Africa UN Knowledge Hub on COVID-19](#) was initiated and coordinated by the United Nations Interdepartmental Task Force on African Affairs (IDTFAA) and launched by the UN Regional Directors.

- *Joint IMO-UNCTAD Statement in support of keeping ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing during the COVID-19 pandemic*

IMO and UNCTAD reiterated calls for Governments to promote crew well-being by allowing crew changes and ensuring seafarers and other maritime personnel have access to documentation and travel options so that they can return home safely. The joint statement also reaffirmed the urgent need for “key worker” designation for seafarers, marine personnel, fishing vessel personnel, offshore energy sector personnel, and service personnel at ports; and urged governments to pursue collaborative efforts to identify and remove any unnecessary regulatory obstacles to post-pandemic recovery and to facilitate maritime transport and trade in these difficult times.

The full statement can be found in Circular Letter No.4204/Add.21

2) with Industry

- *Coronavirus strategy meetings*

IMO continued participation in the weekly industry coronavirus strategy meetings chaired by ICS, with participants from IMO, ILO, WHO, ICAO, ITF, IMHA, InterManager and other industry representatives. The primary focus of discussion has been on facilitating crew changes and ensuring seafarer access to medical care.

3. Secretariat related information

- *Preparation for future reopening of the IMO building continues*

IMO staff continue to work from home. The Organization is however working in preparing the building for a future reopening, based on UK Government and WHO guidance. Social distancing markings are now in place throughout the building and on 15 June a two-week testing phase will commence to assess the measures introduced, with 10% of IMO staff voluntarily working from the building.

- *Implementation of the audit scheme*

The Secretariat continues to work with Member States in implementing the audit scheme. Initial assessments of documents communicated by the audited States through the Comments on the Progress of Implementation of Corrective Action Plans (CPICAPs) have been largely completed for the audits performed in 2016. Soon, the outcome of the initial assessment, along with specific questions where applicable, will be communicated to the concerned Member States. Information provided through CPICAP and any additional information provided through the above process will be reviewed as part of the document-based audit and the decision to carry out in-situ follow-up audits, where applicable, will be made when the audit schedule resumes.

4. Other relevant information

- *Joint IMO-ICAO-ILO Statement on designation of seafarers as key workers and on facilitation of crew changes*

The heads of the maritime, labour and aviation organizations of the United Nations have issued a plea for urgent action on crew changes and for keyworker designation so that sea and air workers can be relieved and repatriated in a safe way during the COVID-19 pandemic. The joint statement has been issued as Circular Letter No.4204/Add.18. It is estimated that starting in mid-June 2020, 300,000 seafarers a month will require international flights to enable ships' crew changeovers. About half of these seafarers will travel home by aircraft for repatriation while the other half will join ships, and 70,000 cruise ship staff are waiting for their repatriation. Currently, around 25% of crew changes are taking place, of which 75% are successful and 25% unsuccessful. The Joint Negotiating Group (JNG) representing employers and the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) representing seafarers unions and their member agreed to support a transition period for governments and employers to implement the IMO-issued framework of protocols (as set out in the IMO Circular Letter No.4204/Add.14), allowing up to 30 days starting from 15 May 2020 to ensure safe facilitation of crew changes takes place.

- *Guidance for flag States regarding surveys and renewals of certificates during the COVID-19 pandemic*

IMO has issued CL No. 4204/Add.19 with the Guidance for flag States regarding surveys and renewals of certificates during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the view that the extension of the validity of certificates beyond the statutory maximum should only be considered in extraordinary circumstances and if no other alternative, such as the issuance of a short-term certificate with an appropriate risk-based survey, exists. The circular includes in annex the IACS's Guiding principles for the provision of technical and implementation advice to flag States when considering whether to permit statutory certificate extension beyond 3 months for the provision of technical and implementation advice to flag States when considering whether to issue short-term certificates or permit certificate extensions beyond the 3 months allowed by the IMO treaty regime.

- *IMO Seafarer Crisis Action Team (SCAT)*

The COVID-19 pandemic has put seafarers around the world in precarious situations. Travel restrictions mean many seafarers cannot leave their ships, be repatriated home, have crew changes or even get urgent medical assistance. Other seafarers have seen their contracts unilaterally terminated or have been quarantined on board ships for more than 14 days, without getting paid.

A large number of seafarers, as well as their spouses and family members, have reached out to IMO to share their concerns about a variety of difficult situations caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

IMO has established an internal Seafarer Crisis Action Team (SCAT) to help resolve individual cases, often working alongside other organizations like the International Labour Organization (ILO), the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Maritime Health Association (IMHA). Since the beginning of the crisis, this dedicated team works around the clock – contacting representatives from national governments, NGOs, trade unions or relevant associations, or orienting seafarers towards the right organisation, to find solutions. To date SCAT was involved in about 70 cases.

Some examples where IMO intervention made a difference for seafarers around the globe can be found [here](#).

- *Bravery Awards*

Thirty-one nominations from eighteen countries and two Organizations were received for the Bravery Awards. The deadline for the submission of nominations was 15 April 2020 and the full list of candidates will soon be forwarded to the judging panels for consideration.

- *Day of the Seafarer – 25 June 2020*

This year, the Day of the Seafarer campaign calls on Member States to recognize seafarers as key workers – and to provide them with the support, assistance and travel options open to all key workers during the pandemic. The 2020 campaign hashtag is: **#SeafarersAreKeyWorkers**. Downloadable posters and further information can be found [here](#):

- Member States' COVID-19 statements

A total of 145 COVID-19 related statements of Members States have been circulated.

- Media

The Secretariat participated in interviews with BBC world Service, NTV Russia and Belgian TV related to crew changes and other seafarer matters.
