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For immediate release

### **Crew change operations essential for Hong Kong and the global community**

The Hong Kong Shipowners Association (HKSOA) and the Hong Kong Liner Shipping Association (HKLSA) would like to stress the importance of facilitating crew change operations and supporting our seafarers, which are in the interest of the global community including Hong Kong.

Seafarers from all over the world are making an essential contribution to ensuring that the global supply chain of all vital goods, such as fuel, food and medical supplies, continues to function at this difficult time. Indeed, world seaborne trade is estimated to account for 90% of world trade. Like other “key workers”, seafarers deserve our support and respect.

As directed by the United Nations International Maritime Organisation, it is incumbent on governments to take measures to facilitate crew change operations. Hong Kong, as the world’s 4<sup>th</sup> largest ship register and a leading maritime centre, has taken practical measures to facilitate crew change operations so that those seafarers who have already been serving on ships for many months without a break can go home to see their families and take a rest at home after expiry of their contracts.

These days, there is public concern about imported infection cases from certain categories of people coming to Hong Kong, including seafarers. In this regard, the industry fully supports the government to take all necessary measures to protect the local community. These include, among others, requiring seafarers to take a virus test within 48 hours prior to departing for the Hong Kong airport, and to take another virus test on their arrival at the airport. Also, in view of the recent, fast-changing COVID-19 situation in Hong Kong, the two Associations have already asked their member companies to postpone or re-schedule their crew changes in the Hong Kong port for at least three weeks, unless those operations are absolutely necessary for ship safety or on compassionate grounds.

“The coronavirus pandemic impacts us all. Nobody can tell how this will play out eventually, but what we do know is that shipping, as the facilitator of the world supply chain, is indispensable for human beings to win this battle.” Bjorn Hojgaard, Chairman of the HKSOA said. “Seafarers are Key Workers and need to be able to go to and from work, as we expect from doctors, nurses and first responders. Otherwise the global economy will come to a screeching halt. Many other major ports in the world have already gradually made special arrangements to facilitate crew changes. Hong Kong, as part of the global community and a global maritime centre, should play its role too.”

Roberto Giannetta, Chairman of the HKSLA, said, “In this difficult time for all, the most important thing is for the global community, including Hong Kong, to work together for the common good. Currently, about 300,000 seafarers unfortunately remain trapped at sea. Crew change that relieves these stranded crew and enables world trade to continue is essential for every reason. In view of the fast-changing situation in Hong Kong, our government has already put in place a mechanism to facilitate crew change operations, whilst not compromising public health or safety. These procedures, mutually discussed and supported by industry and the government, are designed to enable efficient and safe crew change in Hong Kong. Not only do they include asking seafarers to take the virus test within 48 hours before coming to Hong Kong and to take another test upon their arrival at the airport, but they also require the shipping companies and agents to provide isolated, point-to-point transportation from arrival to departure to avoid contact with the local population. We will continue to urge all shipping companies, agents and seafarers to continue to strictly follow the rules and protocols set by respective governments and port authorities.”

For enquiries, please contact Miss Peggy Kan (HKSOA) at 2520 – 0206 or [hksoa@hksoa.org](mailto:hksoa@hksoa.org)

, or Ms Serena Yiu (HKLSA) at 9333 5639 or [serena@hklsa.org](mailto:serena@hklsa.org)



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新聞稿

## 船員輪換對香港和全球社會至關重要

香港船東會和香港定期班輪協會認為，支持海員和促進船員輪換工作非常重要，符合全球社會包括香港社會的利益。

世界各地的海員為確保全球商品供應鏈（燃料、食品和醫療物資等），在當前困難時期作出重要貢獻。據估計，海運佔世界貿易約九成。海員應像其他“關鍵員工”一樣，得到大家的支持和尊重。

正如聯合國國際海事組織的指示，各地政府應該採取措施，促進船員輪換工作。作為世界四大船舶註冊地之一和全球領先的航運中心，香港已採取切實可行的措施，為船員輪換提供便利，使那些在船上多個月來超期服務的海員，可以在工作合約期滿後，回家與家人團聚和休息。

目前，公眾關注個別入境人士（包括海員）的入境確診病例。在此，航運業界完全支持政府採取一切必要措施，保障本地社區居民的健康，包括要求海員在乘機前往香港前48小時內進行病毒測試，並要求他們在抵達香港機場時再次進行病毒測試。此外，鑒於香港最近新冠病毒肺炎疫情嚴峻，兩個協會已經要求會員公司，把香港港口安排船員輪換的工作推遲至少三周，或取消計劃（除非相關輪換工作對於船舶安全或基於人道原因，實屬必要。）

香港船東會主席 Bjorn Hojgaard 先生說：「新冠病毒肺炎疫情對我們所有人都有影響。大家都無法知道疫情最終將會如何發展，但是我們認為，作為全球供應鏈的推動者，航運業界從業員是人類贏得這場戰役所不可或缺的。」

他補充道：「海員是“關鍵員工”，就像醫護人員一樣，應該能夠正常地上下班。否則，世界經濟運作將嘎然而止。現時，許多主要港口已經逐步做了特殊安排，以方便船員輪換工作的正常進行。香港是國際社會的一部分，也應發揮作用。」

香港定期班輪協會主席 Roberto Giannetta 先生說：「在這個困難時刻，最重要的是包括香港在內的全球社會為了共同的利益而團結一致。目前，仍有大約 30 萬海員不幸被困在海上。無論出於何種原因，船員的輪換都是必要的，這能使滯留的船員得到精神上的緩解，使世界貿易得以繼續。鑒於香港疫情的變化，香港政府已建立了一套機制，在不損害公共健康和安全的的大前提下，促進船員的輪換工作。這些經過業界和政府討論並支持的措施，不僅要求船員在抵達香港之前 48 小時內進行病毒測試，並在抵達機場後再進行一次測試；還要求船公司和代理公司提供點對點隔離運輸，以避免船員與社區接觸。我們將繼續敦促航運公司、代理公司和船員嚴格遵守各地政府和港口當局制定的規訂。」

如有查詢，請聯絡香港船東會 Miss Peggy Kan (電話：2520 0206；電郵：[hksoa@hksoa.org](mailto:hksoa@hksoa.org))，或香港定期班輪協會 Ms Serena Yiu (電話：9333 5639；電郵：[serena@hklsa.org](mailto:serena@hklsa.org))。)