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International Transport Workers' Federation
Federación Internacional de los Trabajadores del Transporte
Fédération Internationale des ouvriers du transport
Internationella transportarbetarefederationen
Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation
Международная федерация транспортников
الاتحاد الدولي لعمال النقل

To all Maritime Affiliates and ITF FOC-POC Inspectorate

ITF E-Circular No. 087/D/F/IN/S/SS/2020

Our ref: D/F/IN/S/SS/JS/ld

17 March 2020

Dear Comrades,

RE: Covid-19

The spread of Covid-19 has been affecting the whole world and more and more countries are introducing travel restrictions in an effort to slow down the pandemic and to allow medical staff time to look after all affected and deal with this emergency.

The shipping industry plays a pivotal role in the global logistics chain and 90% of all goods are transported by sea so it is essential that this key function is allowed to continue to perform as close to its best as possible in this hour of dire need for communities worldwide.

Some of the key labour providing countries for shipping like the Philippines and Ukraine are amongst those that have closed their borders and, as such, crew changes are becoming practically impossible to implement.

All sectors of the shipping industry are working together to keep the vital flow of raw materials and supplies on the go and, in discussion with its social partners, [including JNG,] ITF has also learned that most flags have been issuing exemptions from the maximum service periods prescribed within the Maritime Labour Convention (Regulation 2.5 Standard A2.5.1 para 2(b)).

In order to mitigate problems surrounding the replacement of crew, the ITF has decided that during the period from 17 March 2020 to 16 April 2020, it will not challenge extensions of contracts of up to one month, even when these push the seafarers service periods past the maximum allowable by relevant ITF approved CBA [or MLC], provided individual seafarers consent to such extensions.

It goes without saying that, should a seafarer have a solid case for being repatriated at the end of their contract despite the above mentioned travel restrictions, their case will be evaluated further by the social partners. The wishes of any individual seafarer should be taken into account when considering repatriation.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacqueline Smith', written in a cursive style.

Jacqueline Smith

Maritime Coordinator