

## **BIMCO launches Ship Recycling Alliance to help fuel change**

BIMCO has launched a Ship Recycling Alliance to help accelerate safe and environmentally sound recycling of ships. The alliance will co-ordinate the voices of the ship recycling industry and the shipping industry and help facilitate the global implementation of the Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (HKC).

In June 2025, the HKC will enter into force. This comes at a time when more than 15,000 ships are estimated to be recycled over the next 10 years and the need for compliant yards from main recycling states such as India, Bangladesh and Pakistan is critical.

Today, only a minority of shipowners choose voluntary HKC compliant recycling. Therefore, coordinating the voices of the industries is crucial.

"Part of the ship recycling industry is already trying to live up to the HKC standards ahead of its entry into force. To succeed in having our ships recycled responsibly and safely for people and the environment, we need all stakeholders to engage and step up pace. The Ship Recycling Alliance will connect stakeholders, advise regulators and create awareness among the public," says BIMCO's Secretary General & CEO, David Loosley.

An important task will therefore be to liaise with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the Secretariat of the Basel Convention (BC) and the states that are party to these organizations to seek legal clarity on the interaction between both conventions.

This will include assessing, considering and responding to any proposals for future amendments to the HKC, and providing support for the implementation and enforcement of the BC requirements for the management of waste originating from the ship's recycling process.

"It is high time for an initiative like the Ship Recycling Alliance to be launched and put to work. We need an alliance that can formulate and represent the views of the international ship recycling industry and connect that with all other stakeholders involved. Doing so, we strongly believe we can move forward and fuel progress," says Dr. Nikos Mikelis, non-Executive Director of GMS, former IMO Head, Marine Pollution Prevention and Ship Recycling, Marine Environment Division and Chairperson of the alliance.

The founding members of the alliance are BIMCO, the Bangladesh Ship Breakers and Recyclers Association (BSBRA), the Turkish Ship Recycling Industry Association (GEMISANDER), global cash buyer GMS, ship recycling services' company Guideship, Pakistan Ship Breakers and Recyclers Association (PSBRA), the Ship Recycling Industries

Association of India (SRIA), the International Ship Recycling Association (ISRA), global cash buyer Wirana and Indian ship recycling group, Bansal Group.

Members can be representatives of ship recycling associations, individual ship recycling facilities, cash buyers, financial institutions and shipowners among others.

Full text of the Circular is available via the [link](#).

## **Shipping organizations increasingly concerned about seafarer safety**

The chairpersons of the world's biggest shipping industry organizations gathered on 6 February in Athens to discuss topics including greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction and the impact of geopolitics on shipping. By far the most important topic on the agenda was how the industry, and the international community, can help limit and put an end to a rise in unjust treatment and criminalization of its seafarers.

At the meeting, chaired by BIMCO President Nikolaus H Schües, the Round Table of International Shipping Associations - which consists of BIMCO, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), INTERTANKO and INTERCARGO - unanimously agreed that the awareness of seafarer safety, rights and treatment must be increased outside of the shipping industry.

"Throughout 2024 we have witnessed a rise in the number of kidnappings and cases of rogue detention and imprisonment of our seafarers. This is devastating and highly concerning. Let's not forget that seafarers facilitate the transport of over 80 pct of world trade. Despite the challenges they face, they continue to work to the highest professional standards, and we will work collectively towards raising awareness about seafarers lacking some of the fundamental rights that some other keyworkers enjoy," the Round Table chairpersons Nikolaus H Schües of BIMCO, Mr John Xylas of INTERCARGO, Emanuele Grimaldi of the ICS and Rolf Westfal-Larsen Jr. of INTERTANKO, said.

A recent report from the International Maritime Bureau has concluded that 2024 saw a decline in piracy but a rise in the number of seafarers taken hostage. According to the report, 126 seafarers were kidnapped last year against 73 in 2023 and 41 in 2022.

Meanwhile, reliable data is lacking when it comes to criminalization and rogue detention and imprisonment of seafarers when drugs are found on board a ship. Recently reported cases in some parts of the world, however, are testament to innocent seafarers being jailed over alleged drug offences despite lack of sufficient evidence.

The lack of reliable data is a problem that the Round Table member organizations will seek to address to gain a comprehensive overview of the extent of the problem.

"Seafarers should not risk jail sentences, kidnappings or attacks while performing their essential duties. Two weeks ago, we heard the news that the 25-member crew of the Galaxy Leader had been released after being kidnapped at gunpoint and held in captivity for over 430 days by the Houthis. Unjustified deprivation of liberty and attacks on innocent seafarers are attacks on individuals, the shipping industry, supply chains and world trade. We will continue to raise awareness of the rights and treatment of our seafarers," the chairpersons said.

Full text of the Circular is available via the [link](#).

## **Fair Treatment of Seafarers**

### **Background**

Unfair treatment of seafarers can take many forms and be for many reasons. Incidents may relate to eg pollution from ships or smuggling of drugs, even though very few of these incidents involve intentional or grossly negligent behaviour of seafarers. Other incidents may fall under this subject, such as the attitude of port state control officials towards ships' crew as well as abandonment of seafarers.

Fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident is addressed in guidelines developed by a Joint International Maritime Organization (IMO)/International Labour Organization (ILO) Ad Hoc Expert Working Group in 2006. Mandatory provisions on fair treatment of seafarers are included in the 2010 IMO Casualty Investigation Code (CIC), the 2006 ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) and the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Unfair treatment has an unacceptable impact on the seafarers involved. It also has a damaging effect on the image of the shipping industry and its ability to attract and retain qualified seafarers.

The shipping industry is vulnerable to disruption by differing actions by national authorities in relation to people's movement in and between countries. Seaborne trade depends not only on ships being able to call at ports but is also contingent on the ability to change crews at the end of contract periods onboard. Crew members are also dependent on the ability to travel between their home country and the port, where their ship is docked

at the time of crew change. Medical assistance to injured or sick crew members in ports is another essential requirement to keep seaborne trade flowing.

In a positive development, the EU in 2024 recognised seafarers as essential workers as a result of an amendment of the Schengen Borders Code. Such labelling is, however, not enough. The same harmonised approach as applied to international road hauling and air traffic should apply to shipping with the same privileges granted to seafarers as to truck drivers and airline crew. The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that hardly any nation in the world recognises the basic humanitarian requirements of the seafarer necessary to keep global trade flowing during an extended period of restrictions.

## **BIMCO's Position Statement**

BIMCO supports and advocates for fair treatment of seafarers in all respects and is committed to raising awareness.

BIMCO is opposed to liability regimes, which include presumption of guilt rather than innocence of seafarers, and legislation that makes an act illegal retroactively.

Seafarers should be granted internationally recognised privileges by convention to facilitate unhindered movement between their home and ship. All states should follow the EU's example and take steps to grant key worker status to seafarers.

Commercial parties need to take crew change obligations into consideration when negotiating Charter Party contracts.

It is essential that states meet their international obligations under UNCLOS, including article 230 barring states from imprisoning seafarers serving on board foreign ships except in cases of wilful and serious acts of pollution within their territorial waters.

BIMCO supports the enforcement of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), which establishes mandatory requirements for shipowners to maintain financial security to cover abandonment, as well as death and long-term disability of seafarers owing to occupational injury.

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