



Media Release – 17 March 2020

“Coronavirus poses major challenges for seafarers on merchant ships from increasing restrictions imposed by port states”

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has already caused the loss of thousands of human lives and the imposition by authorities of travel restrictions and lockdown of cities, provinces and countries across the world. Communities across most continents and economies are currently subjected to this serious threat and resulting turmoil.

During this very difficult pandemic, our Association wishes to remind societies and nations that without merchant ships and seafarers, cargoes cannot be transported between continents.

Dry bulk carriers remain the workhorses of international shipping, which transports approximately 90% of world trade, serving essential needs such as food and energy: main and minor dry bulks include cereals, grains, agricultural and forest products, as well as iron and other mineral ores, coal and fertilisers, and several other basic goods serving infrastructure for the well-being of populations.

INTERCARGO wishes to highlight the logistical challenges with the repatriation of seafarers who have completed their sea service and seek their relief and re-joining their families. Though their colleague seafarers are standing by on shore in their home country, the relief process is stalled as many port states have imposed local regulations, travel and quarantine restrictions due to COVID-19, despite the IMO circulars to be mindful of free access to seafarers. In many cases neither the seafarers nor the companies know for how long these may prevail.

While our Association totally supports IMO’s and other stakeholders’ issued Guidance, such as on Operational Considerations For Managing COVID-19 Cases On Board Ships, also disseminated via our [website](#), INTERCARGO urges IMO Member States and all Port States to adopt a pragmatic approach in assisting shipowners and seafarers to overcome these challenges by removing undue hinderance for seafarers to leave or join a ship in their ports.

The world relies on transportation by sea and the dry bulk shipping sector’s services. Seafarers need our support and compassion with measured, rather than overzealous, restrictions in relation to COVID-19. Without efficient crew changes, the supply chain would break down leading to basic product shortages and greater hardships for people around the world. It is paramount to consider the mental state of seafarers, who look forward to re-uniting with their families after serving 4-9 months on board a ship, as well as the adverse repercussions on the safe navigation and operation of ships.

Banning crew changes in ports brings high risks to crews, ships, ports and society.

About INTERCARGO: The International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners (INTERCARGO) is representing the interests of quality dry cargo shipowners, with 2,400 registered ships out of more than 11,000 ships in the global dry bulk fleet, corresponding to over 25% of the global dry bulk fleet basis deadweight. The dry bulk sector is the largest shipping sector in terms of number of ships and deadweight. INTERCARGO convened for the first time in 1980 in London and has been participating with consultative status at the International Maritime Organization (IMO) since 1993. INTERCARGO provides the forum where dry bulk shipowners, managers and operators are informed about, discuss and share concerns on key topics and regulatory challenges, especially in relation to safety, the environment and operational excellence. The Association takes forward its Members’ positions to the IMO, as well as to other shipping and international industry fora, having free and fair competition as a principle.