

Media Release – 28 April 2020

Crew Change for ‘Key Workers’ at Sea Must be Top of the Industry’s Agenda, says INTERCARGO

As International Labour Day on May 1 approaches, it is more important than ever to remember the critical role played by seafarers in continuing to transport food, medicines and other essential goods during the COVID-19 pandemic, says INTERCARGO, the organisation representing the world’s quality dry bulk shipowners.

“Seafarers must not be forgotten in these extraordinary times,” says Dimitris Fafalios, Chairman of INTERCARGO. “The issue of crew change must be at the top of the industry’s agenda. Seafarers are amongst the world’s key workers, vital to the global transportation chain. All maritime nations, ports and airports should, as a matter of urgency, permit the travel in/out and sign-on/off of seafarers, with the necessary safety procedures, allowing them to join from and repatriate to their countries of residence with seafarer’s documents and without visas, while the consulates are closed in the seafarers’ countries of residence.

“Without efficient crew changes, the supply chain would break down leading to basic product shortages and greater hardships for people around the world,” adds Mr Fafalios.

“It must be remembered that some of these seafarers may have served their 4-9 months tour of duty and are not able to be relieved even after serving 12 months or more on board ship”, says Jay K. Pillai, INTERCARGO’s Vice-Chairman. “Not only do they deserve our full support, empathy and compassion, but we must also consider the safety implications of the fatigue and depression that are an almost inevitable result of a seafarer being unable to re-unite with their family after such a long time on board while their families back home are enduring these challenging circumstances.

“Maritime authorities of Port States should join hands with their immigration departments to empathise with crews, our unsung heroes at sea, treat them as key workers as requested by the IMO Secretary General and permit crew change without undue restrictions in their ports to ensure safety at sea and of their territorial waters,” adds Mr Pillai.

In the bulk carrier industry alone, there are close to 12,000 vessels employing over 300,000 seafarers globally. Dr Kostas Gkonis, Secretary General of INTERCARGO calls on the sector to support the **#HeroesAtSeaShoutOut** campaign. “If your vessel is in port and it is safe to do so, then please sound your ship’s horn at 1200 LT on May 1 to show consolidated support around the world for the many seafarers who cannot be with their loved ones at this time of global uncertainty.”

“Such initiatives remind our valued seafarers that they are not alone, as demonstrated by the recent personal message from the IMO Secretary General to seafarers ‘**You are not alone**’,” adds Dr Gkonis (to view this message, [click here](#)).

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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.