

the global

# SEAFARER

Wherever you are, so are we

Volume 8 | Issue 1



## End fire and rehire

How seafarers are fighting back  
against ruthless employers

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Published by  
Nautilus International  
on behalf of



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nautilusfederation.org

Incorporating the Merchant  
Navy Journal and Ships'  
Telegraph.  
ISSN 0040 2575

Nautilus International also  
administers the Nautilus Welfare  
Fund and the J W Slater Fund,  
which are registered charities.

Published by  
Nautilus International



06



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# Empowering seafarers: the rising influence of trade unions

The wind of change is blowing for the maritime industry. Nautilus will be working to ensure this change is to the benefit of our maritime professionals



**Nautilus Federation  
Director**  
Mark Dickinson

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Front cover image: General Meeting 2023  
CREDIT: Brad Wakefield / Nautilus International

often write about partnership, social dialogue and the challenges trade unions face from employers, some of whom no longer seem to value engagement with us as the voice of their employees. Some events in recent history, and the media interest that followed, perhaps offer a salutary message to those who think we can be ignored. When our members have had enough, they will act, and we have the power to take industrial action in our toolbox, plus the power of the media and consumer choice.

Our toolbox is growing in other ways too. The trade union movement globally is developing links with institutional investors. These people invest our pensions (sometimes referred to as workers' capital) and they are actively pursuing and embedding environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors in all their investment decisions. This is partly about best practice, responding to consumer and investor concerns, but also in response to legislation following major scandals, concerns about corporate governance, lack of diversity, and the impact of business on the environment. Now we are seeing attention on the 'S' in ESG and this is where workers and their trade unions come into play.

Nautilus is at the heart of this debate, highlighting what nonsense it is to ship goods carrying the fairtrade logo on ships where seafarers are being exploited. No question that farmers in the global south should be paid a

decent price for their produce. No question that consumers will pay extra to ensure a fair deal for producers. Fairtrade bananas, tea, coffee and chocolate is one thing, but fair transport for seafarers moving these goods to market is our justifiable demand.

The talk of human rights due diligence is about workers in the entire supply chain, not just shipping. Social and employment rights are recognised as human rights and employers increasingly want to reassure regulators, customers and investors that they operate to the highest standards of governance throughout the business and third-party transactions.

Nautilus is an active participant in global relations, seeking to foster the highest standards for our members and advancing justice for all seafarers. I see much to be hopeful about for the future. I know there are many employers, sadly not yet the majority, who understand the winds of change are blowing in the direction of seafarers. They want to genuinely engage with us to advance our industry and those who seek to make their careers in maritime. There is a lot of change happening and uncertainty to come. New technology, artificial intelligence and the necessary actions to decarbonise the shipping industry are key.

There is much being done, I have written before about the global partnership launched in October 2022 between the International Transport Workers' Federation, International Maritime Employers' Council and International Chamber of Shipping. Already these organisations have advanced their partnership to acknowledge the crucial need for unions, employers and governments to elaborate a new social contract for seafarers that builds on the just transition and addresses the recruitment and retention of these key workers.

**We have the power to take industrial action in our toolbox, plus the power of the media, consumer choice and increasingly the power of ESG**



## Seafarers get pay rise and better conditions in global deal

# 4%

Rise in wages and compensations

# 10k

FOC vessels covered

# 250k

Seafarers' working conditions improved

More than 250,000 seafarers working on around 10,000 flag of convenience vessels covered by ITF-IBF collective bargaining agreements will have their wages increased, thanks to a four-year agreement reached by the International Bargaining Forum (IBF).

The 2024-2027 IBF Framework Agreement includes a 4% wages and compensations increase from 1 January 2024 and a further 2% increase from 1 January 2025 for seafarers, officers and ratings. Dozens of workplace protections and improvements have also been put in place, including improvements to the minimum number of public holidays, disincentives to counter poor

overtime record-keeping, PPE provision and maintenance and reinforcement of the right to shore leave.

The negotiations have also led to commitments on violence and harassment, a joint recognition of the importance of safe working practices in cargo lashing, and the establishment of a working group on the future of seafaring to cover the Just Transition, hours of work, crewing levels, fatigue and duration of employment.

The JNG also committed to remind its members of the importance of respecting national cabotage provisions, and agreed to work together with the ITF on a strategy to expand provision of free internet

access to seafarers.

'This agreement has been many months in the making, with some difficult conversations with the JNG to get to this stage. It benefits seafarers of all nationalities to ensure that these minimum levels are set through negotiation with ITF and its affiliates,' said Nautilus head of international relations Danny McGowan.

The IBF is the forum that negotiates the world's only global collective bargaining agreement. It consists of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) representing seafarers and the JNG representing ship managers and owners.

### ITF ADDS SAN MARINO TO FLAG OF CONVENIENCE LIST



Landlocked San Marino became a ship registry in 2021

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) expanded its list of flag of convenience (FOC) registries to include San

Marino, during a recent meeting of the Fair Practices Committee.

The San Marino ship register currently has 14 vessels that lack any registered ownership in the country.

At the same meeting, the Committee decided to remove the Cambodia flag from the list of FOC registers as there are currently no commercial vessels registered under the flag.

As part of the ITF's flag of convenience campaign, which marked its 75th anniversary in 2023, the organisation is committed to addressing issues related to FOCs and enforcing decent wages and conditions onboard.

## New Manila home for Filipino seafarers launched by SOS

Subsidised accommodation has been opened in Manila by the Singapore Organisation of Seamen.

The Seacare Sailors' Home (SSH) opened in June 2023 for Filipino seafarer members at Kaizen Suites, a hotel in Malate, Manila. It provides 30 beds across 14 rooms, all of which are equipped with new furnishings and personal lockers for secure storage. The SSH also features a recreation area for members to unwind.

This initiative aims to address Filipino members' accommodation challenges between signing on and signing off, as many live in provinces outside the capital.

The inauguration was attended



ITF general secretary Stephen Cotton, centre, at the opening of the new Seacare Sailors' Home in Manila

by guests including International Transport Workers' Federation general secretary Stephen Cotton.

### OPINION

## Working with our federation partners to fight for your rights



Nautilus Federation coordinator  
**Danny McGowan**  
dmcgowan@nautilusint.org

**D**espite seafarers facing increased dangers in the Red Sea (see pages 29-31), other areas of the Union's international work alongside our global partners must continue.

At the end of 2023, I attended some International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) meetings – the Seafarers' Section Conference and the Fair Practices Committee – representing Nautilus alongside general secretary Mark Dickinson and executive officer Sascha Meijer. We were also joined by a number of representatives from Nautilus Federation affiliates.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, these were the first such meetings held in six years. Covid-19 has of course had an impact on international work programmes since 2020; however, these meetings were an important time for Nautilus to set the agenda for the years ahead.

The Union submitted several motions at the events. Building on the work we undertook at the Union's General Meeting in October 2023, Mr Dickinson delivered a speech on the importance of the Just Transition to maritime professionals.

I introduced the topic of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to the ITF's agenda by delivering a speech to the conference which had been written by an AI tool. We called for a union-led discussion on the topic to assess the impact of this developing technology on our industry.

Ms Meijer spoke about the safe carriage of electric vehicles (EV) and the need for the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) to work with industry and unions to develop mandatory regulations to address the additional risks involved in the carriage of EVs.

We highlighted the importance of diversity in maritime, and marked the 75th anniversary of the ITF's Flag of Convenience campaign by calling for the ITF to continue efforts to drive shipowners to reputable national flags, and to reinforce UNCLOS Article 91, which requires a genuine link between the shipowner and the country of registration.

We look forward to working on behalf of maritime professionals as we lead and participate on these topics with our colleagues in the Nautilus Federation and the ITF. ● If you would like to find out more, please contact me via [dmcgowan@nautilusint.org](mailto:dmcgowan@nautilusint.org)

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To find out more about the ITF, go to [www.itfglobal.org](http://www.itfglobal.org) and for the Nautilus Federation, see [nautilusfederation.org](http://nautilusfederation.org)

# SAVE THE SWISS FLAG!

Nautilus International has made a joint statement with Swiss shipowners urging the Swiss government to take swift action on behalf of the country's shipping register. They reject the government's current proposals which miss the opportunity to ensure ships register. **Holger Schatz** reports

It is well known that the number of ocean-going vessels flying the Swiss flag has been dwindling for years. At present, only 14 ships are still part of the Swiss fleet. After the expiry of the respective guarantee granted by the Confederation for each ship under the now abolished guarantee system, these 14 ships will also leave Switzerland in the next two to five years. This will seal the end of the Swiss flag.

From the workers' point of view, this is a great loss, as ships under the Swiss flag offer good working conditions thanks to a binding social partnership, and there is a high level of protection against specific dangers at sea such as accidents, piracy, and criminalisation.

Unfortunately, the Swiss flag has not been attractive for shipping companies for a long time. Shipping companies are therefore increasingly switching to so-called offshore flags with low profit tax rates or registering in flag states that want to be attractive to shipping companies through the so-called tonnage tax.



CREDIT: Nautilus International

There is a worldwide competition between maritime nations and offshore flag registries for the business of shipping companies, which in many circumstances leads to 'flag shopping' – choosing a flag state that offers the most benefits and advantages for the shipowner. This is of course very regrettable and should be stopped by a global joint effort.

The opportunity to stop 'flag shopping' was within reach when the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) minimum tax of 15% on corporate profits above €750,000 million was agreed. There was 138 countries that agreed to this binding directive in 2021. Unfortunately, however, under pressure from shipping associations, ocean shipping was excluded from this minimum tax. Certain states also pleaded for this special treatment, as Achim Pross, one of those involved in the process of shaping the OECD tax treaty, confirmed to German television.

Nautilus regrets that the community

of states has thus missed the chance to stop global tax dumping for the maritime industry and renew our demand that Switzerland must offer shipping companies better, more attractive framework conditions, such as a tonnage tax.

As is well known, the government is currently planning a tonnage tax. However, since there are currently no plans for the tonnage tax to come with obligations such as cadet training, we have rejected the most recent draft.

Fortunately, in August Nautilus was able to agree on a joint position with the Swiss Shipowners Association (see right), which has now been sent to the authorities and politicians so that they can still influence the law.

## COMMODITY TRADE AND TONNAGE TAX

Apart from the link to the Swiss flag, a law on tonnage tax must prevent the commodity trading industry, which is closely linked to shipping, from being able to exploit the system to make huge profits.

This danger is very real, as Switzerland is traditionally home to many large commodity traders such as Glencore and Trafigura. Commodity traders currently contribute up to 20% of tax revenues in cantons such as Ticino, Zug, Vaud and Geneva. If these companies were to pay tax on their profits from commodities trading, including stock exchange profits, at a tonnage tax rate of 3%, for example, instead of the cantonal tax rates of 10% or the 15% OECD minimum tax, this would lead to tax losses in the billions for the public sector.

The demand for a clear and effective demarcation between shipping and commodity trading has been made to the government by various organisations and is part of the current 'final' clarifications of the law. Nautilus is in close contact with industry experts and non-governmental organisations on this issue and will also tie its approval of the tonnage tax to this demarcation.

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Visit our website for more information on how Nautilus organises in Switzerland for inland waterways and the rivercruise sector: [bit.ly/rivercruise\\_hub](https://bit.ly/rivercruise_hub)



## Joint Statement from Nautilus International and Swiss Shipowners Association

The Union Nautilus International and Swiss Shipowners Association have exchanged views on the future of the Swiss merchant fleet in connection with the Swiss tonnage tax and the Swiss maritime strategy. Both parties recognise the importance of:

- providing a level playing field for the Swiss shipping sector with other major maritime nations, including all EU countries having a merchant fleet, which would benefit the Swiss economy and ensure that the sector with over 2,000 employees will grow
- maintaining the Swiss merchant flag and increasing the number of vessels thereunder, thus ensuring seafarers' rights and their wellbeing onboard the vessels and increasing Switzerland's influence on the international regulatory bodies such as at the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

The parties reached the

following conclusions:

- tonnage tax is essential for the sector to remain competitive
  - there should be a link between the tonnage tax and the Swiss flag in order to maintain the flag and increase its influence on international bodies
- Nautilus International and the Swiss Shipowners Association will jointly work with relevant and political stakeholders to define this link. Nautilus and the Swiss Shipowners Association agree that the Swiss maritime law should be rewritten to reflect a modern flag, which is attractive to have new vessels registered.

The parties have for years been maintaining a transparent and strong social partnership for the benefit of seafarers. However, this partnership can only exist as long as a Swiss fleet exists under the Swiss flag. *Basel, Renens, Zürich August 2023*



Delegates gathered in Geneva from labour organisations, industry and government to set a new course for the sector



CREDIT: ILO

# Inland waterways: a key moment for workers' rights



**Nautilus industrial organiser  
Piet Doerflinger**

At the first International Labour Organization's meeting on inland waterways in 30 years, workers had their say on the future of the sector

In November 2023 the International Labour Organization (ILO) held its first meeting on inland waterways since 1992 in Geneva – an opportunity for unions, including Nautilus International, to promote decent employment on an international basis in discussions with representatives of government and industry.

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) was also there to support the unions.

The collective goal was to improve the inconsistent standards in the sector, where some waterways operate safety rules based on regional reach, whilst other regions lack effective regulations and have high numbers of informal workers.

### WHAT WAS AT STAKE?

'The technical meeting was about consolidating the strongly divergent interests of the three groups involved – labour, government and industry – into realistic recommendations for the ILO,' explains Nautilus industrial organiser Piet Doerflinger.

'This process was very intensive and required countless meetings and consultations within the individual groups. It took five days of negotiations, but the consensus building process was ably moderated by the Norwegian chairperson, Mr Henrik Munthe.'

'Our positions as workers were very skilfully and tenaciously represented by our group's chairperson Mr Yury Sukhorukov, despite the expected resistance from the other two interest groups.'

The ITF sees this as a critical moment to embed labour rights in the industry's future, stating that the meeting was the beginning of a process to elevate the status of the sector and increase its market share while also ensuring it promotes decent employment.'

### NAUTILUS'S CONTRIBUTION

During the meeting the workers' delegation raised matters that are important to improve the working and living conditions of inland waterways workers.

'My involvement consisted of contributing to the consultations within the labour group in an advisory capacity,' says Mr Doerflinger. 'Important points for me were the inclusion of three aspects into the recommendations: the monitoring of the implementation of labour rights by trade unions and tripartite commissions onboard and at the companies; the right of trade unions to access the

## The ITF sees this as a critical moment to embed labour rights in the industry's future

workplace; the explicit mention of hospitality and entertainment personnel on passenger vessels as a vulnerable group.

'In the recommendations to the ILO, the wording "strengthen systems of inspection of labour conditions on board IWW vessels, including through adequate resources, qualified inspectors and harmonisation of inspections among riparian states" and "promote the ratification of international labour conventions and the effective implementation of the international labour standards and other ILO instruments relevant to the IWW sector" was adopted. In addition, "decent work challenges" were declared for people working on river cruise ships. So yes, Nautilus was able to make a contribution.'

The fight will go on, however. 'Many workers on the world's waterways are seeing a decline in their working conditions and a reduction in their pay and training,' says ITF officer Fabrizio Barcellona. 'This is due to globalisation, market consolidation and increasing deregulation in the sector.' In this context, the positive outcome of the meeting is all the more important.

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Visit the Nautilus river cruise hubs:  
EN [bit.ly/river\\_cruise\\_hub\\_en](https://bit.ly/river_cruise_hub_en)  
CH [bit.ly/river\\_cruise\\_ch](https://bit.ly/river_cruise_ch)

## Key issues agreed

The three parties recognised that:

- the lack of national and transnational legal frameworks can lead to unfair competition
- transition to formal employment in the sector is a priority
- collective bargaining can lead to improved working conditions
- decent working conditions are crucial to attract women and young people into the sector
- regulations for all workers are important in areas such as hours of work and rest, medical care, social protection, repatriation, wages, contracts and operational crewing levels
- the creation, attraction and retention of decent jobs in the sector must be promoted
- universal access to social protection systems for workers, regardless of nationality, must be promoted
- enforcement, including through regular inspection of vessels, is critical to improving conditions
- skills development is an absolute priority given new technological developments

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Read the full recommendations at [bit.ly/ILO\\_inland](https://bit.ly/ILO_inland)





## SKILLS PREVAIL when systems fail

The crew of a Stena Line ferry have been praised for averting disaster after their ship lost power and drifted for six and a half hours following a fire on the vehicle deck, reports **Andrew Linington**

**O**n 29 August 2022 a blaze broke out onboard the Danish-flagged ro-ro Stena Scandica, as it sailed between the Swedish port of Nynäshamn and Ventspils, Latvia, with 241 passengers and 58 crew onboard.

Although the crew managed to bring the fire under control within an hour, Stena Scandica's power supply system had failed and directional control, GPS and AIS were all lost. Blackouts left the 35,456gt ship with no fire pumps to provide water for firefighting, anchors stuck on the winches, and the crew with no navigational equipment available to determine their position, other than taking bearings visually and trying to plot positions on a paper chart.

Soon after, the evacuation of passengers by helicopter began and about 90 minutes before a potential grounding, crew members managed to restore propulsion and steering, so Stena Scandica was able to return to Nynäshamn.

Investigators from the Danish Marine Accident Investigation Board (DMAIB) found that 'a cascading effect of major power supply failures' led to a loss of directional control and the immobilisation of safety-critical equipment. The fire had affected cabling connecting the emergency switchboard with the engine room machinery and services, as critical electrical infrastructure was installed with a lack of fire protection and redundancy. 'The

**Blackouts caused by the fire left the ship with no fire pumps to provide water for firefighting**

cables were unprotected from heat and flame, and, as their insulation burnt away, the cables grounded and short-circuited, resulting in multiple and simultaneous electrical failures within all parts of the power supply system including the emergency switchboard and the 24V switchboard/UPS in the emergency generator room.

'The blackout procedures onboard Stena Scandica relied on the emergency power system being intact and therefore did not provide support for the ETO and the chief engineer in the troubleshooting process. The restoration of the ship's power and propulsion was therefore entirely reliant on their knowledge of the electrical system, the ability to think up creative solutions in a stressful environment, and the willingness to take bold decisions on removing safety-critical equipment and using them for other purposes, by dismantling protective mechanisms and creating new electrical connections while the events unfolded.'

The DMAIB said the incident highlighted the need to ensure the robustness of all elements of a ship's electrical system, with critical parts of the infrastructure being structurally protected or designed with redundancy.

The report concluded: 'For many years, accident investigation focused on the shortcomings in human performance as a safety-critical issue. The fire and blackout on Stena Scandica highlight the opposite: human skill and adaptability can remedy failures and shortcomings of the ships' systems.'



## SEAFARERS IN THE FIRING LINE

Attacks by state actors on merchant shipping are once again putting maritime professionals at risk. **Rob Coston** reports on the threat, and how the industry is responding

**S**ince the latest war between Israel and Hamas began on 7 October 2023, attacks by Palestinian-aligned actors in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean have put seafarers at risk during voyages through the Suez Canal.

These attacks are against vessels which are claimed to have links to Israel or that have called at Israeli ports and are claimed by the Houthi government in Yemen, although in some instances these links have been tenuous or have subsequently proven to be false. There has been an associated increase in opportunistic attacks by Somali pirates.

As a faction engaged in a long civil war with a Saudi-backed rival government in the south, the Houthi government has access to military resources and technical expertise including missile and drone technology. It also uses modern online resources to easily identify Israeli-linked targets and ships calling at Israeli ports.

Longstanding security arrangements designed to combat low-tech assaults by Somali pirates – such as armed guards and water cannon – are clearly inadequate when dealing with drones and veteran Houthi fighters. Video footage released by Houthi forces storming the Bahamas-flagged vessel Galaxy Leader by helicopter shows what seafarers are up against.

The attacks have caused several major shipping lines to stop sailing through the Red Sea and instead redirect vessels around the Cape of Good Hope or put sailings on hold.

'Many of the largest shipping companies by market share have suspended shipping in



the Red Sea altogether,' says Nautilus head of professional and technical David Appleton. 'Whilst this is a positive step for seafarers employed by those companies, others are still having to face unacceptable risks transiting the area. Until such time as the safety of shipping can be guaranteed, shipping companies must ensure that the safety of seafarers takes precedence over any commercial considerations. In any case, seafarers should have the opportunity to disembark, if they choose, before their vessel sails through a dangerous area.'

### International response

An international response has been put in place. The United States announced a multinational coalition to safeguard Red Sea shipping in December called Operation Prosperity Guardian, which the UK is also participating in. The EU is also planning to send a task force, and warships of several nations have intercepted and destroyed dozens of drones and several boats that were moving to intercept cargo ships in the area.

As the Telegraph went to press, shipping companies had yet to resume sailing, however: despite an announcement on 24 December saying that it would return to the Red Sea after the launch of the task force, Maersk for example has continued to pause sailings.

'Even for those seafarers who are now being re-routed, this is not a good situation,' explains Mr Appleton. 'It means extra days onboard ship during the long journey around the Cape of Good Hope.'

 **18+**

major shipping firms rerouting vessels

 **10**

extra days onboard for crew of redirected vessels

'A piecemeal approach to the security situation cannot ensure the safety of all maritime professionals in the Red Sea or an adequate global supply chain, even in the short term – and with no obvious conclusion apparent, a long-term solution is needed.'

'In December the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) – of which Nautilus International is an affiliate – joined with the European Community Shipowners' Associations in calling for immediate action to urgently address this alarming situation. They asked authorities to enhance protective structures for the security of commercial vessels transiting through the area, and for coordinated efforts, including diplomatic, to maintain freedom of navigation through the Red Sea and ensure seafarers can work free from the threat of attack. The United States's force to counter Houthi attacks is the beginning, but should not be the sum total, of this effort.'

## Netherlands outlines protective measures

Nautilus International has reached an agreement with Dutch shipowners to designate a large area around Yemen as 'gevaarlijk doorvaartgebied' (a high-risk/dangerous transit area). This applies to seafarers,

including trainees, who are covered by a Dutch collective bargaining agreement and work on Dutch-flagged ships. The shipping company must inform seafarers when their ship is to transit the high risk area and outline the risks and any

protective measures it is putting in place. The seafarer then has the right to ask the shipping company to leave the vessel, and the company must attempt to facilitate this if the request has been put forward in a timely manner.

The US Navy vessel USS Carter Hall conducting flight operations with an unmanned aerial vehicle in the Middle East region



## IBF: WARLIKE AREA DESIGNATIONS

The International Bargaining Forum's (IBF) Warlike Operations Area Committee (WOAC) has unanimously agreed to designate the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden 'Warlike' to emphasise the seriousness of the situation.

This decision taken at a meeting on 12 March 2024 followed the Houthi attack on M/V True Confidence which resulted in the death of three seafarers.

In a joint statement, the IBF WOAC said: 'Our first priority is the safety of seafarers.'

Calling for the diversion of vessels – avoiding sailing through the Newly Established Warlike Area – the statement added: 'Ships transiting the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden are Houthi missile targets, putting seafarers' lives in grave danger. We strongly

urge charterers, operators and shipowners to avoid passage through the area until there is no risk to the safety of seafarers from further attacks.'

The IBF will be asking all employers and union affiliates to lobby their respective governments to intervene and act in the safety of seafarers.

The IBF Warlike Operations Area had been 12 nautical miles off the mainland Yemeni Coast. The latest decision expands the Warlike area to cover the previous declared High Risk Area, which included the Southern Section of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, stretching across to the Eritrea coast. The Area encompasses the Bab El Mandeb Strait including the Maritime Security Transit Corridor (MSTC) in its entirety within the Gulf of Aden.

### What is the IBF?

The International Bargaining Forum (IBF) was set up as a process in which maritime employers, represented by the Joint Negotiating Group (JNG), and seafarers unions, represented by the International Transport-Workers' Federation (ITF) could negotiate over the wages and conditions of employment of seafarers serving on ships to which ITF Special Agreements apply.





The ETF is helping affiliate unions get to work on a Just Transition for transport workers

CREDIT: Beautiful-Moments/Pixabay

## GETTING TO GRIPS WITH GOVERNANCE

The ETF has recently published a report that could have an effect on many Nautilus members' working lives: **Water Transport Employment in Europe: the Role of Governance.**

The report assesses incoherence in government policies and provides recommendations for reform to ensure the relevant skills needed in water transport can be maintained. It builds on discussions with experts and stakeholders, and workshops with ETF member organisations.

The report is available for free download at [bit.ly/ETF\\_water\\_governance](https://bit.ly/ETF_water_governance)

The European Transport Workers' Federation is helping to make the Just Transition a reality with a new guide called the **ETF Climate Change Toolkit for Transport Trade Unions.**

The aim is to raise awareness among ETF affiliate unions of climate change as a core trade union issue – something which is already informing the work of Nautilus.

The Just Transition is a concept developed by the international and European trade union movements and recognised by the 2015 Paris Agreement, where it is stated that policy implementation should take into account 'the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs'.

However, ensuring workers are treated fairly in the move to greener fuels can be easier said than done. That's why the ETF has produced its toolkit to help unions fight for members' rights. The toolkit includes:

# ETF launches toolkit to help transport unions fight for climate justice

- background information on the science behind global warming and links for deeper digging into the topic
- an introduction to EU climate policies and the role of transport in global warming
- an overview of EU policies on decarbonising transport, including information on EU funding possibilities for the Just Transition
- examples of good practice such as the French climate and resilience law, in particular regarding its obligation for social

dialogue at company level on environmental issues

- proposals for decarbonising the rail, road, shipping and aviation sectors, assessing the possible impact on transport workers' jobs and working conditions
- recommendations for trade union action and a checklist for trade union activists and workers' representatives at company level

The **ETF Climate Change Toolkit for Transport Trade Unions** is available to download for free at [bit.ly/ETF\\_toolkit](https://bit.ly/ETF_toolkit).



First place for '12 Degrees' by John Robert M. Marañó



Second place for 'Converging forces' by Mikael Cesar Bureros

# Seen through their eyes: '12 Degrees' wins photo comp

To celebrate World Maritime Day, the ITF Seafarers' Trust has unveiled the winners of the 2023 Life at Sea photography competition, which is aimed at shedding light on the crucial yet often overlooked contributions of seafarers to the global economy.

The first prize, worth £1,000, has been awarded to John Robert M. Marañó for his captivating photograph '12 Degrees'. At first glance the image appears to defy the laws of physics; however, after noticing the pendulum on the back wall the viewer realises it is not a trick but a testament to Marañó's clever use of camera angles.

Competition judge Paddy Rodgers said: 'We think of the floor as solid, but seafarers will tell you that aboard a ship the floor is very movable'. This striking visual metaphor serves to highlight the daily struggles of seafarers to carry out work in an environment that is constantly unsteady.

Taking second place is Mikael Cesar Bureros's 'Converging Forces'. The photograph captures a breathtaking moment as a container ship finds itself on the cusp of being engulfed by a huge sandstorm from Egypt. The image immerses viewers in the harrowing experience of seeing colossal sand clouds bearing down on those aboard, emphasising the unwavering resilience of seafarers in the face of adversity.

2023 marks the **4th** Life at Sea Photo Competition

**8,000** images shared since 2020

**£2,250** in prizes awarded in 2023

The Life at Sea photography competition has been serving as a powerful tribute to seafarers worldwide since 2020, portraying the demanding and often perilous nature of their work while celebrating their dedication to keeping global trade afloat.

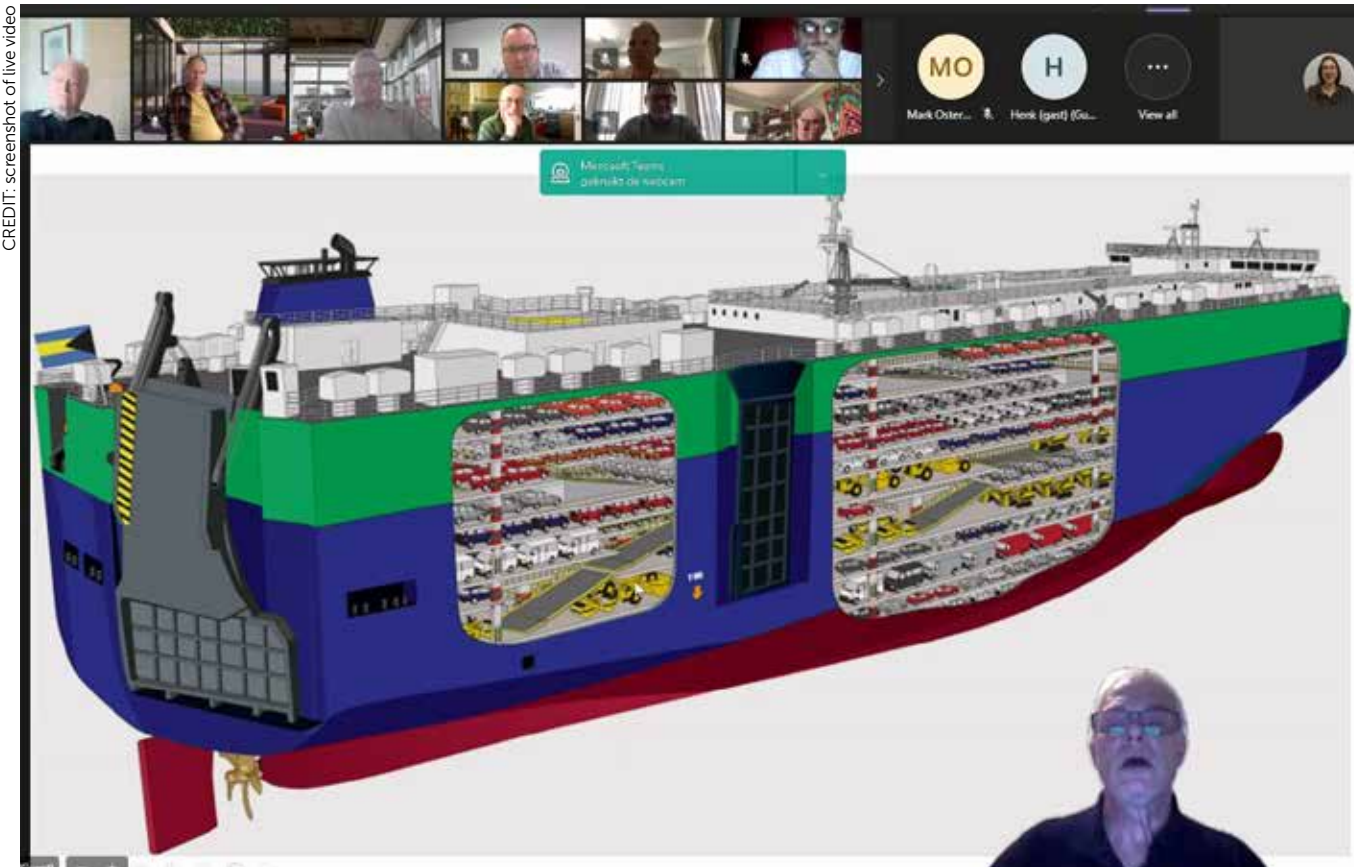
- Find out more about the winners at [bit.ly/ITF\\_photos](https://bit.ly/ITF_photos)



The ITF recently concluded negotiations with shipowners to secure a pay rise and better conditions for 250,000 seafarers working onboard flag of convenience vessels. Read more on [page 4](#)

ALL IMAGES CREDIT: ITF





Henk Eijkenaar (bottom right) giving his presentation on fire safety onboard car carriers to the online October 2023 meeting of the Nautilus Professional and Technical Forum

# Forum tackles fire safety

A recent meeting of the Nautilus Professional and Technical Forum focused on the devastating fire onboard the car carrier Fremantle Highway earlier this year. The aim was to gather members' expertise on safety issues relating to this kind of vessel – and around the carriage of electric vehicles (EVs) on any ship type.

## The Fremantle Highway disaster

Nautilus head of professional and technical David Appleton acknowledged that, contrary to initial reports it was now thought that an electric vehicle was not the initial

cause of the Fremantle Highway fire. However, he said the incident had ignited a debate around fire safety and the carriage of electric vehicles.

Lithium-ion battery fires are notoriously difficult to extinguish, and there are currently no methods available for safely fighting an EV fire onboard once it has taken hold.

With increasing numbers of EVs being carried onboard passenger ferries as well as cargo ships, the industry urgently needs to review its fire safety measures.

This would need to include abandon ship procedures, as crew members from the Fremantle Highway were forced to jump into the sea because lifeboats could not be used, and one seafarer lost his life this way.



Henk Eijkenaar's car carrier fire safety presentation continues

## Fire safety onboard car carriers

Nautilus member Henk Eijkenaar gave the meeting an expert presentation on the safety challenges on the car decks of ro-ro car carriers – whether or not these are carrying EVs.

He noted that the ceilings of the decks are very low, meaning that there is little space above the cars and smoke from any fire fills the deck immediately, making it very difficult to find the vehicle that is the source of the fire. Crew movement is also hampered by the lashings between the cars.

'It is almost impossible to extinguish these fires by manpower,' he continued. 'The only way is to seal the compartment and flood it, but the decks are very open.'

He also highlighted other design concerns with car carriers, such as the vessels' bridge and accommodation sitting above the cargo hold, and the likelihood of lifeboats catching fire as they are lowered down the side of a fiercely burning ship.

He added that emergency response measures need to be reassessed as well. 'Coastguards aren't used to these extreme fires. I think the Netherlands coastguard should have sent a rescue mission to get the crew off the Fremantle Highway before trying to put out the fire.'

## Fire safety onboard passenger vessels

Following the car carrier safety presentation, Nautilus members added their concerns about the carriage of EVs on passenger vessels, as follows:

'More and more EVs are being carried onboard our CalMac ferries, but we don't have guidance on best practice for fighting battery fires. We also need advice on the safest level of charge for an EV, as I have heard that the most dangerous time for these vehicles to be carried is at full discharge.'

'Shipping needs to take its own look at the design of all vessels carrying EVs, as it will be too long if we wait for the IMO to act. We also need joined-up thinking with the automotive industry.'

'I have had someone on one of my ships throw a lithium battery into the sea as it's the only way to prevent thermal runaway.'

'The majority of fires are from older EVs and hybrids. Some companies are already refusing to transport new vehicles with old EVs.'

'New firefighting systems are needed. Fire blankets and fire hoses don't work with EVs, and we need proper sensors.'

'Charging of EVs shouldn't really be allowed onboard, but Scandica and Irish Ferries are already offering this to passengers, and it will be difficult to challenge this commercial imperative.'

'Cruise ships are also allowing passengers to charge electric mobility scooters onboard, although not all of these run off lithium batteries.'

'We should consider deploying fire safety systems that we've had on oil and gas tankers for decades. They can be cost-effectively retrofitted.'



# Working conditions in focus at ISWAN Seminar

**N**autilus director of legal services Charles Boyle attended the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) 2023 Seminar in Helsinki on 16 November, which was aimed at delegates from shipping companies, welfare organisations, unions and other maritime industry stakeholders.

He headed up a panel on fair working conditions, which sat within the Seminar's overall theme: 'Addressing the maritime recruitment crisis: Seafarer wellbeing in a changing world'.

ISWAN chose to make fair working conditions a particular focus this year due to the concerns that it has about the maritime sector's recruitment and retention crisis. The organisation runs several helplines for seafarers, including Nautilus 24/7, and frequently hears about the impact that excessive workloads and lack of access to adequate shore leave have on their physical and mental health.

Mr Boyle brought a legal perspective to the discussion, particularly relating to how amendments to the Maritime



Charles Boyle,  
Nautilus director  
of legal services

CREDIT: Brad Wakefield

Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC) could improve the situation at sea.

He asked maritime stakeholders whether positive changes could potentially come from employers and shipowners if they are made aware of the retention benefits of better conditions, or whether

regulatory efforts at the national or international level will be required; and whether bodies like the International Maritime Organization (IMO) or International Labour Organization (ILO) will be needed or if flag states could take the lead.

## New practical legal guide for ship masters released

A vessel's master is required to protect the interests of crew members, the shipowner and him or herself when something goes wrong onboard – even when a legal issue arises.

A new book from the International Federation of Shipmasters and International Chamber of Shipping – **The Master's Practical Guide to Maritime Law, First Edition** – has been released to help masters and others in the industry understand how to live up to this responsibility. It uses common real-world scenarios to provide context and offers valuable guidance on how to approach legal issues effectively, highlighting best practices, and providing expert advice on managing legal risks.

● The book costs £250 and is available in print or e-book format from ICS Publications at [bit.ly/practical\\_law\\_book](https://bit.ly/practical_law_book)

# Supporting welfare rights in the move to net zero



Simon Grainge  
Chief executive officer  
International Seafarers'  
Welfare and Assistance  
Network (ISWAN)

**I**t is widely stated that the maritime sector faces a growing recruitment and retention crisis. Increased workloads, reduced shore leave, an unwillingness to undertake long contracts and over-occurrence of issues such as bullying and harassment are just some of the factors leading seafarers to seek alternative careers. At the same time, the need for highly skilled, experienced seafarers to steer the maritime sector through the transition to zero carbon has never been greater.

Those going to sea today have grown up in a very different world to previous generations and will have very different expectations and values. They will quite rightly expect to enter a safe and inclusive workplace, but they will also be looking for uninterrupted connectivity to loved ones, short contracts and clear opportunities for personal development.

Employers can make changes to pay and working conditions

to address these issues, but this may not be enough. Good mental health and wellbeing is crucial to seafarers if they are to survive the rigours of a life at sea. ISWAN can be relied on to support seafarers when things go wrong; our helplines and crisis funds are designed for precisely that, but much more can be done to prevent things getting to that stage.

At ISWAN, we consider this to be an important issue, so in November this year (just as the Telegraph was going to press), we held a seminar that took a solutions-focused approach to explore what can be done. The event provided the opportunity to hear from a range of industry experts about what they are doing and further inform our work in the future.

Seafarer welfare is a rights issue but it is also crucial to successful business, so the more partnership there is between industry and welfare organisations, the better for everyone.



the global  
**SEAFARER**



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