



Statement on the vaccination of maritime and shipping professionals

Since the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, affiliates of the Nautilus Federation have been calling on national governments to recognise seafarers and Inland Waterways Transport (IWT) crew as keyworkers. We have also called on shipowners to help to resolve the Crew Change Crisis.

For a short period towards the end of 2020, crew change issues appeared to diminish as shipowners navigated their way around changing travel restrictions, however, they by no means disappeared. Sadly, the arrival of new variants of Covid-19 has led some governments to re-impose strict travel restrictions. These new restrictions have contributed to hundreds of thousands of seafarers once again being impacted by the pandemic.

Another contributing factor to the lack of progress on crew changes has been the pernicious practices of un reputable charterers insisting on 'no crew change' clauses being written into their charterparties with shipowners. The existence of such clauses means that crew changes are prohibited whilst the cargo of the charterer is onboard, preventing diversions to states where crew changes may be possible.

This practice has rightly been condemned by many organisations and stakeholders such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO) in a joint circular letter to all IMO members, though examples are still reported to regulatory authorities and trade unions worldwide.

Nautilus Federation affiliates - all proudly affiliated to or recognised by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) - welcome the recent publication of the [Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change](#).

We hope that the principles within the Neptune Declaration will be followed globally, and we will watch with interest the actions taken by Flags of Convenience to respond to the concerns raised by the signatories.

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, we have witnessed the extraordinary efforts of healthcare workers worldwide and we thank them for their sacrifices on the front line of the health emergency. Alongside these efforts we recognise the achievements of modern science in developing multiple vaccinations for a new disease in such a short space of time and the World Health Organization (WHO) recognises many of these as suitable for use. We have been pleased to see that healthcare workers have been receiving these vaccinations to protect them from the symptoms of coronavirus to reduce the pressure on health services.

The undersigned affiliates of the Nautilus Federation now call on the WHO, IMO, ILO, governments, regional authorities and shipowners worldwide to prioritise maritime and shipping professionals as the next line of defence in the fight against Covid-19, reducing pressure on seafarers and IWT crew.

The work of maritime and shipping professionals, as cross-border workers, often necessitates being away from home for months at a time, transiting multiple nations in the course of their employment. They have faced difficulties in accessing medical attention in ports around the world – even for routine medical requirements – during the Covid-19 pandemic.



We therefore believe that an internationally coordinated coronavirus vaccination programme is required.

As a result of the Crew Change Crisis and their working patterns, large numbers of seafarers and IWT crew, are likely to be away from home when they are called on by their national vaccination programmes, or may have to return to sea before their follow-up appointment.

As national vaccination programmes develop, we expect to see a number of countries requiring travellers to have received a Covid-19 vaccination prior to crossing their borders, and so-called Covid-19 'vaccine passports' are likely to be required for seafarers, to a greater extent than any existing proof of vaccination, to enable them to travel to and from their vessels.

We therefore call on the WHO, IMO, ILO, governments, regional authorities and shipowners to:

- Coordinate a global seafarer vaccination programme to facilitate the safe vaccination of seafarers
- Ensure that seafarers receiving vaccinations outside of their country of domicile only receive vaccines authorised by the regulatory body of their home country
- Ensure that seafarers are provided with adequate information, in their own language and in English, about the vaccination they receive
- Ensure that seafarers can receive the required number of doses within the dosing periods as recommended by the WHO
- Ensure that seafarers experiencing side effects as a result of the vaccination can access medical advice and medical care where necessary
- Recognise any vaccinations authorised by the WHO as valid for seafarer travel and transit through any national jurisdiction
- To enable seafarers who have not yet been able to receive a vaccination to travel to and from their country of domicile and their place of work without restriction, including via commercial aviation, for the duration of the global seafarer vaccination programme
- To launch an education programme for seafarers to counter the effects of anti-vaccination propaganda.

We believe that these actions, implemented in partnership with national unions and the ITF, will help to ensure a safe return to normal operations for maritime and shipping professionals worldwide.

As Nautilus Federation affiliates, collaboratively working in the interests of all of our members, we support a global solution to ending the Crew Change Crisis. We will continue to work with our own national jurisdictions and Flag States in the interests of our members and we will continue to work together to support our members in times of need.

Nautilus Federation
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