



FIATA stands with seafarers maintaining the global supply chain during COVID-19

Zurich, 21 May 2020 – FIATA International Federation of Freight Forwarding Associations extends its support to struggling sea workers who continue to operate despite the pandemic to keep the world's trade afloat. As the health crisis goes on affecting lives and nations' economies, FIATA calls for collaboration between the freight forwarding and shipping industries. FIATA also supports the crew changes protocols from the International Maritime Organization while urging its implementation.

“Ship crew members are facing harsh conditions exacerbated by the coronavirus outbreak, yet they are doing an extraordinary job at keeping the global supply chain open,” said Dr Stephane Graber, FIATA Director General. “This is increasingly becoming a humanitarian concern for crews having spent the longest at sea, and FIATA supports the recognition of such as key workers who are eligible to transit and be repatriated and should receive appropriate medical attention when needed.”

Travel restrictions related to COVID-19 have forced seafarers to extend their time onboard ships after already long periods away from home to ensure that supplies of essential goods are maintained – creating risks to the safety and mental wellbeing of seafarers. According to the International Chamber of Shipping, 150,000 seafarers were in urgent need of crew change by 15 May.

“We have had seafarers on ships for too long without relief because of COVID-19 travel and border restrictions, and we must change crews for the wellbeing and safety of these men and women that move the world's commerce,” said John Butler, World Shipping Council President and CEO.

FIATA approached the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN) to find ways to support seafarers and contribute to the network's work. ISWAN is a membership organisation promoting the welfare of seafarers around the world through direct welfare services and relief funds for seafarers and their families. Their free 24-hour helpline for seafarers, [SeafarerHelp](#), which offers multilingual counselling is currently receiving three times the number of calls from seafarers and their families who worry about repatriation, financial hardship, and getting a job in the future.

“Due to the spreading of the coronavirus outbreak, we have seen a rapid increase in the number of calls coming into our helpline for seafarers, SeafarerHelp,” said Roger Harris, ISWAN Executive Director. “The number of calls more than tripled. To be able to deal with the high volume of calls, we have added extra shifts and extra staff on top of our normal shift pattern. Our teams around the world are working extremely hard 24 hours a day to assist seafarers and their families worldwide who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

As Basil Pietersen, FIATA President, underlined “The world needs to thank all seafarers and their families for keeping the world's commerce and the supply of essential goods afloat. Without them, ships don't sail and the global trade stops. They deserve our deepest gratitude”.

For more information on FIATA's response to the pandemic, please visit the [COVID-19 information platform on its website](#).

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About FIATA

FIATA International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations is the largest nongovernmental organization in the field of transportation. It is the global voice of freight logistics, representing an industry that covers approximately 40,000 freight forwarding and logistics firms, and employs around 10 million people in some 160 countries. www.fiata.com