

MARITIME ACTIVITIES CONSULTANTS S.A.
"CONNECTING YOUR BUSINESS TO THE MARITIME RESOURCES YOU NEED"



TECHNICAL SERVICE CIRCULAR No. 04/2021, Date: 23/02/2021



Subject: "IMO H.T.W. 7TH Session: COVID-19, "White List" and training in focus at Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping Sub-Committee - IMO launches a year of action for seafarers"

1. The international maritime community attributes particular emphasis to the fact that IMO has chosen to make **2021 a year of action for seafarers**, who are facing unprecedented hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic, despite their vital role as key workers for global supply chains. **The World Maritime Theme for 2021**, "Seafarers: at the core of shipping's future" seeks to increase the visibility of seafarers by drawing attention to the invaluable role they play now and will continue to play in the future. Various international registries have early on supported IMO initiatives dedicated to the well fare of seafarers during the pandemic, as per the Organization's applicable decisions.

2. Launching the World Maritime theme on 16 February, **IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim emphasized** that more Governments must step up to end the crew change crisis. According to IMO official sources the COVID-19 pandemic has placed extraordinary demands on seafarers, with hundreds of thousands of men and women stranded on ships for months beyond their original contracts, unable to be repatriated due to national travel restrictions. Some sources underline that a similar number of seafarers are unable to join ships and earn a living. This crew change crisis, which has been ongoing for nearly a year, is a humanitarian emergency that threatens the safety of shipping.

3. **The 7th session of the IMO's Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW, 15 to 19 February)** addressed on a priority basis the human side of shipping, including challenges related to the issuance and maintenance of seafarer certificates during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, and of the facilitation of seafarers' electronic certificates and documents.

4. **Role of the human element – the Covid-19 pandemic:** As per standing IMO priority, the human element is a key factor both for safety and environmental protection, and HTW 7 has recognized the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the human element. In particular, and according to the Sub-Committee proceedings, the pandemic has led to

challenges related to the issuance and maintenance of seafarer certificates. The Sub-Committee has attributed particular emphasis to the following challenges:

The STCW Code requires seafarers to meet the requirements of medical fitness to obtain a certificate of competency (CoC). Obtaining a medical certificate during the COVID-19 pandemic has been more cumbersome and time-consuming and has required pragmatic solutions by flag states. As per HTW 7 deliberations, the Sub-committee invited flag states to submit proposals that reconsider the process for the issuance of certificates.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created serious problems in renewal of various documents, such as CoP, health certificates etc., and the seafarers are having difficulties in maintaining their certificates because necessary courses are not available. HTW 7 agreed to establish a correspondence group to identify in detail certification and training issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

5. Implementation of the STCW Convention (“White List”): The STCW Convention requires flag states to demonstrate that they have given full effect to the provisions of the STCW Convention and to send subsequent report to IMO for review. HTW 7 agreed to establish a correspondence group on the implementation of the STCW Convention to enhance the communication of information to the IMO as a basis for publishing the “White List”.

6. Electronic certificates and documents for seafarers: HTW 7 considered amendments to the STCW Convention to accommodate the use of electronic certificates and documents for seafarers, in addition to the development of an accommodating guideline on the use of electronic certificates.

7. As per existing marketing policy **Maritime Activities Consultants S.A.** will continue to closely monitor both IMO policy initiatives related to the human element and HTW Sub-Committee deliberations, in particular those related to the pandemic leading to challenges related to the issuance and maintenance of seafarer certificates and providing follow-up consultation to both international registries and our commercial customers on the basis of operative efficiency and solid certification requirements.

“SIMPLIFYING YOUR MARITIME NEEDS”



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