DATE

RECIPIENT

**BY EMAIL**

SALUTATION

We are writing to you on behalf of the maritime community to highlight the specific and damaging circumstances affecting seafarers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

At a time when many aspects of normal life have been severely constrained by the pandemic, hundreds of thousands of seafarers have kept the trade routes open, transporting the goods, medical supplies, and raw materials that the world needs to survive.

These 'invisible' workers have demonstrated great resilience, but this has come at considerable personal cost. The unprecedented isolation controls, border closures and lack of flights have made it impossible for many seafarers to return home at the end of their contracts. Some have now been on board ship for a year or longer – working day in and day out without relief and, for many, without even the opportunity to go ashore.

The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) states that the longest period of continuous employment for a seafarer on board any ship is 11 months.

For every seafarer unable to go home, there is a seafarer ashore, waiting to go to work. Due to the nature of seafarer contracts, this means that many of them have been unable to earn a living for some time.

This is a matter of great concern at both an individual and a collective level.

At the individual level, incarceration with no end in sight results in high levels of stress and anxiety. Several cases of suicide have been reported. At the collective level, the combined effects of mental fragility and fatigue have a direct impact on ship safety. Unsafe ships cause injury, loss of life, loss of the ship and cargo, and damage to the environment.

These circumstances are preventable, and we are looking to you and your staff directly for help to address them. The steps we need to take are simple and pragmatic:

* Recognise seafarers as key workers
* Arrange for visiting ships to have vaccinations delivered for administering on board. Officers are trained to give injections and most medicines can be kept at the required temperature in the ship’s refrigerators.
* Make special arrangements for seafarers to be repatriated following their contracts aboard,
* Make special arrangements for their reliefs to be allowed to join their ships,
* Ensure your inspectors are checking for MLC compliance when they insect ships.

For months now, international organisations in the maritime industry have appealed to all parties to work together to achieve these goals, however the seafarer crisis continues.

As senior representatives of The Nautical Institute, we are looking to you and your staff for leadership to address this humanitarian crisis.

The existing circumstances diminish us all and we hope you can help to make a difference.

Yours Sincerely,

**About The Nautical Institute**

The NI (www.nautinst.org) is an international organisation for maritime professionals, with membership that encompass a broad range of experience across the maritime domain both afloat and ashore. The expertise of the NI is recognised at the International Maritime Organization, where the NI has status as a non-governmental organization (NGO).

At this difficult time, we have a chance to reflect core values of humanity, professionalism and compassion. The NI branch network has access to expertise in all areas of the maritime domain. If you have a question or a concern over a matter that requires professional maritime expertise, please contact me and I will work to ensure you have access to the appropriate experts in the industry.

The Branches of the Nautical Institute are requesting that those making decisions and issuing Directives that impact on seafarers focus their decisions based on an understanding and empathy of circumstance dealing with the chaos that is COVID-19.