



DENMARK
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Security Council
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**Permanent Mission of Japan
to the United Nations**



**PERMANENT MISSION OF PANAMA
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**PERMANENT MISSION OF ROMANIA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

Concept Note

UN Security Council Arria Formula Meeting

**Organized by Greece, India and the Philippines
Co-sponsored by Denmark, Japan, Panama and Romania**

“Maritime Safety and Security: Protection of Seafarers”

**Friday 21 November 2025, 10.00 – 13.00 EST
UN Headquarters, Conference Room 4**

Seafarers are essential to international maritime transport and the continuous operation of global trade, with around ninety percent of trade being conducted via maritime routes. They play a key role in supporting shipping, which is a highly globalized industry, and in maintaining global supply chains.

Historically, seafaring has been regarded as one of the most demanding professions. While working conditions for those at sea have improved over the past two centuries, there are still several challenges associated with the profession. Maritime labour remains a specialized sector where seafarers may encounter physical, psychological, and social difficulties.

In recent years, seafarers have encountered various risks, including those arising from the pandemic, conflict, and terrorist activities. The Security Council has expressed its concern over the threat that unlawful acts against the safety of navigation pose to seafarers and other persons, and over the threat that piracy and armed robbery at sea pose to the safety of seafarers, including through their being taken as hostages, as well as over the adverse humanitarian impact on the seafarers and their families. Attacks on merchant and commercial vessels have jeopardized freedom of navigation, maritime security and

international trade. These developments underscore the intrinsic link between the protection of seafarers and the maintenance of international peace and security.

Furthermore, seafarer abandonment remains a persistent and serious concern, with cases of crews left without pay, food, or medical support. According to the ITF, at least 2.280 seafarers have been left stranded so far in 2025. The 2006 Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), known informally as the “seafarers' bill of rights”, was amended in 2014 and in 2022 to include provisions for protecting abandoned seafarers, by establishing a financial security system for assisting seafarers in such situations and providing for repatriation. However, the issue continues to grow, taking also into account the use of substandard ships and of unsafe and illicit shipping practices, including fraudulent activities in the maritime sector.

Hence, more determined action is needed by all concerned; flag States, port States, States of which seafarers are nationals or are resident or are otherwise domiciled in their territory, and the States in which relevant recruitment and placement services operate, to resolve cases of seafarer abandonment expeditiously and to prevent future cases. To this end, the competent international organizations, International Maritime Organization (IMO) and International Labour Organization (ILO), have intensified their work through coordinated and comprehensive actions. In particular, the Joint ILO-IMO Tripartite Working Group, established to identify and address seafarers' issues and the human element (JTWG), delivered practical guidance to port and flag State authorities and other stakeholders to improve the circumstances of abandoned seafarers (2022). These Guidelines facilitate the development and implementation of practical steps to expeditiously and effectively resolve cases of abandonment of seafarers. As the issue continues to persist, the work of the IMO and ILO remains vital and is ongoing.

In addition, the relevant bodies of both organizations have also focused recently on other issues pertaining to the employment, working conditions, well-being and welfare of seafarers, specifically pressing issues affecting seafarers' rights and welfare – such as the fair treatment of seafarers detained in connection with alleged crimes, as well as the issue of shipboard violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault.

A major development in ensuring the protection of seafarers' rights is the recent adoption of the amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) in June 2025, entering into force in 2027, which address a broad range of issues, primarily focusing on improving their working and living conditions.

It is clear that promoting adherence to and the effective implementation of the relevant international instruments, strengthening enforcement by flag and port States and enhancing cooperation between all stakeholders are essential factors for protecting seafarers' rights, improving their working conditions and ensuring the sustainable growth of the maritime industry.

Moreover, taking into account the limited numbers of women in the shipping industry, it is important to raise awareness and to create appropriate conditions that foster the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of women's empowerment. Women currently represent only a small percentage of the global seafaring workforce, and many face unequal opportunities, unsafe working conditions and harassment. Addressing these challenges is a means of strengthening resilience, innovation and operational security across the maritime sector, contributing directly to the broader Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

In conclusion, a secure maritime domain is fundamental for achieving sustainable development and for upholding a rules-based international order at sea, with UNCLOS at its core. There is an obvious need to enhance the protection and security of the two million seafarers who sustain international maritime transport and global trade. Their recognition, reflected in the most recent MLC amendments, as 'key workers' calls for continued measures by States to facilitate their mobility and ensure their safety. As an old maritime saying reminds us "without them half of the world would freeze, and half of the world would starve". Their well-being, training and safety are indispensable to maritime peace, security and global prosperity.

Guiding questions:

During the discussion, the participants are encouraged to engage on the following guiding questions:

- How do threats to the safety and well-being of seafarers – such as piracy or attacks in conflict zones – affect international peace and security and the stability of global trade routes? Could enhanced protection of seafarers serve as a preventive measure against wider maritime instability?
- What are the challenges that the international community faces regarding maritime labour and what could be further done to strengthen the protection of seafarers' rights?
- What are the reasons for the limited percentage of women in the global seafaring workforce and how can women's empowerment in the maritime environment be enhanced?
- How has the MLC contributed to the improvement of seafarers' working and living conditions?
- How can international community foster coordination in implementing relevant international instruments for strengthening the protection and safety of seafarers?

Opening remarks:

- H.E. Ambassador Aglaia Balta, Permanent Representative of Greece to the UN

Welcoming remarks:

- H.E. Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO)

Briefers:

- Captain HCG Antonios Doumanis, Seafarers Labour Director, Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy of Greece
- Mr. Emmanuel Donato Guzman, Office of Maritime and Ocean Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs Republic of the Philippines
- Dr. Bimal N Patel, Member of the International Law Commission, Professor of International Law at Rashtriya Raksha University, India
- Cpt. Eleni Papadopoulou, General Secretary-Masters and Mates Union of Greek Merchant Marine

Format:

All Member States of the UN, Permanent Observers, UN entities, non-governmental organizations accredited to the UN, civil society and academia are invited to attend.

Following the panelists' interventions, members of the Security Council will be invited to take the floor. Other delegations wishing to make an intervention are encouraged to inform the organizers in advance as time will be limited. All delegations are encouraged to speak no more than 3 minutes.

Interpretation will be provided. The meeting will be webcast at the UN Web TV.