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Circular Letter No.4379
15 February 2021

To: IMO Members and other Governments
United Nations and specialized agencies
Intergovernmental organizations
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status

Subject: **World Maritime Day and Day of the Seafarer, 2021**

1 The Secretary-General has the honour to advise that:

- .1 **World Maritime Day** will be celebrated on Thursday, 30 September 2021;
- .2 the **2021 World Maritime Day Parallel Event** is expected to be celebrated in South Africa. However, depending on the progress of the situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, arrangements will be announced in due course; and
- .3 the annual **Day of the Seafarer** will be celebrated on 25 June 2021.

2 This year's World Maritime theme is "**Seafarers: at the core of shipping's future**" and the message of the Secretary-General on the chosen theme has been recorded and is now available on the [IMO website](#).



You can watch the Secretary-General's video message [here](#):

3 The text of the Secretary-General's message is annexed to this circular letter and a background document on the year's theme will be circulated in good time to assist Member Governments and international organizations in planning their own activities and communications for use in observing **World Maritime Day**.

4 The message will be available for downloading in all of the Organization's official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and the video containing the Secretary-General's message is available in English only. In addition, the 2021 logo is already available to download from the IMO website in all six languages (click [here](#) for direct access).

5 In order to raise awareness of seafarers' vital role and to increase their visibility, IMO is launching an online campaign which will focus on a seafarer's profile every quarter, sharing their points of view on general issues and specific topics. IMO stakeholders and the general public will be invited to engage on social media by using the hashtag #WorldMaritimeTheme and comment on these posts with their thoughts towards the questions posed to each seafarer. The first profile is already available on the IMO website (click [here](#) for direct access) and the interview can be watched [here](#).

6 Furthermore, Member Governments and observer international organizations are encouraged to organize, wherever possible, suitable events throughout the year to celebrate **World Maritime Day** and inform the Secretariat as early as possible of any planned activities. Social media participation is also encouraged via Twitter, by using the hashtag #WorldMaritimeDay. Photographs of the events can also be sent to: media@imo.org

7 The 2021 Day of the Seafarer campaign will continue to encourage governments to support seafarers amid the pandemic but will expand its message towards the post-pandemic recovery, calling for a **fair future for seafarers**.

8 This angle will provide IMO and the wider maritime community the opportunity to talk about issues that are now and will still be relevant to seafarers even post-pandemic, such as fair treatment of seafarers, fair working conditions (including implementation of the ILO's Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, fair access to training, safety and well-being of seafarers, etc.).

9 The campaign will be driven across all social media platforms and the hashtags #FairFuture4Seafarers and #DayoftheSeafarer will be used and promoted. Further details of the campaign on how to participate, together with a variety of materials and "content opportunities" to assist participation, will be posted in due course on the IMO website at www.imo.org.

ANNEX

**WORLD MARITIME THEME FOR 2021
SEAFARERS: AT THE CORE OF SHIPPING'S FUTURE**

**A message from Kitack Lim
Secretary-General, International Maritime Organization**

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we begin a new year, the COVID-19 pandemic still holds sway, with many countries subject to lockdowns and travel restrictions.

The development of various vaccines offers the first gleams of hope, although for many seafarers, the situation is still desperate. Hundreds of thousands cannot leave ships; whilst many others cannot join. Abandonment of seafarers reached record levels in 2020. This humanitarian crisis threatens global trade and safe navigation.

We all must do better to support our brave professionals who continue to deliver global trade. The dedication and professionalism of more than one and a half million seafarers worldwide deserve our great admiration and gratitude – but most importantly, immediate action.

A first step would be for all countries to designate seafarers as key workers, as outlined in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution adopted in December. To date, just over 50 IMO Member States have done so.

We need more Governments to step up. Key worker designation is crucial to ensure prioritization for vaccination. Once again, I strongly urge Governments to designate seafarers as key workers.

With the development of vaccines, there is a need for further cooperation and concerted efforts to facilitate the vaccination of seafarers. IMO stands ready to work with all stakeholders on these emerging issues.

But seafarers have not only been impacted by the pandemic, their lives have also been put at risk in other ways – one major issue being piracy incidents, costing lives and traumatizing many more who have been held hostage or are still in the hands of their attackers.

We need to do more and IMO has decided to make 2021 a year of action for our seafarers.

This year's World Maritime Theme – "Seafarers: at the core of shipping's future" – is dedicated to the seafarers who have shown tremendous fortitude and determination in continuing to deliver global trade throughout this global crisis.

At IMO, seafarers have always been at the centre of all our work – be it in the area of safety, maritime security, or environmental protection.

However, this year, we want to shine a light on the significance of the human element to the safety of life on board ships and the importance of ensuring an appropriately trained and qualified future workforce, ready to meet the challenges and opportunities of digitalization and automation. We will also place a special focus on seafarers' well-being, an area highlighted by the plight of seafarers during the COVID pandemic.

