



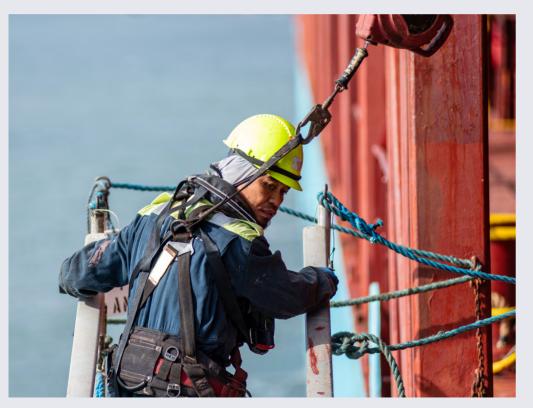


Delivering on seafarers' rights

2024 Progress Report



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Delivering on seafarers' rights – 2024 Progress Report by IHRB and SSI

About SSI and IHRB



The Sustainable Shipping Initiative

The Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI) is a multi-stakeholder collective catalysing change during this crucial decade of action for an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable shipping sector. Since 2010, SSI has brought together leaders across the maritime ecosystem to act on issues such as circular economy in shipping, seafarers' rights, and defining sustainability criteria for marine fuels. SSI's members include shipowners, operators and managers; cargo owners; classification societies; environmental and social non-profits; and service providers.

www.sustainableshipping.org



The Institute for Human Rights and Business

The Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) is an international think-and-do tank with the mission to shape policy, advance practice, and strengthen accountability in order to make respect for human rights part of everyday business. IHRB works in various areas including Commodities, the Built Environment, Migrant Workers, Just Transition, and Oceans. IHRB's Ocean and Human Rights Platform works specifically on shipping, ports and shipyards, coastal wind energy, aquaculture and fishing. The Ocean Platform focuses on the impacts of business activities on livelihoods and working conditions.

www.ihrb.org

CODE OF CONDUCT:

In 2021, IHRB and SSI, in collaboration with the Rafto



Foundation for Human Rights, developed and published an industry Code of Conduct for delivering on seafarers' rights with the aim of improving the human rights and welfare of the world's seafarers. The Code of Conduct can be used by charterers to assess their shipowners and operators. It is supplemented by a self-assessment questionnaire, which provides guidance for shipping companies on concrete ways to adopt the commitments outlined in the Code of Conduct and track progress against them.

The purpose of this report is to provide an annual update of progress against the Code of Conduct towards improving seafarers' rights. It brings together a range of perspectives from industry and from civil society – in their own words. Previous reports can be found here.

Summary and reflections: annual SEAFAIRER roundtable

AUTHORS: Andrew Stephens, SSI; Frances House, IHRB; Jostein Hole Kobbeltvedt, Rafto

In October 2024, IHRB and SSI, together with Rafto, the Norwegian Embassy in Singapore (MFA) and Mission to Seafarers, hosted the fourth annual shipping roundtable in Singapore, the third under the SEAFAIRER banner.

This discussion is designed to bring together industry stakeholders to discuss progress of the Delivering on seafarers' rights Code of Conduct and its accompanying self-assessment. It is also an opportunity to gauge the state of the shipping industry in terms of human rights and welfare, look for where improvements can be made, and encourage further collaboration to make those improvements happen.

This year, eighty stakeholders from the shipping industry participated in the roundtable, including ship owners, operators and financers, government and embassy representatives, major charterers (commodity companies and traders), and seafarer organisations. Also present were the Norwegian and Filipino Ambassadors to Singapore. Like last year, two seafarers from a seafarer workshop held in the lead-up to SEAFAIRER (see 'Life at sea' below) travelled to Singapore to give first-hand reflections.

The first of the three panels focussed on the recently published briefing: Seafarers and Illegal Recruitment Fees: 2024 Insights (see 'Tackling Recruitment Fees in the Maritime Industry: A path to secure future talent' below). It was agreed that concrete action must be taken by industry leaders, and IHRB and TURTLE are forming an informal action group to tackle the issue of illegal recruitment fees in the maritime industry. (For more information please contact francesca.fairbairn@ihrb.org.) IHRB, Mission to Seafarers and local representatives also intend to support awareness raising, and a grassroots advisory service for South India and the Philippines.

The second panel was on verification of shipowner and operator due diligence of seafarer welfare. ESG Platform RightShip reported a significant increase in both companies and vessels reporting under the crew welfare self-assessment mechanism (see 'A look at the RightShip



Andrew Stephens



Frances House
IHRB



Jostein Hole Kobbeltvedt Rafto

Crew Welfare Self-Assessment Data' below). RightShip, assurance expert DNV and ship inspector Idwal agreed to continue discussing various options for verification of self-assessment (see 'Assurance' below).

The third panel, curated by Edelman Global Advisory, covered the welfare of shipyard workers in Southeast Asia. Like last year and in 2019, Transient Workers Count Too again discussed challenges faced by these migrant workers, usually from Bangladesh. Several companies, including Equinor, Grieg Green, and Impactt, expressed the desire to collaborate and avoid duplication in shipyard assessment – such as Grieg Green's Yardscore initiative.

A full report from this year's roundtable can be found here.

Industry insights

The Code of Conduct establishes a baseline understanding of a company's operations and their delivery of seafarers' rights. Seafarers continue to face uncertainties, and it remains pertinent to provide the tools and guidance needed for more stakeholders to acknowledge and begin assessing their obligations to seafarers.

The next sections of this report include short reflections from seafarers' rights organisations, shipowners, and cargo owners on how the situation has changed in the past twelve months. These insights highlight how the Code of Conduct has assisted companies in their due diligence work, and provide important reminders of the ongoing need to continue raising awareness and working toward solutions to the issues faced by seafarers worldwide. (For further detail please see contributor websites.)



LIFE AT SEA

Seafarer workshop summary

AUTHOR: Rakesh Ranjan, South Asia Regional Coordinator, Migrant Workers Programme, IHRB



In September 2024 IHRB and Mission to Seafarers organised a workshop for seafarers in Tuticorin, India. The aim was to unpack key human rights challenges faced by Indian seafarers. The meeting brought together 19 crew members, with four themes: recruitment costs, job scams, shore leave, and other pressing concerns.

Reflecting the 2024 Recruitment fee briefing's findings, it is evident that seafarers in India continue to face high recruitment costs, including fees for travel, visas, and services that employers often promise to reimburse but fail to do adequately.

"It's a scam from top to bottom. Sub-agents take our money without records. Agencies, colleges, and companies are all linked, making it impossible to get a job without paying." "There's no way to know who is an agency and who is legitimate. The lines are blurred, leaving us freshers vulnerable to fraud."

Seafarers agreed it is not unusual to pay four figures for a job at sea. Worse, fraudulent recruitment, where illegal recruitment fees are charged for jobs that do not exist, remain rampant in the industry.

"I paid 400,000 [INR] to one of our local agents for a job. He sent me, but my job was not certified, so I couldn't join the vessel. We know the agent who cheated me—many of us do—but we can't fight them."

Shore leave, crucial for seafarers' well-being, is often complicated by the status of the docking country, leaving seafarers confined to their vessels and significantly affecting their mental health. This is exacerbated by long working hours.

"The ship becomes like a jail, and we are the prisoners. With no shore leave and long working hours, mental health is a big issue. Nobody talks about it, and we're just expected to endure."

Another major concern is the difference in salary structures, where officers receive raises of 100-200%, while crew members receive minimal or no increments, exacerbating financial insecurity.

The need for fair wages, transparent recruitment, proper insurance, and social security measures was clear. The workshop generated a number of recommendations including the need for improved educational programmes to create awareness about fair recruitment practices, contract terms, and rights among aspiring seafarers and their families.

A full report from the workshop can be found here.

A seafarers charity's reflections on ongoing challenges

AUTHOR: Ben Bailey, Director of Programme, The Mission to Seafarers





The world's 1.89 million seafarers have long been recognised as the backbone of global trade, yet the wellbeing of these men and women can sometimes be overlooked. Whilst we have seen many advancements over the years, some critical issues remain:

Shore leave is essential for seafarers' mental and physical health. Currently, restrictive port regulations and security protocols often limit access to shore leave. This deprives seafarers of much-needed rest and recreation away from their vessel. To improve this, there needs to be better collaboration between shipping companies, port authorities, and governments to ensure that seafarers can enjoy shore leave without unnecessary bureaucratic barriers.

The mental health and resilience of our mariners is a growing concern. The prolonged periods of isolation can lead to anxiety, depression, and even suicide.

Shipping companies need to invest more in mental health support by offering counselling services, mental health awareness training, and fostering a culture that encourages seafarers to speak openly about their challenges.

Connectivity is one area which has improved significantly since the pandemic, but access to reliable internet is still a luxury on many vessels. Improving this would allow seafarers to stay in touch with their families, reduce loneliness, and maintain stronger support networks.

Finally, the issue of **abandonment** must be tackled headon. Despite international regulations, too many seafarers find themselves stranded without pay or resources when shipping companies fail financially. There must be stricter enforcement of maritime labour laws, alongside the establishment of stronger safety nets to ensure that abandoned crews receive immediate assistance and are repatriated swiftly. The Mission to Seafarers has long recognised the complex needs of seafarers and has been supporting them and their families since 1856. Spanning an international network of 200 ports across 50 countries, more than 500,000 seafarers interact with our services each year, seeking assistance to make life at sea better. Addressing these key areas is vital for building a more humane and sustainable shipping industry that truly supports its workforce.

Tackling Recruitment Fees in the Maritime Industry: A path to secure future talent

LIFE AT SEA

AUTHOR: Isabelle Rickmers, CEO, TURTLE

TURTLE

IHRB and TURTLE have now published two briefings highlighting the widespread practice of the illegal charging of recruitment fees to seafarers. While last year's survey addressed a broader range of corruption issues at sea, this year we narrowed the focus to recruitment fees to better understand their scope and impact.

The 2024 survey, conducted between May and July, had 2,627 seafarer respondents, and in it, we took a closer look at the financial and psychological burden of these fees.

Key findings of Seafarers and Illegal Recruitment Fees: 2024 Insights include:

- 31% of seafarers reported being asked to pay a recruitment fee, with 28% of these cases occurring in 2024, proving the practice is endemic and current.
- More than half of the seafarers paid amounts ranging from US\$100 to \$5,000, with some facing demands exceeding \$10,000, pushing many into debt and

- increasing the risk of modern slavery and unsafe working conditions as this 'pay to-play' model prioritises fee-paying recruits instead of the most qualified.
- Besides direct payment of money (73%), seafarers were also asked to pay administrative fees (34%), visa fees (20%) travel expenses (16%), medical expenses (16%), unpaid work (7%), gifts (6%), sexual favours (2%), and more.
- 62% said they were asked for a fee by a crewing or manning agent, 41% had been asked by another company or person linked to a crewing/ manning agent or a shipping company; 24% mentioned an online recruitment platform (most likely Facebook) and 12% said by the shipping company itself.
- The amounts charged, and often paid, are huge, leading to long-term debt burden, conditions of bonded labour, and adverse mental health impacts. 73% of those asked to pay reported emotional distress, including financial stress (43%), depression (20%), anxiety (18%), and more.

Only 20% of seafarers reported the issue to authorities, with many unaware that recruitment fees are illegal.

IHRB and TURTLE are working together to establish an informal action group with industry leaders to share ideas and strategies for combatting seafarer recruitment fees.

Together, we aim to address this persistent challenge and protect seafarers from exploitation. Fair recruitment is crucial for the integrity of the maritime industry and its workers. It not only attracts the next generation of seafarers but also eliminates entry barriers and allows for progress.

INDUSTRY ACTION

Progress on managing supply chain risks and respecting seafarers' rights

AUTHOR: George Mathews, Principal Safety, South32



South32 is a globally diversified mining and metal company as well as a large charterer, completing over 400 voyages per year and carrying a diverse set of commodities. Maritime transport plays an important role both to support operations (inbound) and deliver commodities (outbound) to our customers.

The global shipping industry has been identified as being particularly susceptible to systemic human rights risks in part because seafarers are often from nations with human rights, labour rights and corruption challenges. The problem is exacerbated by the fragmentation of regulatory oversight among flag states and practical limitations for the effective enforcement of basic conditions onboard vessels.

While we do not own vessels or directly employ seafarers, we collaborate with vessel owners and operators to conduct due diligence, address relevant labour issues, and support seafarer welfare.

In view of this, we continue to develop and embed our enhanced due diligence (EDD) programme, which applies to any vessel that is deemed to have a certain risk level. The EDD programme involves additional vetting with a special focus on the vessel managers to ensure that highest safety standards are met and to address crew welfare. The programme includes physical inspections, desktop analysis, quality audits and in some cases in-depth human rights due diligence assessments. In the last financial year, we audited 295 vessels through our enhanced due diligence programme.

Through our long-standing membership in SSI, we were instrumental in the development of the Code of Conduct that we see as an important pillar in uplifting seafarer welfare. It is a contractual obligation to adhere to the Code of Conduct when entering long-term contracts with South32. In addition, we work closely with Mission to Seafarers to provide seafarers on all our vessels with the opportunity to participate in the Seafarers Happiness Index, a survey to assess and monitor wellbeing. This will provide us with useful data to further improve the lives of seafarers in the years to come.

A ship manager's role in securing growing awareness by seafarers of their rights

INDUSTRY ACTION

AUTHOR: Esther Gan, VP Marketing, Wilhelmsen Ship Management



Seafarers are the backbone of the maritime industry, tirelessly keeping global trade flowing and ensuring the safe transportation of essential goods. They are also vital in maintaining the optimal performance of our managed vessels, enabling our fleet to operate efficiently and on schedule.

As ship managers, we act on behalf of our customers – the ship owners – playing a crucial role in shaping a positive working environment onboard. We are committed to protecting and respecting seafarers' rights, aligning our efforts with ship owners. This commitment compels us to create a safe and supportive atmosphere that prioritises the well-being of our crew.

Delivering on seafarers' rights Code of Conduct establishes clear expectations for companies to uphold seafarers' rights and operational standards. Wilhelmsen Ship Management has been an early contributor in the development of the Code of Conduct, actively involving our ship owners during its development. Their feedback has been instrumental in ensuring the collective voices of all stakeholders are considered when defining the standards.

By promoting awareness of seafarer rights among our customers, we enhance our collective responsibility towards their welfare. This journey of collaboration is rewarding, and we are committed to continuing our efforts to improve seafarer welfare beyond the requirements of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC).

This continuous dialogue encourages us to reinforce the commitment of both ship managers and owners to prioritize the safety, well-being, and rights of seafarers.

ASSURANCE

Seafarers: Key workers who need to be supported in preparing for tomorrow's challenges

AUTHORS: Carl Erik Høy-Petersen, Business Development Leader & Maritime ESG Lead, DNV Rachel Lock, Head of UK Sustainability & ESG, Supply Chain & Product Assurance, DNV



Big changes are underway in shipping, we need a greater focus on establishing strong safety cultures to navigate these changes and this starts with seafarers. As an industry, we also need to expand our perspective on the topic, as companies are increasingly focusing on the sustainability and social aspects, expanding safety culture to encompass sustainability culture, including crew welfare and wellbeing.

With stakeholder interest and pressure building, we see a growing need for closer alignment on crew welfare benchmarks and standards, and importantly how these are verified. Impartial, independent assessments, and trustworthy data is vital for companies to effectively and meaningfully demonstrate their performance in this area.

DNV is working with shipping companies and stakeholders

such as Idwal, IHRB and Rightship to understand what this could look like and how it could be adopted by stakeholders across the maritime industry.

This need for a more aligned approach is also seen in the twin challenges of decarbonisation and digitalisation where multiple industries and stakeholders are needed to drive the transition. A recent study by DNV in cooperation with the Singapore Maritime Foundation (SMF), suggests that decarbonisation and digitalisation can boost career advancement and development opportunities for seafarers.

However, 81% of seafarers felt they required more training to work with the advanced technologies onboard future ships. And for new fuels, more than 75% said they would need support to work aboard vessels with new fuel types such

Seafarers are key workers, and the health and wellbeing of the crew is vital to upholding safety standards. We believe that increasing the industry's focus on the risks associated with seafarer wellbeing helps to support safer operations at sea.

Knut Ørbeck-Nilssen, CEO of DNV Maritime

as liquefied natural gas (LNG), ammonia, hydrogen and methanol. This shows that proper training and industry collaboration are essential not only for seafarer welfare, but to attract and retain these vital workers.

DNV has also been a long-time gold sponsor of The Mission to Seafarers, particularly the Happy-at-Sea app. The world's first digital seafarers' centre, the app is designed to promote mental health, personal wellbeing and safety.

At DNV we continuously work with companies across the maritime industry and beyond to improve their safety performance, help them understand the complexity of safety culture and how different leadership styles can influence this, and provide insights into models and methods that can positively impact safety culture.

Boots on deck, eyes on the horizon: working towards a unified standard for crew wellbeing

ASSURANCE





Idwal is a data-driven ship inspection technology business, providing inspection insights to empower ship owners, financiers and charterers in their decision making. In 2024, we made significant strides in measuring crew wellbeing standards across vessels, globally. Our efforts have been driven by a combination of our "boots-on-deck" data collection and the establishment of objective measures that reflect the conditions seafarers face on a daily basis.

Key Insights from Inspections and Data Analysis

Through our regular ship inspections around the world, we've captured data across ten social impact pillars, evaluating factors such as accommodation quality, access to food, recreational facilities, and connectivity. The results have shown a spectrum of conditions, from well-maintained vessels to ships where seafarers endure poor living standards.

Our Social Impact Score (SIS), developed as part of this process, provides a reliable metric to quantify crew welfare conditions. On average, vessels scored 75.8 out of 100, leaving a 24% gap to address in improving the quality of life on board.

We have also identified strong correlations between the state of vessel maintenance and crew wellbeing – with poor maintenance being linked to poor working conditions, reinforcing the need for a holistic approach to ship management that includes seafarers' rights. Communications connectivity remains one of the worst-performing areas, with an average score of 5.4/10, reflecting limited access to wifi, which exacerbates isolation.

Call for Industry Collaboration

Recognising the fragmented standards in the industry, we advocate for a unified approach to measuring crew welfare. Working closely with other stakeholders, such as RightShip and DNV, we aim to foster collaboration across businesses to elevate welfare benchmarks. The goal is to establish a verified, industry-wide approach that is robust and transparent.

Looking ahead, our continued focus on crew wellbeing remains integral to our ESG goals, and we invite stakeholders to join the conversation to create a global standard that will create a framework to address these challenges.

A look at the RightShip crew welfare self-assessment data

AUTHOR: Taner Umac, Head of Operations – EMEA, RightShip

RIGHTSHIP

The Delivering on seafarers' rights Code of Conduct is supplemented by a practical self-assessment questionnaire, which is also available through the RightShip Crew Welfare Self-Assessment Tool (CWSA), and guides how to adopt the commitments outlined in the Code of Conduct, as well as provides a way to track progress year on year.



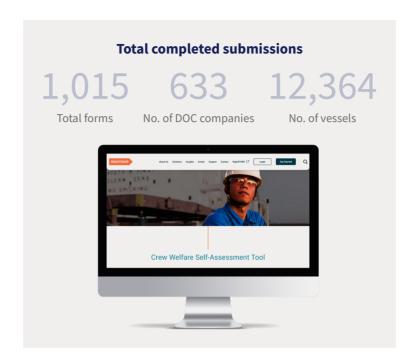
What does the data tell us?

As of October 2024, 633 Document of Compliance (DOC) companies, representing over 12,300 vessels, have completed self-assessments. This figure underscores these companies' commitment to going beyond compliance and prioritising seafarer wellbeing. It also reflects increased participation in transparency efforts.

While the number of submissions grew significantly in 2023, it plateaued in Q3 2023 and remained steady through Q1 2024. The introduction of CWSA 2.0 (see 'Release of Crew Welfare Self-Assessment Tool 2.0' below) sparked renewed interest, leading to new submissions and renewals in Q2 and O3 of 2024.

Based on the submissions received between January and October 2024, China and Greece top the list in the number of submissions.

Dry bulk vessel owners and managers lead the way in self-assessment participation.









Since last year's report, thirty-nine crew welfare verification assessments have been conducted at company offices. These visits are essential for engaging with senior company leaders and other department leads. It helps in understanding the company culture, commitment and practices to fostering a culture of strengthened seafarer welfare against their self-assessment.

Some data from the self-assessments

18%

provide seafarers with private medical insurance coverage ashore for 12 months.

32%

reported that not all vessels in their fleet offer private showers and toilet facilities in crew cabins.

98%

of companies assess trading conditions and exceed minimum safe manning requirements by adding seafarers as needed.

32%

provide seafarers with free internet access. The remaining group offers internet access free of charge and a data cap, or at a reasonable cost.

56%

support seafarers' families through training and consultations on topics to enhance well-being.

Release of Crew Welfare Self-Assessment Tool 2.0

In early 2024, after 2.5 years of gathering industry feedback, we launched an updated version of the self-assessment tool, developed with insights from over 200 stakeholders. Through online surveys, interviews, and interactive workshops, we engaged a wide range of industry players, including vessel owners, managers, charterers, port operators, financial institutions, and retailers. The goal was to simplify and streamline the self-assessment process, reducing administrative burden and expanding accessibility for users, thereby promoting a more comprehensive approach to crew welfare.

Key enhancements in CWSA 2.0:

- Explainers: Each section now includes notes to clarify intent, aiding users across all expertise levels.
- Updated Content: Questions have been refined in line with the Code of Conduct, improving relevance and focus.
- Simplified Process: The self-assessment journey has been made more intuitive, decreasing the time required for completion.

- User-Friendly Interface: A redesigned interface provides a more engaging and accessible experience.
- Enhanced Functionalities: New features include progress indicators, auto-save, internal notes, validation tools, error messages, and a centralized form management board.

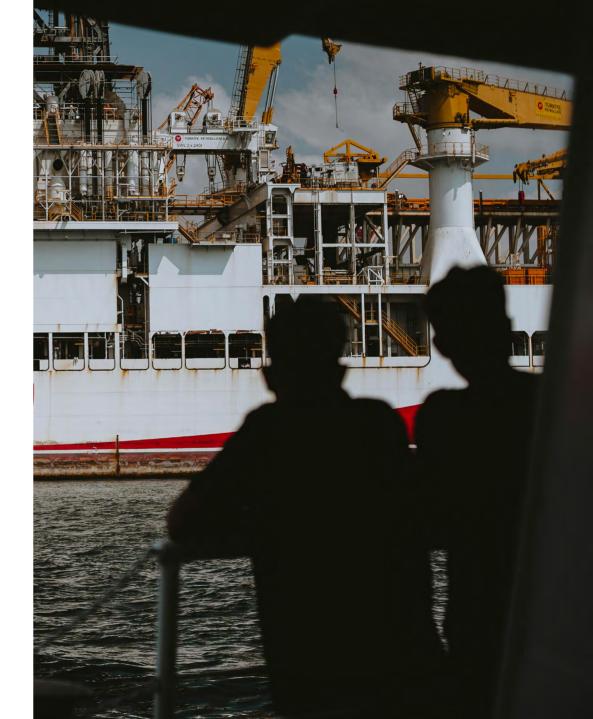
Released in May 2024, CWSA 2.0 represents a significant step toward a more efficient and impactful self-assessment process. Since its release, over 250 companies have completed the self-assessment, highlighting the industry's desire and commitment to improve performance on these critical issues. The full CWSA 2.0 questionnaire can be accessed here.

Call to action

AUTHOR: Francesca Fairbairn, Shipping and Commodities Programme Manager, IHRB



This year, the progress report's Call to Action for the industry and government comes from IHRB. Over recent years, IHRB, SSI and Rafto have been working hard to raise the prominence of seafarer welfare on corporate and government agendas. This work builds on longstanding efforts by organisations such as Mission to Seafarers, ITF, ISWAN, MACN, Nautilus International and countless others, as well as corporate actors, to keep seafarers' rights front and centre in responsible shipping. (Many of those organisations have contributed to past progress reports.)



In the last year, as you'll have read above, conversations have progressed around verification of self-assessment of the Delivering on seafarers' rights Code of Conduct, with DNV, Idwal and RightShip spearheading those efforts. While self-assessment will only ever be one part of a much bigger picture around strengthening seafarer welfare, ongoing efforts to ensure stronger verification will improve transparency and accountability. We encourage all organisations that would like to be a part of these conversations to please be in touch.

IHRB and TURTLE, the maritime recruitment agency, have now published two research briefings revealing the prevalence of illegal recruitment fees charged to seafarers. The time has come for more targeted action. An informal action group comprised of industry leaders and civil society organisations is dedicated to tackling this ongoing challenge. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact me.

We also hope to develop further engagement with seafarers who took part in our workshop in Tuticorin, two of whom subsequently participated in our SEAFAIRER roundtable in Singapore. This work will comprise grassroots awareness-raising of seafarers' rights in and around Tuticorin (now known as Thoothukudi). This is a sizeable port city in Tamil Nadu, South India, from which many Indian seafarers hail.

Mission to Seafarers has a strong presence there, supporting thousands of seafarers from the area, and will be our primary partner in this work.

We hope the report discussed above will lead to concrete steps to end charging of recruitment fees on ships through more robust due diligence and corporate policies, and help ensure that seafarer welfare efforts are of a high standard. As we all know, the 1.8 million men and women seafarers working around the world are the backbone of global trade. The maritime industry must redouble its efforts to ensure their rights are respected, and their well-being is ensured.

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Delivering on seafarers' rights Working Group at the SSI

Forum for the future, IHRB, Klaveness Combination Carriers, Rio Tinto, South32, The Mission to Seafarers, Wilhelmsen Ship Management

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