

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE SEAFARER

25 June 2021

The world depends on shipping, and shipping depends on seafarers. But the life and work of seafarers have been affected dramatically by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Throughout the crisis, seafarers have faced enormous challenges concerning repatriation, travel to join their ships, proper access to vaccinations and medical care, and shore leave. Yet seafarers on board ships have continued working, providing an essential service for people everywhere

The members of this multinational workforce of 1.6 million people must be recognized as key workers who deliver an essential service, and be given access to transit and travel. Seafarers must also have equitable access to vaccines, as nobody is safe until everyone is safe.

During 2020, the number of seafarers needing to be relieved from ships -- effectively stranded onboard -- reached an unacceptably high of 400,000. Thanks to the efforts of all concerned parties, the number is currently estimated to be about 200,000. But the toll on seafarers continues to be immense. We must do more to help the fatigued and stressed workforce that operates the ships that deliver vital goods -- including food, fuel and medical supplies. This is both a humanitarian issue and a potential threat to the safety of navigation.

On the International Day of the Seafarer, we must acknowledge that the future of world trade depends on the people who operate ships. All stakeholders must work together to ensure a fair future for seafarers.