

## PRESS RELEASE

### Shipping industry leaders launch project for delivering on seafarers' rights

**LONDON, 5 November 2020** – The Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI) and the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), along with SSI members today announce the launch of a new project focusing on seafarers' labour and human rights.

*Delivering on seafarers' rights* will be a joint project to develop a human rights code of conduct for charterers, and a roadmap for tackling systemic challenges which create human rights risks for seafarers – a widely-recognised gap in catalysing industry-wide policy and practice.

Co-led by SSI and IHRB, the project brings together SSI members: The China Navigation Company; Forum for the Future; Louis Dreyfus Company; Oldendorff Carriers; RightShip; South32; and Standard Chartered Bank.

The challenge of protecting and respecting seafarers rights was thrust into the spotlight with the emergence of 300,000+ seafarers stranded at sea due to crew-change restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Alongside this increased public awareness of the challenges seafarers worldwide face, there is a growing demand from consumers, investors, business partners, governments, and civil society for transparent and sustainable supply chains that address human rights along with environmental concerns.

Charterers are also increasingly under scrutiny with regard to the sustainability of their supply chains, not only in terms of their commodities but also the vessels that transport their cargo. However, there is currently a lack of guidance on how labour and human rights risks should be identified and mitigated. Plugging this gap is key to strengthening both chartering-related decision-making and due diligence processes.

This project will see charterers play an active role in raising the industry's bar through the development of an industry code of conduct for actors joined together across the shipping value chain. Based on international labour and human rights standards and principles, this work will bring charterers, shipowners, and operators together for collective action, increasing transparency and driving positive change.

The work will further explore ways in which seafarers' rights can be addressed by demanding transparency on labour and human rights risks, for example - through contractual terms and chartering provisions.

**Andrew Stephens, Executive Director at SSI** said: *"Respect of the labour and human rights of seafarers worldwide is a key milestone on the road to sustainable shipping. We strongly believe in the power of transparency to drive positive change, and through this work we seek to catalyse*

*collective action and leadership by charterers to advocate for more robust human rights protection within the industry.”*

**Frances House, Deputy Chief Executive at IHRB** said: *“COVID restrictions have stranded over 300,000 seafarers at sea worldwide, thrusting the human rights risks of shipping into the spotlight as never before. IHRB welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with SSI and its members in raising the bar across the industry whereby respect for international human rights standards becomes part of everyday business. An industry-wide code of conduct affirming the human rights responsibilities of shipowners and operators will help to level the playing field and enable cargo owners and investors to make more informed choices around whom they want to do business with.”*

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## Testimonials from members of SSI’s Working Group on the Human Side of Shipping: Delivering on seafarers’ rights

**James Woodrow, Managing Director at The China Navigation Company Pte Ltd** said: *“Maritime transport is essential to the world’s economy as over 90% of the world’s trade is carried by sea and it is, by far, the most cost-effective way to move en masse goods and raw materials around the world (1). Generally this happens quietly and unobtrusively, but this is only possible due to the essential work carried out by 1.65 million (2) seafarers of all nationalities.*

*Too often the nature of this ‘out of sight, out of mind’ work is taken advantage of by unscrupulous organisations to be also ‘below or ignoring national and international legislative requirements and against basic accepted standards of human rights’. The China Navigation Company is keen to work with the other committed members and partners of the Sustainable Shipping Initiative to ensure that seafarers’ labour and human rights are fully respected and observed. We will work in this initiative with proactive charterers to play an active role in raising the bar and through transparency assist the due diligence to deliver on seafarers’ rights, potentially by way of an industry code of conduct and through contractual terms and chartering provisions”.*

**Sally Uren, Chief Executive at Forum for the Future** said: *“COVID has revealed who really are our essential workers and how little value our society and our economy often attaches to their essentialness. This could not be more true in relation to seafarers without whose work, our access to various basic needs would be severely impacted. Yet, the lack of respect for their human rights is not a new story. Forum hopes that this initiative will deliver an understanding of practical ways in which we can all play a role in changing structures and mindsets such that we can re-design a rights-respecting business model for the shipping industry.”*

**Seb Landerretche, Head of Freight Platform at Louis Dreyfus Company** said: *“Preserving and protecting human rights throughout our supply chains is of great importance for LDC. As leading global charterers, we are committed to protecting the rights of workers at sea, all the more so in today’s context, with the added challenges and restrictions caused by the pandemic. In this area as in others, we believe that transparency and collaboration through multi-stakeholder*

*platforms like SSI is the key to lasting positive change. We look forward to working with others in this drive to address human rights challenges at sea.”*

**David Peel General Manager at RightShip** said: *“It’s unfortunate that it took a global pandemic for seafarer welfare to come into sharp focus. Some seafarers have been on a ship for 18 months. This is not sustainable, it leads to long-term fatigue, which impacts decision-making and focus. That is why we have seen numerous high-profile incidents including fires, groundings, and capsizing of ships, and notably, the recent demise of the Gulf Livestock off Japan, which sailed into a typhoon. If we expect our seafarers to make safe choices, we need to do the right thing and protect their health and wellbeing. RightShip is committed driving lasting change and I am pleased that we have been able to work with SSI to make significant strides forward.”*

**Robert Haggquist, Charterer at South32** said: *“Respect for human rights is fundamental to how we do business at South32 and reflects our values of care, trust, togetherness and excellence. Not only is it the right thing to do, but it is critical to the success and integrity of our business. We believe the industry needs to focus on seafarers’ human rights in the same way we look at land-based supply chains. Only by improving the respect for seafarers’ human rights can we achieve truly sustainable supply chains with positive social impacts. We are delighted to work with other likeminded companies through SSI to achieve a positive sustainable impact.”*

**Samantha Bramley, Director Environmental & Social Risk Management, Sustainable Finance, Global Banking at Standard Chartered Bank** said: *“At Standard Chartered we believe we have a fundamental responsibility to respect human rights in all we do and ensure that our financing in no way contributes to any adverse impacts to seafarers rights on ships we finance. The shipping industry has unique challenges regarding the oversight and enforcement of human rights at sea and seafarers rights can often be overlooked, an issue brought into stark reality with the recent COVID 19 pandemic with some seafarers trapped on ships for months on end, leading to serious impacts on their human rights. At Standard Chartered we continue to look for ways to improve the situation for seafarers and work with key organizations like the SSI to bring about greater awareness, transparency and change to improve the lives of seafarers.”*

## Notes to Editors

For more information, interviews or comment please contact Elizabeth Petit, Head of Communications, Sustainable Shipping Initiative ([e.petit@sustainableshipping.org](mailto:e.petit@sustainableshipping.org)) and Haley St. Dennis, Head of Communications ([haley.st.dennis@ihrb.org](mailto:haley.st.dennis@ihrb.org)).

## About the Sustainable Shipping Initiative

The Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI) is a multi-stakeholder collective of ambitious and like-minded leaders, driving change through cross-sectoral collaboration to contribute to – and thrive in – a more sustainable maritime industry. Spanning the entire shipping value chain, SSI members are shipowners and charterers; shipyards, marine product, equipment and service providers; banks, ship finance and insurance providers; classification societies; and sustainability non-profits.

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## About the Institute for Human Rights and Business

Founded in 2009, IHRB is the leading international think tank on business and human rights. IHRB's mission is to shape policy, advance practice, and strengthen accountability in order to make respect for human rights part of everyday business.

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