

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Shipping industry unites to launch Code of Conduct and self-assessment to protect seafarers' rights and welfare

LONDON, 12 OCTOBER 2021 – Today sees the launch of a landmark Code of Conduct and self-assessment tool developed to protect the human rights and welfare of the world's nearly two million seafarers. The initiative aims to support a safe, healthy and secure onboard work environment, and goes beyond the ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) to focus on the full spectrum of seafarers' rights and wellbeing, from fair terms of employment and minimum crewing levels to the management of grievance mechanisms. The documents can be [accessed here](#).

The project has been led by the Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI) and the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB), in collaboration with the Rafto Foundation for Human Rights and RightShip. Key SSI members played an active role in its development, with expert input from Forum for the Future, Louis Dreyfus Company, Oldendorff Carriers, South32, Standard Chartered Bank, Swire Shipping and Wilhelmsen Ship Management.

“A sustainable shipping industry needs to ensure the protection of its workforce. This presents a unique opportunity for the industry to work together and take concrete action for the rights of nearly 2 million seafarers worldwide, now and in the future” Kristina Kunigenas, Human Rights Lead at the Sustainable Shipping Initiative, said.

Based on international labour and human rights standards and principles, the Code of Conduct and self-assessment were created over eight months of consultation and collaboration with shipowners, operators, charterers, cargo owners, seafarers' associations, civil society and others.

To enable immediate action across the industry, [RightShip has launched an online self-assessment tool](#) developed in collaboration with SSI and IHRB. This freely available questionnaire provides practical guidance on utilising the Code of Conduct, helping shipowners and operators understand their responsibilities while assessing current operations and ways of working, and consequently showing areas for improvement.

“The global pandemic brought seafarers rights firmly into focus, with many crews forced to endure exceptionally difficult conditions to keep global supply chains and trade freely flowing,” notes Frances House, Deputy Chief Executive at IHRB. “We expect a great deal from them and it's only right that they expect an adequate standard of care, conditions, and quality from us. This is a proud, vital industry that depends on people to keep sailing. This Code of Conduct and self-assessment will help build a platform to respect worker dignity while advancing industry progress. We look forward to widespread engagement from industry stakeholders everywhere.”

Download the Code of Conduct and associated documents:

<https://www.sustainablesipping.org/seafarers/>

Register for the launch webinar on Tuesday October 19:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2WCferIDTeOOB5tMZFMOVA

Testimonials from SSI members and partners:

Cynthia Morel, Senior Sustainability Strategist, Forum for the Future: “This marks a vital step towards ensuring that seafarers’ human rights are respected. We hope that this will lay the foundation for fostering the deeper relationships, connections and trust necessary to ensure the shipping sector commits to honouring human dignity and enabling equitable outcomes in its operations and supply-chains it is active in.”

Sebastien Landerretche, Head of Freight at Louis Dreyfus Company: “As a leading global charterer, LDC is committed to promoting the welfare of seafarers, who are essential to the continuity, resilience and decarbonization of the shipping industry. We believe today’s launch is an important foundation for a sustainable future, setting industry participants’ responsibilities and reinforcing support processes for crew members.”

Scott Jones, Director of Communications at Oldendorff Carriers: “The shipping industry has been, and continues to be, very focused on reducing its carbon footprint. However, it is equally important that we focus on the human element to make sure that seafarers’ rights are respected and that we have a holistic view to make the industry truly sustainable. This Code of Conduct is an important new step in highlighting seafarers’ rights and giving the shipping industry a sustainable future.”

Jostein Hole Kobbeldt, Executive Director, Rafto Foundation for Human Rights: “There are growing expectations towards companies with regard to adhering to international human rights standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. A proactive and systematic approach is necessary. The Rafto Foundation has had the privilege of working with IHRB and SSI to develop the Code of Conduct – Delivering on seafarers’ rights. We hope it will be a valuable tool for the shipping industry in order to promote social sustainability and deliver on human rights.”

Christopher Saunders, Chief Product Officer at RightShip: “At RightShip, we have an ambitious vision for a maritime industry that causes zero harm to people and the environment we operate in, so we are delighted to be working with SSI and key stakeholders to deliver this important initiative for seafarers. While technology is changing the way that we move cargo, the human contribution to the supply chain is the lifeblood of our industry. Safe, sustainable voyages rely on crews that are supported to work safely, without risk to their wellbeing. We believe the Crew Welfare Code of Conduct and self-assessment tool will be a significant step forward in giving our essential workers the respect and recognition they deserve and importantly provide guidance and support to those striving to operate beyond compliance.”

Robert Haggquist, Senior Chartering Manager at South32: “We are pleased to have worked with likeminded partners across the shipping value chain to deliver this important initiative that we believe will contribute to a more sustainable maritime industry. The pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of seafarers but also their importance to keep global supply chains working. With this Code of Conduct we are addressing the systemic issues in the industry by giving owners and charterers a platform to collaborate and to improve transparency around seafarers’ welfare. Only by improving the respect for seafarers’ rights can we achieve truly sustainable supply chains with positive social impact.”

Samantha Bramley, Director Environmental & Social Risk Management, Sustainable Finance, Global Banking at Standard Chartered Bank: “Standard Chartered has made a commitment to

achieve zero CO2 emissions from our global operations by 2030 and transport by 2050. In line with our work under the Poseidon Principles we are integrating climate considerations into lending decisions with an aim to supporting shipping decarbonization. However, the S in ESG must not be forgotten, and the work being done to protect and respect seafarers' rights should remain a priority for lenders, investors and other stakeholders in the maritime sector."

Simon Bennett, General Manager – Sustainable Development at Swire Shipping: "Seafarers work long, hard hours, for many months away from their families and friends. They deserve to be treated with respect, and to receive the same rights that their shore-based colleagues experience as the norm, and then more, to take account of the non-standard working environment. Many of us had assumed that the ILO MLC (2006) would assure this. But sadly the Covid-19 pandemic showed that whilst much was said about the crucial nature of the job they were doing, little was practically delivered, and in fact in many places their treatment became markedly worse. We believe that this Code of Conduct details the areas required to be addressed to ensure that seafarers' rights are observed, and exhort all shipowners to facilitate, provide them and support shippers and others with interests in our delivering a sustainable and humane shipping value chain and industry to assure themselves, using this assessment, that this is indeed the case."

Carl Schou, CEO and President at Wilhelmsen Ship Management: "The question is no longer whether seafarers deserve better, but how we are addressing this and taking action. This Code of Conduct and self-assessment tool is a good check and balance for responsible owners and operators to improve the welfare of our seafarers. The responsibility to ensure a thriving seafaring community is in our hands."

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Notes to Editors

For more information, interviews or comment please contact Elizabeth Petit, Head of Communications, Sustainable Shipping Initiative (e.petit@sustainableshipping.org) and Haley St. Dennis, Head of Communications, Institute for Human Rights and Business (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; ports; 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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