

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Wellbeing of seafarers needs to be a priority to safeguard the future of the profession, according to new report.

LONDON, 31 JANUARY 2024 – Issues such as illegal recruitment fees are negatively impacting the lives and wellbeing of seafarers and jeopardising the profession’s future, according to the latest annual progress report on seafarers’ rights.

The Delivering on Seafarers’ Rights Annual Progress Report, published by the Institute for Human Rights and Business (IHRB) and the Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI), is a comprehensive review of the challenges facing seafarers, the shipping industry’s efforts to address challenges, and recommendations for 2024.

The report covers topics including: attracting people to a seafaring career, illegal recruitment fees, corporate action on improving seafarer welfare, as well as an update on data from the RightShip Crew Welfare Self-Assessment Tool.

These issues significantly impact the lives and wellbeing of seafarers worldwide, making it even harder to attract the talent the industry needs to pursue careers at sea. The impact of welfare on recruitment and retention is a huge concern for shipping’s wider viability and sustainability. The prevalence of illegal recruitment fees poses a severe threat, exploiting seafarers, their families and communities, and undermining their rights.

The report shares insights from various organisations and stakeholder groups on the issues facing seafarers, as outlined in the [Delivering on Seafarers’ Rights Code of Conduct](#), and brings together contributions from the International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN), Nautilus International, Oldendorff Carriers, Rio Tinto, RightShip, and Turtle.

For all the negatives, there has been progress. Leading shipping companies and charterers are working on a range of initiatives to enhance seafarer welfare, to improve standards and diversity on their ships and within their supply chains. Such efforts play a pivotal role in fostering a supportive and conducive environment for those working at sea, acknowledging their fundamental rights and basic needs.

Furthermore, a recorded increase in companies using the RightShip Crew Welfare Self-Assessment Tool signals a commitment to monitoring and improving industry standards, emphasising the importance of continuously evaluating and advancing the conditions and treatment of seafarers aboard vessels.

The report can be downloaded here: <https://www.sustainableshipping.org/resources/delivering-on-seafarers-rights-2023-progress-report/>

Steven Jones, CEO of the Sustainable Shipping Initiative, said: “This second Delivering on Seafarers’ Rights Annual Progress Report is vital reading for all in the industry. There is progress we can learn

from, such as the ideas, innovation, and energy of companies who are investing and making sure their people and social needs are to the fore. However, it is clear that there is so much more to be done. We need to take these lessons and ensure they are not simply the domain of the good companies, we need to make sure there is no place for the bad to operate.”

Frances House, Special Advisor at IHRB, said: “We know the Maritime Labour Convention isn’t enough to prevent seafarers’ rights being undermined. Charterers and container cargo owners should encourage their shipping suppliers to comply with the Seafarers’ Rights Code of Conduct and use the self-assessment tool to improve their performance. This report is a positive sign that uptake of the Code of Conduct is increasing, but verification and transparency around compliance are the critical goals now.

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Notes to Editors

For more information, interviews or comment please contact Elizabeth Petit, Sustainable Shipping Initiative (e.petit@sustainableshipping.org) or Sam Simmons, IHRB (sam.simmons@ihrb.org).

About the Sustainable Shipping Initiative

The Sustainable Shipping Initiative (SSI) is a member-led group of leaders catalysing change across the maritime ecosystem. Since 2010, SSI has brought together shipowners, operators and managers; cargo owners; classification societies; non-profits; and service providers to advance environmental, social and economic goals for a sustainable shipping industry.

www.sustainableshipping.org

About 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](#), [aquaculture and fishing](#). The Ocean Platform focuses on the impacts of business activities on livelihoods and working conditions.

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