



Geneva, December 2020

ILO Governing Body 340th session

Draft resolution concerning maritime labour issues and coronavirus disease (COVID-19)

EU Statement – for adoption by correspondence

This statement is delivered on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the Republic of North Macedonia*, Montenegro* and Albania*, as well as Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

1. The European Union and its Member States thank the social partners for putting forward a draft resolution concerning maritime labour issues and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and support the adoption of the text of this Resolution following the tripartite consultations of 23 and 27 November.
2. Following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, around 400 000 seafarers have been stranded at sea. In too many cases, carrying out crew changes has proven very difficult or even impossible, resulting in seafarers and fishers being forced to continue to work far beyond the length of their contracts. They are often denied shore leave, medical assistance ashore and repatriation. As a result, many work beyond the maximum allowed duration of service.
3. This situation calls for action to enable crew changes, shore leave and medical assistance for seafarers as provided for in the Maritime Labour Convention. The same goes for fishers. This is important not only on humanitarian grounds, but also in view of their important role in ensuring the continuity in the supply of goods, energy, medical supplies and food, including seafood.
4. The EU undertook action to that end. Already in March guidance was issued recommending the designation of workers involved in the supply of goods, maritime and inland navigation workers and fishers as essential. In October, EU Member States adopted a Recommendation on a coordinated approach in response to the pandemic, facilitating the free movement of essential workers, including seafarers.
5. However, due to the global nature of maritime transport and fishing activities, international cooperation is essential. The European Union and its Member States therefore welcome initiatives taken by the Office, the Officers of the Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention, international social partners, the International Maritime Organization and other UN agencies and programmes to address this situation. Furthermore, they thank Indonesia for taking the initiative to pursue the matter at the UN General Assembly. The EU and its Member States have supported and welcome the adoption of the UN Resolution on seafarers by consensus on 1 December 2020.

*The Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

6. The draft ILO resolution urges all ILO Members to designate seafarers as key workers, to consider the relaxation of travel requirements and ensure access to medical assistance and emergency repatriation. It calls on the Office to continue this support and cooperation on this matter. It calls on companies to carry out human rights due diligence in relation to the pandemic. It calls on ILO members, the Office and companies to consider taking similar measures for fishers. These are actions essential to ensuring the health of hundreds of thousands of seafarers and fishers, preventing accidents and securing the functioning of global supply chains.
7. The EU and its Member States fully support this resolution and look forward to further cooperating with the Office, with governments, workers and employers on this matter.