Day of the Seafarer 2020
Message by Kitack Lim, Secretary-General
International Maritime Organization

Seafarers are at the heart of everything IMO does. And every year we celebrate seafarers with our Day of the Seafarer campaign.

Even in good times, seafarers are the unsung heroes of the global economy. More than 80% of global trade is delivered by sea. Seafarers' work is physically and mentally demanding, lonely and remote.

But this year, we are in the unprecedented situation of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Ships are continuing to trade, and most ports are still open to deliver and load vital supplies. But the global pandemic has plunged many seafarers into desperate situations. I have been amazed and impressed with the dedication, professionalism, resilience and perseverance of seafarers as they have faced the inability to conduct crew changes, inability to be repatriated, inability to get passports and visas to get to and from their ships, lack of access to medical care, lack of personal protective equipment and denial of shore leave - all as a result of well-intentioned efforts to protect public health and safety, but with overly restrictive consequences to shipping. Despite all these challenges, seafarers have stayed on the job, 24/7.

IMO has worked with trade unions, seafarer welfare organizations, shipping industry representatives and other United Nations agencies, to find solutions to these problems.
I have written to all our Member Governments, urging them to recognize all seafarers as "key workers".

Seafarers' work is unique and essential. Just like other key workers, seafarers are on the front line in this global fight. They deserve our thanks. But they also need – and deserve – quick and decisive humanitarian action from governments everywhere, not just during the pandemic, but at all times.

That's why our 2020 campaign theme is "**#SeafarersAreKeyWorkers**". Follow, use and share this hashtag across social media platforms to join this global call for proper recognition – and action – for seafarers. Seafarers continue to deliver for all of us. Now, let's ensure that *we* deliver for *them*!

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