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Circular Letter No.4204/Add.21  
8 June 2020

To: All IMO Member States  
United Nations and specialized agencies  
Intergovernmental organizations  
Non-governmental organizations in consultative status with IMO

Subject: **Joint statement IMO-UNCTAD – Call for collaborative action in support of keeping ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have jointly issued the attached statement which calls for collaborative action in support of keeping ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Member States and international organizations are invited to bring the contents of this Circular Letter to the attention of the competent authorities and all concerned agencies, at both national and local levels.

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## ANNEX



### JOINT STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF KEEPING SHIPS MOVING, PORTS OPEN AND CROSS-BORDER TRADE FLOWING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

8 June 2020

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The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has placed the world in an unprecedented situation. To slow the spread of the disease and mitigate its impacts, travel is being curtailed and borders are being closed.

More than 80% of global trade by volume is carried by maritime transport, which moves the world's food, energy and raw materials, as well as manufactured goods and components and is vital to sustainable development and prosperity. We are living in a deeply interconnected world and as far as it concerns the pandemic, "we are all in the same boat".

Maritime transport is dependent on the 2 million seafarers who operate the world's merchant ships. It is estimated that starting in mid-June 2020, 300,000 seafarers a month will require international flights to enable ships' crew changeover - about half will travel home by aircraft for repatriation while the other half will join ships, and 70,000 cruise ship staff are waiting for their repatriation. At the same time, crews on commercial fishing vessels, which provide a major source of global nutrition must also be periodically changed to avoid fatigue. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) both acknowledge the critical role of the maritime sector in keeping trade flowing during the global fight against COVID-19. The two Organizations have been continuously highlighting the risks to shipping and trade arising from the COVID-19 impacts and have called for collaborative efforts to address the challenge.

For shipping to continue to operate safely, we are seeking the support of Governments to facilitate crew changes and ensure crew wellbeing, by facilitating repatriation and safe return home of seafarers, marine personnel, fishing vessel personnel and offshore energy sector personnel, as well as access to medical care for sick or injured crew and to medical prescriptions. To comply with international safety and employment regulations and also for humanitarian reasons, crew changes cannot be postponed indefinitely.

To ensure crew resupply and repatriation, Governments need to facilitate the access of marine personnel to documentation and travel options.

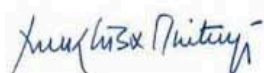
We encourage Governments and relevant national and local authorities to designate seafarers, marine personnel, fishing vessel personnel, offshore energy sector personnel, and service provider personnel at ports as 'key workers' providing an essential service, regardless of nationality when in their jurisdiction, and to exempt them from travel restrictions. Such designation will ensure that the trade of essential goods, including medical supplies and food, is not hampered by the pandemic and the associated containment measures.

Collaborative efforts should be pursued to identify and remove any unnecessary regulatory obstacles to post-pandemic recovery and to facilitate maritime transport and trade in these difficult times. Pragmatic approaches should be taken to grant exemptions and waivers where necessary and appropriate, and efforts should be made to facilitate the use of electronic solutions for ship-shore, administrative and commercial interactions; effective sharing of pre-arrival information and other COVID-related reporting requirements for ships; and providing adequate equipment and resources to customs and border control stations in ports.

In the longer term, some of the measures to confront the COVID-19 crisis may offer important co-benefits, for instance encouraging further investment in digitalization and advancing efforts to improve the energy efficiency of ships and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping.

We emphasize that for trade to continue during these critical times, there is a need to keep ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing, while at the same time ensuring that border agencies can safely undertake all necessary controls. International collaboration, coordination and solidarity among all is going to be key to overcoming the unprecedented global challenge posed by the pandemic and its longer-term repercussions.

The two Organizations recognize that facilitating trade and the transport of goods has become more important than ever, to avoid logistics obstacles that can lead to shortages of necessary supplies, and encourage Governments to take all necessary measures to keep ships moving, ports open and cross-border trade flowing during the covid-19 pandemic



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