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Maritime Labour Convention

International Labour Organization overwhelmingly supports new international law to protect abandoned seafarers and provide financial security for death or long-term disability of seafarers

The approval of these amendments was a major step in establishing binding international law on these issues which are very important for the shipping industry

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Government, employer and worker delegates to the International Labour Conference (ILC), at the 103rd annual meeting of International Labour Organization (ILO), overwhelmingly voted in favour of approving amendments to the [Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 \(MLC,2006\)](#) > in order to better protect abandoned seafarers, and provide financial security for compensation to seafarers and their families in cases of a seafarer's death or long-term disability. These international legal measures are aimed at improving working and living conditions for seafarers, the most globalized of the world's workers.

The approval of these amendments was a major step in establishing binding international law on these issues which are very important for the shipping industry. The amendments were discussed in detail and adopted on close to unanimous basis (1 abstention) vote on April 11 2014 by the 400 participants at the [first meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee established under the MLC, 2006](#) >.

“The MLC, 2006 really is a milestone for the maritime sector, aside from the first time ever requiring the certification of seafarers' working and living conditions, it brought with it another innovation - the

possibility for more rapid changes to the Convention to meet the needs of the industry. It is truly a living Convention. It is designed to grow and change and respond to the needs of workers and employers” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder. “This vote by the ILC to support this approach is an inspiring example for other economic sectors. When they come into force, these measures will ensure the welfare of the world’s seafarers and their families if the seafarers are abandoned or death or long-term disability occurs as the result of occupational injury, illness or hazard. These steps will certainly help improve the working and living conditions for seafarers, the people who are so essential to the world’s economy and movement of world trade.”

The amendments, which were developed over nearly a decade of discussion by a Joint Working Group established by the ILO and International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 1998, will strengthen the MLC, 2006. They establish mandatory requirements that shipowners have financial security to cover abandonment of seafarers, as well as death or long-term disability of seafarers due to occupational injury and hazard.

As of March 2014, the ILO’s Abandonment of Seafarers Database listed 159 abandoned merchant ships, some dating back to 2006 with abandonment cases still unresolved. Many abandoned seafarers are working and living onboard ships without pay, often for several months, and lack food and water supplies, medical care or means to return home.

“These requirements, which I know are supported by shipowners and seafarers and by the major marine insurers, can only help to provide relief and peace of mind to abandoned seafarers and their families wherever they may be,” said Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, Director of the ILO Labour Standards Department. “By approving these amendments to the Convention, the ILC not only strengthened the MLC, 2006 provisions that guarantee a level-playing field for quality shipping around the world, they also endorsed an important new approach to making ILO’s Conventions easier to update to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of the sector concerned.”

Unless there is significant disagreement when they are circulated to governments, that have ratified the MLC, 2006 these new requirements will enter into force by early 2017.

When they enter into force, certificates or other documents will need to be carried on board ships to establish that financial security is in place to protect the seafarers working on board the ship. Failure to provide this protection may mean that a ship can be detained in a port.

The ILO’s MLC, 2006 came into force on 20 August 2013. To date, [61 ILO Member States](#) > representing more than 80 percent of the world’s global shipping tonnage have ratified the Convention.

“These requirements guarantee that seafarers are not abandoned, alone and legally adrift for months on end, without pay, adequate food and water and away home,” Dr. Doumbia-Henry said. “They also clearly define the role of flag States that register ships in ensuring that adequate security exists to mitigate against the financial, legal and human cost of abandonment, and death and long-term disability due to occupational hazards.”

Tags: seafarer, international labour standards, sea transport, merchant marine



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