

Neptune Declaration

Even though the volume of maritime trade did not encounter same harrowing drops in certain areas of industry in wake of COVID-19, the human factor in sustaining this primary method of moving goods around the globe deserves a closer look.



This obviously means the seafarers, who have remained instrumental in ensuring the ships have continued to trade safe and sound even in most difficult situations, both in course of pre-COVID and COVID eras.

For many seafarers, the pandemic only meant their working conditions have degraded from difficult to humanely impossible.

One of primary indications of the pandemic for seafarers was the crew change crisis, which has resulted in around 400,000 seafarers stranded on ships because of coronavirus-related travel bans.

Local authorities, who are concerned about further possible spread of pandemic due to seafarers, have taken steps prevent disembarkation of crew, and crew changes were heavily curtailed with restrictions enabled by national authorities with aim to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

This has made impossible for many seafarers to return to their homes after completion of their contracts. Even where seafarers were able to depart ships, lack of meaningful ability to travel due to disruption in air travel meant the crew members were stranded for prolonged periods.

This means that the seafarers, who are primary human factor and drivers of the maritime trade, may possibly face threats to their physical and mental health due to uncertain periods of being stuck at ships of their original employment.

Unfortunately many seafarers are already employed under hardly ideal conditions, with their shifts sometimes extending to seven days of work a week and twelve hour shifts a day. Such grueling work for duration of months as stipulated in their contracts also mean it is not only the seafarers' health that is at risk, but third parties and environment who may in wake of potential incidents which may be contributed by overworked seafarers.



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Following his graduation from Istanbul Technical University with a degree in Mathematics Engineering, Umut started his marine risks insurance career in 2005 at Anadolu Insurance Company. He later joined Aon ve Omnia as an insurance and reinsurance broker. In 2014 he took the position as Underwriter of Turkish P&I. Umut's responsibilities include establishment of Company's risk and business acceptance criteria, review and guidance of rating practices and application of these practices to both prospect busines and portfolio, and ensuring smooth and continuous run of the Company's reinsurance treaty programmes. His articles on various insurance related topics continue to be published in maritime and insurance sector periodicals.



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Working at sea beyond their contracted hours can result in fatigue, which increases the risk of accidents on board, maritime incidents and environmental disasters.

In order to allay these dangers to seafarers' wellbeing and the wider maritime industry, more than 800 companies and organizations have come together to declare the Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change. The Declaration focuses on four primary areas as follows.

- Recognize seafarers as key workers and give them priority access to COVID-19 vaccines
- Establish and implement gold standard health protocols based on existing best practice
- Increase collaboration between ship operators and charterers to facilitate crew changes
- Ensure air connectivity between key maritime hubs for seafarers

Türk P&I is pleased to count itself among the signatories of Neptune Declaration.