



The global voice of freight logistics

Repatriation of stranded seafarers necessary for global trade

FIATA calls on its National Association members to take urgent action within their national jurisdictions

Governmental restrictions on travel and economy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to severely hamper crew changeovers, creating what is set to become a real humanitarian crisis and a severe threat to global trade. As stated in [FIATA's press release](#), the International Chamber of Shipping estimated that some 150,000 seafarers were in urgent need of crew change by 15 May, following expiration of their contracts and subsequent extensions, leaving many seafarers stranded and in desperate situations. FIATA joins with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), the World Shipping Council (WSC) and other international organizations, to call upon national governments to take urgent action.

FIATA applauds the essential work carried out by crew members during these challenging times. With around 90% of the world's trade being transported by sea, they play a real and crucial role in ensuring the continued functioning of the world's trade to transport essential goods and resources to the world's population. However, in the absence of appropriate welfare measures in line with international labour and maritime regulations, the inability of many of them to continue to work on these ships poses a real threat to international trade. A key implication of this will be a substantially increase in the number of blank sailings as ships will not be able to operate without the required crew members, which will have a knock-on effect on container imbalances and the fluidity of the supply chain to deliver. As stated by FIATA Director General Dr Stéphane Graber: "This is increasingly becoming a humanitarian concern for crews. FIATA supports the recognition of such as key workers who are eligible to transit and be repatriated and should receive appropriate medical attention when needed."

It is critical that national governments take proactive and coordinated action to facilitate the transit and movement of stranded and replacement crew members across their territories. FIATA calls on its National Association members to urgently contact their respective national governments to ensure facilitation of crew member repatriation and replacement, including exemption from travel restrictions and expedited visa application procedures. As with all other aspects of the COVID-19 crisis, this requires coordinated international action for the ongoing viability of our global supply chains.