

IFSMSA

NEWSLETTER

The Shipmasters' International Voice

RESCUE AT SEA

See article on Page 6

A guide to principles and practice in the context of refugees and migrants movements



Contents

Secretary General's Message	2
From the News Editor	3
The IMO Digest	4
IMO and methane-based fuels in shipping	4
Day of the Seafarer 2026	4
Underwater noise from shipping	5
Curbing marine plastic pollution	6
Revised Rescue Guide	6
Gender mainstreaming in the maritime sector	8
Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111)	9
Republic of the Congo	11
Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden region	11
IMO treaty on hazardous and noxious cargo	13
Copernicus over Ireland	14
Digital risks	15
Switching off AIS: questionable security	17
No freedom yet by Michael Grey	18
Sri Lanka Cadet training	19
Hong Kong-Guangdong inland water transport	20
The system is broken. We have had enough	21
Global seabed mapping	22
The Danish Straits	23
Now wipe your feet by Michael Grey	24
Strait of Juan de Fuca	24
World-first ethanol-fuelled engine for ocean-going ships	25
Royal Navy's unmanned minehunter trails	26
Sailors' Society Wellness at Sea training	27
CHIRP on Fatigue: safe crewing on paper, risk in reality	28
VIKING Pentagon Star	30
Copernicus data	31
The 2026 Atlantic hurricane season	31
Mission to Seafarers' news	32
Saharan dust reaches the Caribbean	33

Readers are reminded that the opinions expressed in the IFSMA Newsletter are those of the various authors and providers of news and are not necessarily in accord with IFSMA policy.

Secretary General's Message

From us at IFSMA HQ, we hope you are all well.

During the month of May, the main event taking place at IMO was the 111th session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111). This is seen as the most senior of all the IMO Committees and it was an honour to be accompanied at this Committee by IFSMA members Captain Stanislav Nezavitin from the Odessa Ship Masters' Association, Captain David Appleton from Nautilus International and Captain Morten Kveim from the Norwegian Maritime Officers' Association. As IFSMA had four representatives at this Committee, we were able to actively participate at the Plenary session and two Working Groups covering MASS (Marine Autonomous Surface Ships) and GHG (Greenhouse Gas) Safety.

The highlight of MSC 111 was the final adoption of the MASS Code after many years of work. David Appleton and Morten Kveim represented IFSMA on many of the MASS Working Groups and David has been involved from the very beginning. The MASS Code is the world's first non-mandatory code on this evolving subject. It establishes a framework for the operation and management of remotely operated and autonomous vessels. This includes the operation of the Remote Operation Centres (ROCs). The Code becomes effective on 1st July 2026 and forms the basis for future mandatory regulations following the Experience Building Phase (EBP).

Also, at MSC111, progress was made on safety regulations for alternative fuels to support the decarbonisation initiative. Important progress was made on hydrogen and ammonia-related safety guidance, including amendments to the IGC Code, and guidelines for ammonia cargo used as fuel on gas carriers. These measures support the maritime sector's energy transition while maintaining safety standards.

There were also important debates regarding the safe use of pesticides, maritime security, the inspection of life-saving appliances and maritime digitalisation.

In the wider maritime industry, the focus remains on the seafarers onboard ships that remain stranded in the Persian Gulf. The IMO Secretary General continues to highlight the case for protecting seafarer safety and preserving the right of free navigation for all international trading ships.

The industry guidance on the Safe Management of Vessel Transits through the Strait of Hormuz was also issued recently. See IFSMA website for download link. This guidance is intended to assist in planning and safely managing all vessel transits through the Strait during periods of heightened security risk.

To get more information on these topics and all maritime news, please explore our new website at www.ifsma.org and follow us on LinkedIn and

Facebook where we highlight our latest news, initiatives and updates.

We wish you the very best and safe sailing in these troubled times.

Andy Cook
Secretary General

From the News Editor

Seafarer Abandonment

WMU Large-scale research project

In response to the increase in reported cases of seafarer abandonment, the World Maritime University (WMU) has launched a large-scale research initiative titled **Seafarer Abandonment: A focused investigation into regulatory implementation**. This was reported by the WMU on 28 May.

Funded by The TK Foundation, The ITF Seafarers' Trust, and The Seafarers' Charity, the research will examine how existing international protections, particularly those under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), are implemented across flag, port, and labour-supplying States.

Increase of 31% in cases in 2025

In 2024, reported seafarer abandonment incidents totalled 312, involving more than 3,100 seafarers. The number of affected seafarers increased by approximately 87% compared with 2023, while the number of abandonment cases/vessels increased by about 136%, exceeding all previous single-year records (ITF and IMO sources). Rather than improving, the situation has continued to deteriorate. The latest reporting from the joint IMO/ILO database shows a further 31% increase in 2025, with a total number of 410 new cases, affecting more than 6,000 seafarers by the end of the year.

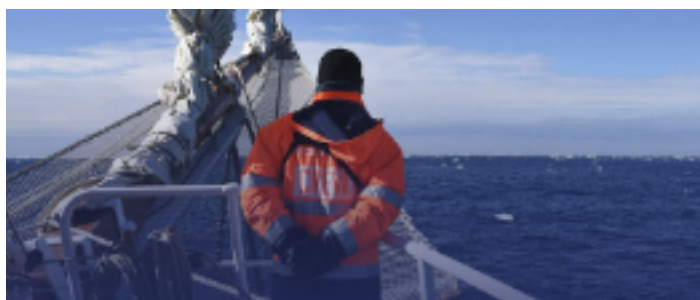


Illustration per www.wmu.se
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While greater awareness and stronger reporting mechanisms may partly explain the rise, the scale and persistence of these cases point to deeper, ongoing shortcomings in the practical application of existing international protections, as well as significant negative impacts on both the workforce and the wider industry.

Exploring experiences

The research will also explore the actual experiences of abandoned seafarers and their families, assessing the socioeconomic, psychological, and health impacts of abandonment.

Drawing on data analysis and direct engagement with affected seafarers and support organizations, the study aims to generate evidence-based recommendations to strengthen regulatory practices and enhance the welfare and rights of seafarers worldwide.

Comment

To quote Katie Higginbottom, Head of the ITF Seafarers' Trust: *'Maritime systems of governance are failing seafarers. We need to unpack the weaknesses in regulatory enforcement and face up to the intolerable human cost to seafarers and their families. We hope that this collaborative research project will give us the data and analysis to effectively confront this shameful aspect of the maritime industry.'*

Deborah Layde, Chief Executive of The Seafarers' Charity, added: *'Seafarer abandonment is a systemic failure: solving it demands sector-wide collaboration and coordinated global action.'*

'This research has the potential to be pivotal in driving regulatory reform, and we are pleased to co-fund the team at the World Maritime University to undertake it. In time, we hope this research can provide the evidence to drive systemic change and ensure no seafarer has to go through the trauma of abandonment.'

In conclusion Dennis Treleaven, Senior Maritime Program Officer at TheTK Foundation, commented: *'The TK Foundation Maritime Grants Program supports a wide range of research projects and welfare programs that lead to improvements in the health, safety and welfare of seafarers.'*

'We are very pleased to be working in partnership with the World Maritime University and other partner universities and maritime academies to support this important maritime research that will lead to improvements in the lives of seafarers.'

Finally, Professor Maximo Q Mejia, Jr. President of the World Maritime University reflected: *'Seafarer abandonment is a complex and deeply concerning issue affecting the key workers at the heart of our industry, with devastating consequences for seafarers and their families.'*

'As this issue continues to grow across the maritime industry, stronger legal frameworks and more effective implementation mechanisms are urgently needed to safeguard those who work at sea. We are pleased to undertake this collaborative research with our esteemed academic and institutional partners, as our collective expertise and dedication to seafarer wellbeing will generate meaningful and practical insights for the maritime community to address this pressing issue.'

Broad collaboration

WMU will collaborate on the project with PRC's Dalian Maritime University, Indian Maritime University, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific of the Philippines, and in Indonesia, Politeknik Pelayaran Banten. Working collaboratively with these academic institutions will significantly expand the pool of data points, particularly through contributions from national stakeholders in the top labour-supplying countries, while deepening understanding of the specific challenges faced by nationalities most affected by abandonment.

The IMO Digest

Appearing below is a summary of some of the news received with grateful thanks from the excellent IMO Media service in recent weeks.

Illustrations per www.imo.org as a source and copyright holder.

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IMO and methane-based fuels in shipping

International experts on methane-based fuels, including LNG, bio-methane and e-methane shared their expertise during an IMO technical seminar at IMO HQ in London on 12 May.

Sharing insights into relevant topics

The IMO Future Fuels and Technology Project* organized the event, during which participants shared insights on topics including methane emissions abatement, experience in the use of LNG – including bunkering and safety issues, production pathways, scaling up and sustainability aspects of e-LNG and bio-LNG for potential use in the maritime sector.



The seminar, which was purely informative and not intended for policy negotiations, was moderated by Ms Linden Coppell, Vice President Sustainability & ESG at MSC Cruises. Two hundred participants from IMO Member States, NGOs, IGOs, industry and academia attended – in person and online.

Resources and further information

The IMO Future Fuels and Technology Project is a partnership between the Government of the Republic of Korea and IMO, aiming to support GHG emissions reduction from international shipping by promoting the uptake of future fuels and technology.

This seminar was the fourth technical seminar organized under the project, following previous editions covering: biofuels, onboard carbon capture and storage (OCCS)** and the energy transition of global shipping§.

The next in the series will focus on ammonia – provisionally planned for 17 September 2026 in the margins of the 12th session of the IMO Sub-Committee on Carriage of Cargoes and Containers (CCC12).

* <https://futurefuels.imo.org/>

** <https://tinyurl.com/b8xk523v>

§ <https://tinyurl.com/4nb7xuek>

Day of the Seafarer 2026, 25 June

Carrying world trade. Carrying the risks

This year, the Day of the Seafarer campaign will focus on revealing the realities of life at sea, highlighting the hardship, pressure and risks that seafarers can face. It will draw particular attention to the challenges of operating in high-risk and conflict-affected areas, while underscoring the essential role seafarers play in keeping the global economy moving.

The campaign will be built around the line: ***Carrying world trade. Carrying the risks***. It reflects the fact that seafarers keep global trade moving, while often facing difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions. Their contribution is often out of sight, even though they are central to the movement of goods around the world.

The aim is for this year's Day of the Seafarer to not only recognize seafarers' contribution but also acknowledge the risks and sacrifices behind it.

The hashtag for this year will be #DayoftheSeafarer

Here's how the maritime community can contribute to the IMO 2026 Day of the Seafarer edition, a personal approach from IMO:

If you are a seafarer

Share what ***Carrying world trade. Carrying the risks*** means to you.

Tell us about the realities of life at sea, the challenges you face, or the moments that define your work.

Join the conversation using #DayoftheSeafarer

If you work in shipping or the maritime industry

Highlight how your company or organization supports seafarers' safety, wellbeing and mental health — particularly for those operating in high-risk or conflict-affected areas.

If you are a government or maritime administration

Share the actions, policies or initiatives you are taking to support and protect seafarers working under difficult conditions.

If you are an NGO, welfare organization or union

Tell us how you support seafarers and their families, especially those facing isolation, insecurity or the pressures of operating in challenging environments.

If you are part of the UN family or an international organization

Share how seafarers connect to your work and why their role is essential to global trade, humanitarian assistance and sustainable development.

If you are a maritime educator, researcher or academic institution

Help raise awareness by sharing research, training initiatives or perspectives on the human element of shipping and the risks seafarers face at sea.

For everyone

Join us in recognizing the contribution, resilience and sacrifices of seafarers worldwide. Share your message using #DayoftheSeafarer

Resources

For access to the IMO digital board and to download all resources readers are invited to use the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/3c4dtezc>

Background

The Day of the Seafarer (25 June) was established in a resolution adopted by the 2010 Diplomatic Conference in Manila to adopt the revised STCW Convention. Its stated purpose is to recognize the unique contribution made by seafarers from all over the world to international seaborne trade, the world economy and civil society as a whole.



The resolution 'encourages Governments, shipping organizations, companies, shipowners and all other parties concerned to duly and appropriately promote

the Day of the Seafarer and take action to celebrate it meaningfully.'

Day of the Seafarer is recognized by the United Nations as an observance day.

This year's Day of the Seafarer campaign will highlight the realities of life at sea, focusing on the hardship, pressure, and risks seafarers face, especially in high-risk and conflict-affected areas.

Under the theme **Carrying world trade. Carrying the risks** the campaign recognizes the essential role seafarers play in sustaining global trade while often working in difficult and dangerous conditions that remain largely unseen. The campaign aims to honour seafarers' contributions, to hear their voices, and to acknowledge the sacrifices and risks behind their work.

The hashtag for this year is #DayoftheSeafarer.

There is also a link to digital resources to be shared here: <https://tinyurl.com/3c4dtezc>

Underwater noise from shipping

IMO strengthens global efforts to reduce

Shipping is one of the main sources of underwater radiated noise (URN), which can affect marine biodiversity and disrupt the marine environment.

March – April 2026 workshops

To help Member States better understand and address this challenge, the GEF-UNDP-IMO GloNoise Partnership has completed a series of national workshops ranging from March to April 2026 across all six Lead Pilot Countries — Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, India, South Africa and Trinidad and Tobago — with additional participation from Georgia, Madagascar and Mexico.

Delivered primarily in person, the workshops brought together nearly 200 participants from government agencies, academia, research institutions and the shipping industry. Through practical exercises and group discussions, participants explored how to assess underwater noise, identify potential hotspots and consider mitigation measures within their national contexts.

Hands on experience; evidence based assessment

Central to the workshops was the new URN Toolkit, developed by the GloNoise Partnership to support countries in building technical knowledge and capacity on underwater noise from shipping. Participants worked directly with the Toolkit's training modules and modelling tools, gaining hands-on experience in evidence-based assessment and analysis.

Designed as an open and accessible platform for maritime stakeholders, the Toolkit is structured across three levels — from foundational knowledge to

simplified screening and more advanced assessment — allowing countries to apply it according to their capacities and available data.

For access the URN Toolkit readers are invited to use the link here: <https://glonoise.blueoasis.pt/>

The successful delivery of all national workshops within a short period reflected the strong collaboration between participating countries and partners.



Discussions throughout the series also underscored the need for stronger national coordination, improved research and data collection, and closer engagement with the shipping sector in developing practical solutions.

The Toolkit will be finalized later this year and will remain available to Member States to support implementation of the IMO Revised Guidelines for the reduction of underwater radiated noise from shipping.

Next step: Global webinar on the underwater radiated noise toolkit

Building on the momentum of the national workshops, the GloNoise Partnership will host a global webinar on the URN Toolkit, open to all IMO Member States.

Curbing marine plastic pollution

Indonesia advances plan

Indonesia has taken an important step in tackling sea-based marine plastic litter (SBMPL) with a national workshop focused on developing a Port Waste Management Plan (PWMP).

More than thirty national representatives from maritime, port, environmental and other related authorities convened in Jakarta for the two-day workshop held from 4-6 May. They collaborated to produce a draft PWMP for Indonesia's busiest port: Tanjung Priok. The final version is to be adopted later by an ad hoc interministerial committee.

Compliance with MARPOL

The plan outlines how ship-generated waste should be managed safely, efficiently and in full compliance with Annex V of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), as well as relevant IMO guidance. The PWMP aims to strengthen port procedures, improve waste handling systems and reduce the discharge of plastics and other garbage into the marine environment.

GloLitter Partnerships project

This workshop was organized as part of the GloLitter Partnerships project under the OceanLitter Programme, jointly implemented by IMO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), with funding from Norway.



Following the workshop, effort commenced on a Techno-Economic Feasibility Assessment to establish port reception facilities at Tanjung Priok.

Reception facilities

Port reception facilities play a critical role in preventing marine plastic pollution by providing vessels with a reliable place to discharge waste instead of dumping it at sea. Strengthening these systems is essential to reducing marine plastic litter from shipping and fishing activities and protecting Indonesia's marine ecosystems.

Identifying the solutions

Supporting Member States in identifying the most effective and sustainable solutions for receiving, storing, and processing ship-generated waste is a key component of the GloLitter project.

Revised Rescue Guide

Strengthening protection for refugees and migrants in distress at sea.

UNHCR, IMO and ICS joint release

This revised Guide underlines the continued relevance and life-saving impact of practical

protection action, covering rescuing people in distress at sea, including refugees and migrants, and ensuring safe disembarkation in line with international law.

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) have released a revised Rescue Guide, a tool to help all partners uphold the humanitarian and legal duties to rescue refugees and migrants in distress at sea and bring them to safety.

The revised edition of *Rescue at Sea: A guide to principles and practice in the context of refugee and migrant movements* [Download in six languages here*] comes as tragic shipwrecks continue to highlight the urgent need for stronger collective action to prevent further loss of life among people fleeing danger or seeking better prospects.

The Guide was launched during an event held at IMO HQ in London on 19 May.



The revised Guide underlines the continued relevance and life-saving impact of practical protection action, covering rescuing people in distress at sea, including refugees and migrants, and ensuring safe disembarkation in line with international law.

In the year marking the 75th anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention, the revised Guide underlines the continued relevance and life-saving impact of practical protection action, covering rescuing people in distress at sea, including refugees and migrants, and ensuring safe disembarkation in line with international law. The seas must be treated as a humanitarian space, and the duty to rescue people in distress at sea must be upheld without discrimination, the partners agreed.

In the words of Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General, IMO: *'There is an ongoing human tragedy of lives lost at sea during unsafe, dangerous journeys. We must recognize the tireless efforts of coast guards, navies, search and rescue agencies, and merchant vessels in rescuing individuals in distress at sea—preventing an even higher death toll. Established legal obligations must be translated into concrete action at sea. This revised Guide ensures clarity for Governments and provides practical steps for shipmasters and crews,'* said Arsenio Dominguez, Secretary-General, IMO.

'Nobody risks their life at sea, or that of their family, unless desperate to find safety and stability in the absence of safer pathways. Yet, these appalling wrecks cannot be accepted as inevitable. They are preventable,' said Elizabeth Tan, Director of UNHCR's Division of International Protection and Solutions. *"The revised Rescue Guide is a practical tool to help uphold one of the clearest moral and legal duties at sea: to rescue refugees and migrants in distress and bring them to safety. It reflects the shared commitment of UNHCR, IMO and the shipping sector, as well as humanitarian agencies and NGOs, to support States in their primary responsibility to save lives at sea.'*

Maritime routes continue to exact a devastating human toll. In 2025, according to data from UNHCR, authorities and partners, the Mediterranean remained one of the world's deadliest corridors, with 1,953 people reported dead or missing. The South and South-East Asia route saw 892 people recorded dead or missing, out of more than 6,500 Rohingya refugees who attempted perilous sea crossings that year, making this the route with the highest mortality rate worldwide for refugee and migrant sea journeys. Danger extends also around Africa, with the Western Africa Atlantic route claiming 424 lives last year.

Building on the 2015 edition, the newly revised Rescue Guide provides more detailed guidance on applicable legal standards and practical procedures to ensure the prompt rescue and disembarkation of people in distress at sea in locations where they would not be exposed to risks, including the risk of refoulement. Available in six languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), the Rescue Guide serves as a global, practical resource for shipmasters, ship owners, State authorities, insurance companies, and all actors engaged in maritime rescue operations.

'The global shipping industry is often the first responder when people are in distress at sea. Ship masters and crews act with professionalism and humanity, frequently going beyond their commercial duties to save lives. This revised Guide provides practical clarity to support those efforts, helping ensure that rescues are conducted safely, predictably, and in line with international law, while reinforcing the shared responsibility across States and stakeholders to deliver timely disembarkation,' said Thomas A. Kazakos, ICS Secretary General.

For more information, please contact:

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* <https://tinyurl.com/yuzrb8z6>

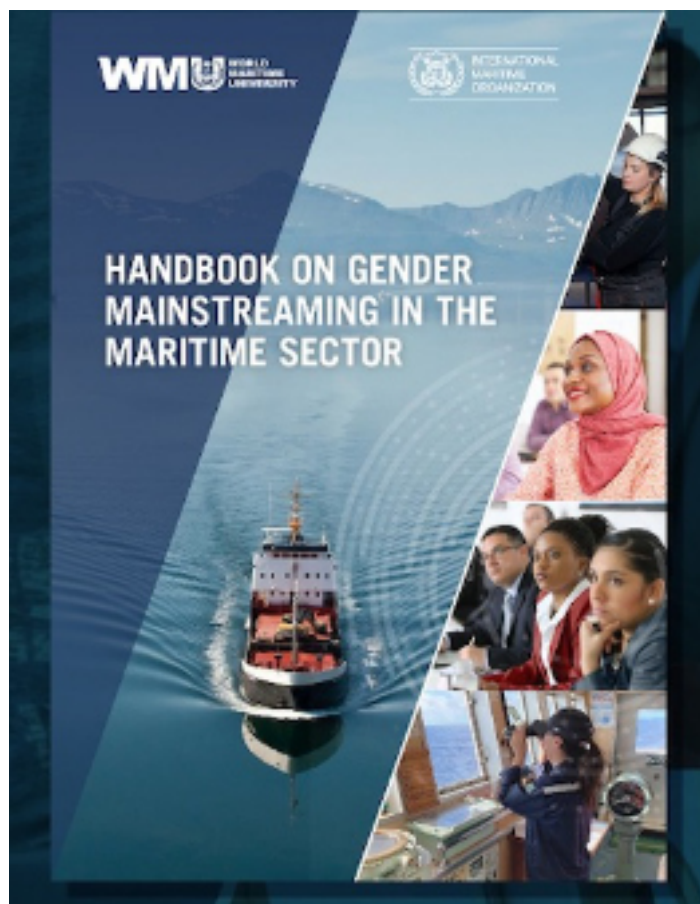
Gender mainstreaming in the maritime sector

IMO and WMU launch handbook

New practical guide calls for maritime industry to take measurable action on gender equality

The World Maritime University (WMU) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) have released a new publication: *Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming in the Maritime Sector*, calling for action to address persistent gender inequality across the global maritime industry.

The handbook, authored by WMU Professor Momoko Kitada, was launched on the International Day for Women in Maritime on 18 May. Professor Kitada is also the recipient of the 2026 IMO Gender Equality Award.



The new handbook was launched as part of an event held at IMO headquarters in London to mark the International Day for Women in Maritime 2026.

This publication is the first of its kind, aimed at closing the gender gap in the maritime sector, where women account for just 1% of the world's seafaring workforce and hold only 19% of ministerial roles responsible for maritime affairs.

To watch the video

Professor Kitada explains by video what the *Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming in the Maritime Sector* is all about.

See here: <https://tinyurl.com/3e7uzehy>

A practical tool

The handbook provides practical guidance for maritime administrations, shipping companies, ports, shipyards and maritime education institutions on how to integrate gender considerations into policies, recruitment, training, workplace safety and leadership development.

It includes tools tailored to maritime organizations for gender analysis, the development of gender equality action plans, and monitoring and evaluation.

Presenting the handbook, Professor Kitada emphasized that gender mainstreaming is an effective strategy, process and methodology which works for everyone's benefit. She commented: '*Gender mainstreaming requires leadership to implement. No matter our role or level in an organization, we can exercise gender mainstreaming in both large and small capacities.*'

Moving beyond rhetoric

In the foreword, IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez said the industry must move '*beyond rhetoric and toward measurable action*,' adding that a more diverse maritime workforce is more competent, safer and more sustainable.



WMU Professor Momoko Kitada

He stated: '*Gender mainstreaming is the strategic tool we must employ to bridge this gap. It is not a*

secondary objective or a 'women's issue'; it is a globally recognized methodology used to ensure that every policy, every regulation, and every operational practice is scrutinized through a gender lens.'

WMU President Maximo Q. Mejia, Jr. said in the preface that the handbook was designed to serve as 'a roadmap to definitive change,' helping organizations implement practical measures to create more equitable workplaces.

He noted that WMU itself had reached gender parity in its Malmö MSc intake for 2025 after decades of targeted efforts to increase opportunities for women in maritime education.

Access the handbook

To access the *Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming in the Maritime Sector* (6.3MB) readers are invited to use the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/4tk8te23>

Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111)

Key outcomes on autonomous ships

GHG safety

Situation in the Strait of Hormuz

The IMO Maritime Safety Committee met for its 111th session from 13 to 22 May at IMO HQ in London. The meeting was chaired by Mr Theofilos Mozas of Greece. Key outcomes are outlined below.

First global code for autonomous ships (MASS Code)

IMO adopted a new International Code of Safety for Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships (MASS Code) to support the safe integration of AI-enabled and remotely operated commercial ships into global shipping.



The MASS Code sets out a comprehensive, goal-based framework to ensure that remotely controlled or autonomous ships are designed and operated to a level of safety, security and environmental protection that is expected of a conventional ship. They will also be required to comply with the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and other applicable mandatory IMO instruments.

The Code applies to cargo ships* and will take effect from 1 July 2026. As it is a non-mandatory instrument, Member States are given the opportunity to test its use while paving the way for making it mandatory under the SOLAS Convention.

Welcoming the milestone at the conclusion of the 111th session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) in London, held 13 to 22 May, IMO Secretary-General Mr Arsenio Dominguez said: 'This landmark achievement positions IMO at the forefront of regulating emerging technologies, demonstrating the Organization's ability to anticipate and shape the future of shipping. It represents a major step forward, enabling innovation while ensuring that safety, accountability and the human element remain at the core of maritime operations.'

New approach required

A ship is considered autonomous if such shipboard technology is designed and verified to control actions without human intervention. While the number of fully crewless or remote-operated ships are currently limited, a growing number are being successfully trialled internationally.



At MSC111 the IFSMA delegation from left: Secretary General Andy Cook, Stanislav Nezavitin (Ukraine), David Appleton (UK) and Morten Kveim (Norway).

The MASS Code introduces new requirements for the design, approval and operation of these ships, including in key areas such as navigation, connectivity, remote operations, fire safety, and search and rescue. It places strong emphasis on risk assessment, robust system design, cyber security and the integration of Remote Operations Centres (ROCs).

Importantly, it underscores the importance of human oversight, with the master retaining overall responsibility for the ship at all times – even if not on board the ship.

Roadmap towards binding rules

The new MASS Code supplements existing IMO instruments, taken due account of the international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). It is the culmination of nearly a decade of multilateral discussions, legal work and on-the-water trials, to enable new and conventional technologies to operate safely together.

The next steps for the Code include:

- **December 2026** – MSC 112 to re-establish MASS Working Group for the Development of a framework for an Experience-Building Phase (EBP) of the non-mandatory MASS Code.
- **2028** – Development of the mandatory MASS Code, based on the non-mandatory Code and results from the EBP and review conducted by the relevant sub-committees. Consideration of amendments to SOLAS (new chapter) for the Code's adoption.
- **By 1 July 2030** – Expected adoption of the IMO's first mandatory MASS Code, for entry into force on 1 January 2032.

In addition to the new MASS Code, the Maritime Safety Committee took the following key decisions:

Situation in the Strait of Hormuz

The Committee adopted a resolution requesting the support of IMO Member States for the Secretary-General's ongoing efforts to facilitate the safe evacuation of ships and seafarers trapped in the Persian Gulf.

The Committee urged Member States and organizations to assist trapped seafarers by providing essential supplies, establishing helplines and remote support, and keeping families informed. Crew changes were also encouraged.

The Committee requested the Secretary-General to closely monitor the situation and provide regular updates to Member States and relevant IMO bodies.

Guidelines for ships using alternative fuels

The Committee continued work on the safety regulatory framework for ships using new technologies and alternative fuels. It approved new Interim guidelines for use of ammonia cargo as fuel, to support the safe design, construction and operation of ships carrying and using ammonia as fuel.

The Committee approved two new sets of interim guidelines for training seafarers on ships using alternative fuels and technologies, reflecting the need to develop new skills while addressing the specific risks of each fuel type. These include:

- Interim guidelines on training for seafarers on ships using methyl/ethyl alcohol as fuel.
- Interim guidelines on training for seafarers on ships using ammonia as fuel.

The Committee also clarified how the one ship, one code principle applies to gas carriers using alternative fuels, including whether the IGF Code or IGC Code should apply, improving consistency and clarity in the regulatory framework.

Progress towards free ship tracking data for coastal States

The Committee approved amendments to the SOLAS Convention that would change how the Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) system works, with the aim of making global ship tracking data easier to

access, and improve safety, security and environmental protection at sea. The amendments will be considered for adoption by MSC 112 in December.

The amendments will allow coastal States to receive standard ship position reports free of charge, removing a major barrier to using the system. This is expected to help countries better monitor maritime activity, support search and rescue operations, and respond to issues such as illegal shipping and marine pollution.

LRIT is a worldwide system that allows governments to track ships by receiving regular updates on their position and identity.

Improving security of ship communications through VDES

The Committee adopted a resolution to introduce the VHF data exchange system (VDES) into the IMO regulatory framework, as an alternative to the current AIS tracking system currently required of ships. The new regulations are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2028.

VDES is a more advanced version of AIS that allows ships and coastal authorities to send and receive more data, more quickly and more securely. VDES is designed to make ship tracking more secure by adding authentication, helping to reduce the risk of spoofing.

The Committee also adopted revised Performance standards for shipborne VDES and approved Guidelines for the onboard operational use of shipborne VDES.

Secretary-General's closing remarks

'I will briefly highlight three key achievements of this session:

'Firstly, you have achieved a historic milestone with the adoption of the non-mandatory MASS Code — the first global and comprehensive regulatory framework dedicated to Maritime Autonomous Surface Ships. This landmark achievement positions IMO at the forefront of regulating emerging technologies, demonstrating the Organization's ability to anticipate and shape the future of shipping. It represents a major step forward, enabling innovation while ensuring that safety, accountability and the human element remain at the core of maritime operations.

'Secondly, you have made significant progress on GHG safety, in particular by advancing the development of the safety regulatory framework needed to support the uptake of new technologies and alternative fuels. You have also provided important clarifications on the application of the "one ship, one code" principle, contributing to greater coherence and clarity in the regulatory framework. This is an essential contribution to a safe and effective energy transition in shipping.

'Lastly, you have taken an important decision on the financial architecture of the LRIT system. This

decision lays the foundation for a more robust and sustainable framework, while clearly expressing your ambition to further develop and expand the use of LRIT in support of maritime safety, security and environmental protection.’

* The MASS Code applies to cargo ships covered under SOLAS Chapter 1.

Republic of the Congo

Supporting maritime digitalization

A needs assessment mission was conducted in the Republic of the Congo from 18 to 22 May to review existing port processes and institutional frameworks and support preparations for the introduction of a Maritime Single Window (MSW)¹ system at the Port of Pointe-Noire.

To exchange information by way of a single interface

The Maritime Single Window is a digital platform that enables stakeholders and agencies involved in vessel arrival, stay and departure to exchange information through a single interface. By simplifying information sharing, the system is expected to reduce the time and costs linked to ship and cargo clearance procedures.



Since 1 January 2024, all IMO Member States are required² to establish MSW systems in ports to improve the efficiency of global shipping.

Broad collaboration

This needs assessment mission was carried out by IMO consultants in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Civil Aviation and Merchant Navy, the Port Administration, relevant Ministries and Public Agencies including customs and border agencies, Port Health Service, the Border Police and Immigration Service, as well as private-sector stakeholders such as shipping lines, agents, and terminal operators.

The mission opening ceremony was presided over by HE Mr Josué Rodrigue Ngouonimba, Minister of

Transports, Civil Aviation and Merchant Shipping of the Republic of Congo. The mission concluded with a meeting gathering the consultants, the Maritime and Port Administrations to review and validate the findings.

Enhancing digital transformation

A mission report outlining a roadmap for the development of the MSW in Pointe-Noire, together with key findings and recommendations aligned with IMO guidance, will support the next steps in implementation and the development of related digital tools.

The report will support stakeholder mapping and provide clear directions to ensure the efficient and successful implementation of the MSW.

IMO's ITCP

The activity was delivered through IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP)³ in close collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Civil Aviation and Merchant Shipping of the Republic of the Congo.

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/3yknt3zz>

² <https://tinyurl.com/v6um9z9p>

³ <https://tinyurl.com/bdz3xpsn>

Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden region

Chair of the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment (DCoC/JA)

Statement on the resurgence of piracy

Somali piracy remains suppressed, but not eradicated, highlights the Chair of the Djibouti Code of Conduct/ Jeddah Amendment (currently South Africa) – a regional initiative implemented by IMO to combat piracy, armed robbery against ships and other illicit maritime activities in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden.

The Chair of the Djibouti Code of Conduct/Jeddah Amendment (DCoC/JA), on behalf of the Signatory States, expresses grave concern and strongly condemns the continued detention of the Republic of Palau-flagged tanker MT *Honour 25* (IMO 9109735), which has reportedly remained in captivity since 24 April 2026 under the control of pirates.

Details of circumstances and concerns were outlined in a statement issued on 26 May as below.

The Signatory States are deeply concerned at the deteriorating humanitarian situation on board the vessel and by the plight of the seventeen crew members, who remain in captivity under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions and are reportedly in desperate need of assistance, with onboard provisions now critically low.

These developments, together with the resurgence of piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia, reinforce a stark reality: despite the progress achieved in recent years, maritime security gains remain fragile and continue to require sustained vigilance, operational coordination, and collective international engagement.

The Signatory States further express deep concern regarding the fate and wellbeing of the crew members onboard the other vessels currently being held by pirates and armed robbers in the region, namely the Saint Kitts and Nevis-flagged general cargo vessel *Sward* (IMO 9174244), reportedly hijacked on 26 April 2026 with fifteen crew members onboard, and the Togo-flagged oil tanker MV *Eureka* (IMO 1022823), reportedly hijacked on 2 May 2026 with twelve crew members onboard.

The continued captivity of these seafarers further underscores the persistent and evolving threat posed by piracy and armed robbery against ships in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden, and reinforces the urgent need for strengthened regional and international cooperation to secure the safe release of all affected crew members and prevent further incidents.

The current incident serves as a stark reminder that Somali piracy remains suppressed, but not eradicated, and that sustained international and regional cooperation remains essential to safeguarding freedom of navigation, protecting seafarers, and ensuring maritime security and stability in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden.



The Chair supports the remarks delivered by the Secretary-General of the IMO during the 111th session of the Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111), which highlighted the renewed threat of piracy and armed robbery against ships off the coast of Somalia and emphasized the urgent need for practical and coordinated action.

Intervention by Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa

The Chair notes the interventions delivered by several Signatory States during MSC 111, including Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania, South Africa, and others, which underscored the growing concern in the region regarding the resurgence of Somali piracy and

the need for renewed international attention and operational responses.

In particular, the Signatory States take note of Kenya's intervention highlighting the importance of the Djibouti Code of Conduct Working Group 3 (WG3), which Member States established to drive policy discussions aimed at enabling regional States to contribute more effectively to addressing maritime security threats through strengthened operational cooperation and coordination at sea.

The Signatory States also note the concerns raised by several other Member States, as well as by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), which called for stronger and more urgent measures to protect seafarers operating in high-risk maritime environments.

Somalia call

In this regard, the Signatory States call upon the Federal Government of Somalia to make every possible effort, in cooperation with relevant regional and international partners, to facilitate the safe and immediate release of the vessel and crew members and to ensure their safety, wellbeing, and humane treatment.

The Signatory States further call upon the international community, including naval forces operating in the region, international organizations, and maritime security partners, to intensify efforts aimed at securing the release of the crew members and preventing further acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden.

The Signatory States also urge all Member States and relevant stakeholders to act decisively, as highlighted during MSC 111, by:

- **Enhancing** reporting and information-sharing through continued reporting of piracy and armed robbery incidents.
- **Ensuring** transparency regarding maritime security measures, including national requirements related to privately contracted armed security personnel.
- **Strengthening** regional and international cooperation, particularly through sustained support for the implementation of the DCoC/JA framework.
- **Fully implementing** relevant IMO instruments, including SOLAS chapter XI-2 and the ISPS Code; IMO guidance; and Best Management Practices (BMP), in order to better safeguard vessels and seafarers.

The Signatory States reaffirm their continued commitment under the DCoC/JA framework to strengthen regional cooperation, information sharing, operational coordination, and whole-of-government approaches to maritime security in order to address piracy and other illicit maritime activities.

The Signatory States also align themselves with the serious concerns highlighted by the Secretary-General of IMO regarding the deteriorating humanitarian situation faced by seafarers operating in high-risk areas. Seafarers operating in dangerous maritime environments continue to face prolonged confinement, sustained security threats, and severe psychological pressure.

Seafarers must never become collateral victims of geopolitical tensions, criminality, or delays in collective action. The principles are clear and unequivocal: freedom of navigation must be respected, and the safety, dignity, welfare, and humane treatment of seafarers must be guaranteed at all times.

South African chair

As Chair of the DCoC/JA, South Africa wishes to emphasize that this situation is not solely a maritime security issue, but also a pressing humanitarian concern. Reports of crew members being held hostage under armed guard, exposed to violence, uncertainty, and prolonged confinement underscore the urgent need for strengthened coordination, timely interventions, and practical operational responses.

Practical solutions exist. What is required now is the collective will to implement them urgently, decisively, and without delay.

The unequivocal message from the Signatory States today is clear: the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of seafarers are non-negotiable, and we will continue to support all efforts aimed at protecting them and securing their safe release.

Issued on behalf of the Signatory States of the
DCoC/JA

Republic of South Africa

Chair of the Djibouti Code of Conduct / Jedah
Amendment (DCOC/JA))

For more information

For more information about the Djibouti Code of Conduct readers are invited to use the link here: <https://dcoc.org/about-us>

IMO treaty on hazardous and noxious cargo

Entering into force in 2027

The 2010 HNS Convention establishes the first international compensation regime for accidents involving hazardous and noxious substances carried by sea.

The International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea (2010 HNS Convention) is set to enter into force on 29 November 2027, marking a milestone for shipping's global liability and compensation regime as

increasing volumes of chemicals and alternative fuels are transported by sea.

Conditions for the treaty's entry into force were met on 29 May 2026, paving the way for the 2010 HNS Convention (the 1996 Convention as amended by the 2010 Protocol) to enter into force eighteen months later.

In the words of IMO Secretary-General, Arsenio Dominguez: *'The fulfilment of the conditions for the entry into force of the HNS Protocol is a long-awaited milestone that closes an important gap in the international liability and compensation regime for shipping.'*

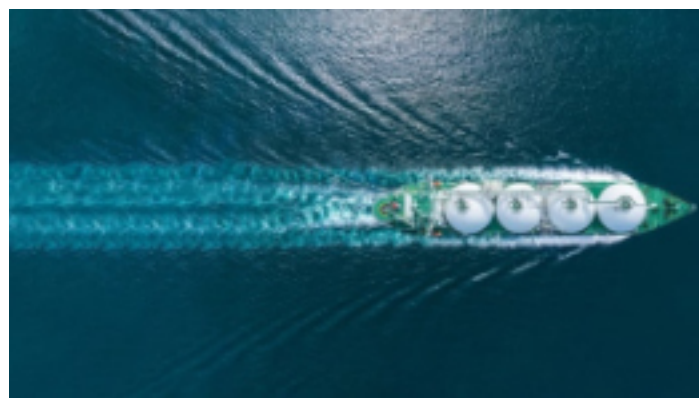
'This treaty will ensure that those affected by hazardous cargo incidents involving ships can access fair and timely compensation, while providing legal certainty for industry and governments.'

Conditions for entry into force met

Under article 21(1), the 2010 HNS Protocol will enter into force eighteen months after the following requirements have been satisfied:

- At least twelve States to express their consent to be bound, including four States each with not less than two million units of gross tonnage.
- The receipt, by the IMO Secretary-General, of information confirming that contributing cargo in those States amounted to at least 40 million tonnes in the preceding calendar year.

There are currently twelve contracting States* to the 2010 HNS Protocol, following ratifications by Belgium, Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Sweden in April 2026. Nine of these States have more than 2 million units of gross tonnage.



Reports on contributing cargo submitted by contracting States in accordance with Article 20 of the Protocol confirm that the required aggregate quantity of contributing cargo – more than 40 million tonnes – was achieved for the 2025 reporting year.

What the treaty covers

The 2010 HNS Convention complements existing IMO liability and compensation regimes addressing oil pollution and hazardous shipwrecks, extending similar protection to damage involving other hazardous and noxious substances.

The Convention covers loss of life, personal injury, property damage, economic loss, clean-up costs and environmental damage arising from incidents involving more than 2,000 hazardous substances carried by sea, including chemicals, oils, acids, fertilizers, alcohols, LNG and LPG.

Under the regime:

- Shipowners are subject to strict liability for damage and are required to maintain State-certified insurance or other financial security.
- Additional compensation is available through the HNS Fund, financed by contributions from receivers of HNS cargo in Contracting States.

It is estimated that approximately 65,000 ships will require HNS certificates of insurance or other financial security.

HNS Fund

The 2010 HNS Convention applies the “polluter pays” principle by ensuring that the shipping and HNS industries provide compensation for those who suffer loss or damage resulting from an HNS incident.

An HNS Fund will be established to provide compensation once the shipowner’s liability is exhausted. The Fund will be financed through contributions paid post-incident by receivers of HNS cargo in contracting States.

Total compensation available under the Convention is capped at 250 million Special Drawing Rights (SDR) of the International Monetary Fund (approximately US\$ 360 million at current exchange rates) per incident.

Shipowners are held strictly liable up to the maximum limit established under the Convention for the costs arising from an HNS incident.

The HNS Fund will be administered by States, with contributions based on the actual compensation required.

*Contracting States

The twelve contracting States to the HNS Convention, as at 29 May 2026, were: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, South Africa, Sweden and Türkiye.

Copernicus over Ireland

This rare cloud-free image of Ireland, acquired by one of the Copernicus Sentinel-3 satellites on 29 April 2026, provides an exceptional view of the island, revealing its surface in full spring detail.

Across the island, bright green tones dominate, indicating widespread vegetation growth associated with mild temperatures and ample moisture typical of the season. The central plains appear as a continuous agricultural mosaic, while darker upland areas

suggest thinner vegetation cover and more exposed terrain. Along the eastern seaboard, milky turquoise plumes indicate suspended sediments in coastal waters, shaped by river outflows and marine currents.

Copernicus Sentinel satellite observations allow tracking of such seasonal and coastal features over time, supporting environmental monitoring and analysis.



Credit: European Union, Copernicus Sentinel-3 imagery.

EU ©.

Earth Observation provides mankind with the tools needed to better understand and monitor the planet. This information can be used to make better decisions on the ground, from how to respond to wildfires to how to reduce air pollution in our cities.

Earth Observation in a nutshell

Earth Observation provides essential information on the world around us. It combines information from satellites with data from ground-based (in-situ) sensors and monitoring stations to help us map out the present, forecast the near future, and take action based on these insights. This data ranges from informing on the use of land by humans to insights into disaster risk.

EU Space’s Earth Observation component is Copernicus. It provides a massive array of freely accessible data and analysis for all kinds of users. Its six services, covering land, marine, and atmospheric

environments, as well as climate change, security, and emergency management, are helping Europe make more sustainable and secure choices every day.

Copernicus

Copernicus' Earth Observation data informs better decision-making worldwide, from improving public health to mitigating disaster risk and managing emergencies. Thanks to feedback from its users, it is constantly improving its already free and open databases.

Digital risks:

ITU report: Critical vulnerabilities in the world's interconnected systems

Joint expert report by ITU, UNDRR, and Sciences Po highlights resilience as the cornerstone of digital infrastructure stability

From Geneva, ITU asked the question: *'Are we ready for solar storms, submarine cable cuts, satellite disruptions, and extreme weather to disrupt communication networks and potentially trigger a "digital pandemic?"*

A new report: *When digital systems fail: The hidden risks of our digital world* – outlines risk scenarios on Earth, at sea, and in space, analysing the fragility of interconnected digital systems and offering a roadmap for preparedness.

Experts brought together by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and Sciences Po, call for coordinated action between countries to improve digital resilience and protect essential services like healthcare, finance, and emergency response.

In the words of Doreen Bogdan-Martin, ITU Secretary-General: *'Resilience must be built into the DNA of the technologies we depend on. This report urges us to consider the systemic nature of risks and rethink how we protect the systems that connect and empower humanity.'*

Kamal Kishore, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction and Head of UNDRR, added: *'As our societies become more reliant on digital technologies, disruptions caused by disasters can cascade across systems and borders, triggering far-reaching and potentially catastrophic failures. We must plan, build and maintain digital infrastructure with systemic risk in mind – now and for the future. Digital infrastructure must be resilient infrastructure.'*

The risks of digital dependency

Digital technologies have revolutionized how we live, connect, and work, yet our growing reliance on these systems has created risks that often go unnoticed.

A severe solar storm could disable satellites, disrupt navigation systems, and destabilize energy grids, with recovery times measured in months. Extreme temperatures could overwhelm data centres, leading to mobile service outages, as well as failures in healthcare systems and financial transactions. In the meantime, earthquakes or other natural hazards can sever vital Internet connections, slowing business operations and leaving entire nations offline for weeks.

Any specific scenario may seem isolated and unlikely, not alarming enough to prompt a timely global response. Yet digital vulnerabilities are real, and unexpected incidents are bound to happen.

The report highlights another vulnerability: societies have grown dependent on digital systems without maintaining analogue skills and ensuring adequate fallback options. When big systems fail, offline alternatives are not always available anymore. **(For an item relative to undersea business see the footnote below:*)**

Arancha González, Dean of the Paris School of International Affairs at Sciences Po, commented: *'Facing systemic risks means looking beyond data and working across disciplines. This report shows how evidence-based policymaking can help us build resilience in an increasingly interconnected world.'*

Turning knowledge into action

The report calls on policymakers, the private sector, and civil society to act now to prevent these risks from becoming a digital pandemic urging for global commitment and coordinated action.

Six priorities to be considered for safeguarding critical digital infrastructure:

- **Deepen knowledge:** Identify vulnerabilities, map cross-sector dependencies, develop models for potential chain reactions, and maintain analogue skills.
- **Modernize risk management:** Treat non-intentional digital disruptions as a core risk by updating legal and disaster-risk frameworks and incentives.
- **Strengthen standards and planning:** Establish robust fallback systems and conduct joint multi-sector scenario planning.
- **Improve coordination on critical risks:** Proactively coordinate on high-impact risks affecting space weather, submarine cables, satellites, and data centres.
- **Build societal resilience:** Equip communities and organizations to withstand and recover from digital disruptions by fostering adaptive capacities.
- **Foster trust and collaboration:** Build capacity, convene stakeholders, and promote shared awareness and accountability across sectors and borders.

The findings are the result of a collaborative process involving experts from twelve countries, representing national authorities, the private sector, academia and international organizations.

When digital systems fail: The hidden risks of our digital world

The report is available here:

<https://tinyurl.com/ar39btwj>

***A footnote: Undersea**

On 15 January 2022, the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano erupted 40 kilometres north of the Tongan capital. It shredded 80 kilometres of the single submarine cable connecting the archipelago to the rest of the world. The nearest repair ship was stationed in Papua New Guinea, more than 4,200 kilometres away. Tonga went dark for five weeks. The domestic inter-island cable, buried under volcanic debris, took eighteen months more to repair. Tonga carried little global traffic. Had the same cable geography applied to a major routing hub, a choke point where dozens of systems converge, the outage would not have been a footnote of a volcanic eruption. It would have been a financial and logistical crisis measured in continents.

Hour 0-6: The rupture and the governance vacuum it exposes

Several cables are severed immediately. Others sustain damage that instruments will not detect until day eight, when they fail completely, eliminating the residual connectivity. In the first six hours, satellite backup absorbs approximately 8% of normal traffic. Within 90 minutes, even that capacity is overwhelmed.

The affected cables are owned by a consortium of private operators from a number of countries. Repair vessel mobilization requires commercial negotiation and approvals from coastal States, including routing authorisations across three exclusive economic zones. The fastest available cable repair vessel is nine days away. A second is identified but requires 18 days to reach the severed cables.

The whole Pacific is covered by a few ships.

Emergency requests to redirect satellite capacity trigger competing national claims on available bandwidth. No agreed protocol for prioritization currently exists, nor a shared definition of what level of connectivity constitutes a humanitarian minimum. This reflects the distributed nature of responsibilities across national authorities, international organizations, and private operators.

Days 2-7: Cascading into economies and bodies

Financial clearing for the region is suspended after 48 hours of degraded connectivity. Businesses can not settle import payments. Port operations slow by 60%

as logistics software, dependent on cloud services, becomes inaccessible. A regional central bank declares a connectivity emergency. Health facilities that had migrated patient records to cloud platforms lose access to clinical histories. A doctor treating a patient in a rural clinic has no record of the patient's medications or previous diagnoses.



This is the moment when a system that appeared to be about information management reveals itself to be a system of medical safety. The cloud migration has been efficient, but it created a hidden interdependency to be taken into account.

Days 8-21: Three weeks without the internet

The region reverts to operating on high-frequency radio and physical document transport. A generation of administrators, health workers, teachers, and traders who had never worked without digital connectivity discover, under stress, that analogue fallback requires skills that have been lost, equipment that has been decommissioned, and institutional memory that had not survived the transition to digital systems.

Misinformation spreads rapidly to fill the information vacuum. With verified information sources unavailable, speculations fill the vacuum. Rumours about the cause of the outage, about when connectivity would return, about which banks had cash reserves and which did not, circulate and are amplified. The information disruption is no longer a

secondary effect of the cable rupture; it becomes a crisis of its own.

What this scenario reveals

Submarine cables carry over 99% of international internet traffic. Yet, there are only a few hundred globally. Repair capacity is commercially contracted and geographically limited. While bodies such as the International Cable Protection Committee that include private and public actors, coordinate cable protection and facilitate repair operations, this capacity operates without a strategic reserve requirement or any public international governance framework adequate to a major multi-cable event. In this scenario, every relevant institution, national governments, international organisations, cable operators, satellite providers, and financial regulators have a partial role. However, no actor has the authority required to match its responsibility. The crisis is not only caused by an eruption;

it is mainly caused by an architecture in which no single actor holds both the authority and the operational capacity required to match the scale of its responsibilities.

Acknowledgement

This text is extracted from a document co-published by ITU, UNDRR and the Technology and Global Affairs Innovation Hub of the Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po.

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Switching off AIS: questionable security

Commercial vessels operating in contested maritime regions, such as the Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman, Red Sea and others, have increasingly adopted the practice of disabling Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders to reduce exposure to location tracking and visibility to threat actors.

However, as research by Cydome (www.cydome.io) has shown, turning off the AIS could still leave the ship's location publicly visible, resulting in a false sense of security.

It is understood that improperly configured Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) devices communicate their location via public interfaces, regardless of AIS status.

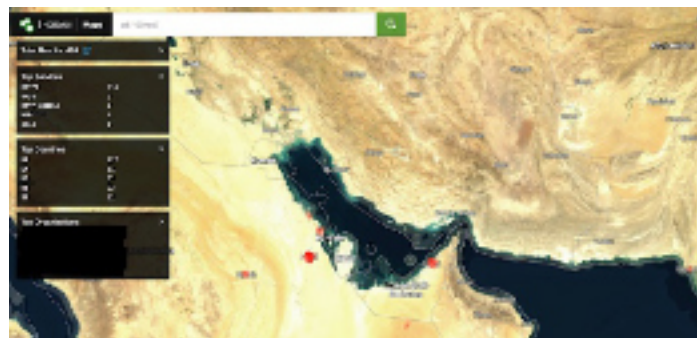
Furthermore, it was found that cyber risks posed by VSATs could severely compromise ship operations. One example of such an incident was the exploitation of VSAT vulnerabilities in 2025 during cyberattacks on a fleet of Iranian tankers.

To mitigate those risks, shipping companies have been advised to adopt comprehensive risk management and properly defend the broader attack surface with a multi-layered approach, rather than treating AIS deactivation as an isolated security measure.

It is a given that AIS transmissions are generally mandatory. Disabling them could be considered as a violation under national laws, class and insurance requirements and so forth. We do not encourage or support disabling AIS transmissions; however, as we are aware that this is a known phenomenon, this research highlights location-sharing and cyber risks of VSAT equipment in use by maritime operations.

Ship location sharing technologies and practices: Not Just AIS

To recap AIS is a mandatory tracking system established under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) for the real-time broadcast of the vessel identification and position. Since AIS is a public broadcast, it is increasingly common to see AIS systems deactivated when traveling in high-risk waters such as the Strait of Hormuz in an attempt to go dark to avoid safety threats.



A regional map query for satellite infrastructure reveals hundreds of exposed nodes in and around the Persian Gulf, including highly vulnerable services.

Illustration per Cydome www.cydome.io
Cydome ©.

Since the escalation of hostilities in the Persian Gulf area, AIS blackout events have surged in the waters of across the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman, and the Red Sea. According to maritime intelligence providers, AIS gaps lasting hours to days have been recorded by dozens of vessels transiting these waters.

However, shipmasters, crews and maritime operators need to be aware that AIS is not the only technology that transmits the ship location. Vessels rely almost exclusively on satellite communication, using VSATs for bi-directional ship-to-shore satellite connectivity, serving both operational and crew/guest welfare needs.

VSAT Electronic Footprint and Location Sharing

Due to its operational importance, the onboard VSAT constantly operates and is not turned off. The VSAT is assigned a public-facing IP address and communicates with the public internet and sometimes also directly with the onshore station. However, in

addition to the external communication gateway, VSATs also have additional interfaces for operational monitoring and maintenance. If left unprotected or unpatched, those interfaces can be exploited to gain unauthorized access to the VSAT and from there to the ship's network.

As Cydome researchers identified, some VSAT interfaces communicate the ship's location. Using internal and Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) tools, the Cydome research team was able to confirm that many VSAT devices used in the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf region are extensively exposed:

- Management interfaces that are directly accessible from the public internet.
- Network services that run with default configurations.
- Hub systems that aggregate connectivity for entire fleets that are accessible without authentication,
- VSAT devices running on old infrastructure with known vulnerabilities, in some cases, multiple critical vulnerabilities that can permit an external attacker to gain administrative access to the device (and from there, other devices in the ship's network at risk).

Turning off AIS does not make a ship invisible

The VSAT terminal still transmits – and through it, vessel position, configuration data, and exploitable vulnerabilities remain exposed to any capable adversary scanning the right ports.

How VSAT reveals position

What most crews and shipping companies do not realize is that VSAT exposure is not only a cyber attack surface – it is also a location disclosure surface. Four distinct mechanisms allow a capable adversary to infer a vessel's position directly from its VSAT terminal, without access to AIS information, and without active exploitation:

- Satellite beam geolocation. VSAT terminals connect to specific satellite beams, each covering a defined geographic footprint. The beam that the terminal is registered on narrows its location to a region of hundreds of square miles. Combined with signal timing and frequency data, this can be further refined.
- IP geolocation and ASN attribution. VSAT terminals are assigned IP addresses routed through the provider's network. Many maritime VSAT providers publish or inadvertently leak ASN routing tables that associate IP ranges with geographic regions or vessel classes. A terminal's active IP – visible from its exposed management interface – can place it within a defined operational corridor.
- GNSS position via user interfaces. VSAT terminals frequently feature web-based graphical user interfaces (GUIs) intended for onboard monitoring. If these interfaces are internet-facing and lack proper authentication, an adversary can simply access the dashboard

and read the vessel's exact live GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System) coordinates directly from the screen.

- Network services and management interface data. Exposed network services on VSAT terminals frequently serve configuration data, including full GPS coordinates, terminal identifiers, and vessel names – directly readable without authentication. In Cydome's research, multiple terminals in the Gulf region were found serving this data openly to the internet, exposing the vessels' exact location.

The conclusion is that even if a vessel disables its AIS to avoid location tracking, while leaving its VSAT terminal exposed, it has not gone dark. It has simply shifted its beacon from one system to a less familiar interface of another.

No freedom yet

By Michael Grey, IFSMA Honorary Member

Amid a salvo of ferocious two-way threats and imprecations, accompanied by a token barrage of missiles from Iran and the obliteration (the word of the year?) of some speedboats, Project Freedom has been put on hold.

Two US-flag ships have made an escorted escape, but for the rest of the crews aboard the trapped fleet, it is back to business as usual; keeping their ships operational, trying to maintain morale and hoping that any incoming ordnance does not have their coordinates inputted. It could be a long, hope-sapping wait, but by now, expectations will surely be low, which may mitigate the inevitable disappointments, when the trumpeted "deal" fails to emerge. Nothing happens in a hurry in these turgid negotiations between parties which, with good reason, do not trust each other an inch. For the operators of these ships, it is now a matter of trying to keep the ships adequately supplied with food and water, arranging reliefs, if this is humanly possible, and trying to reassure their employees that they have not been forgotten.

There are already abandoned crews which the Mission to Seafarers and other welfare organisations are supporting, so there is an increasing need for everyone to support these wonderful helpers. Project Freedom was surely always a matter of hope over expectation. Whatever encouraging noises were coming from the US military, no responsible shipmaster is going to risk an exit through the Straits of Hormuz, if there is the slightest risk of an attack. Merchant mariners, whose war this definitely is not, are not paid to be heroic, while shipmasters know the priority of their duties, which revolve around the safety of their ships and all aboard them. And for the present, of the choices on offer, it is safer to stay. In practical terms, they know that they operate large, slow-moving targets, with neither the sea room nor the time to manoeuvre to avoid incoming ordnance.

What guarantees could ever be given that some trigger-happy Revolutionary Guard outpost, whatever Tehran might have decreed, could not resist the prospect of martyrdom, with a deep-laden VLCC in

their sights. And surely, even the most enthusiastic proponents of Project Freedom knew that all it would take is for a single missile or drone to hit a departing laden tanker, for the futility of the scheme to be exposed. And to do the shipping industry justice, it too has rejected any moves that increases the threat level to their hard-pressed and anxious crews. At the same time, as the weeks extend into months, and in the absence of any sort of realistic peace plan that will not leave the stranded ships and their crews as some sort of sacrificial pawns on the great diplomatic chess-board, the worries increase.

It is a long time ago, but it would be surprising if some more thoughtful operators have not recollected the miserable fate of the 60-odd merchant ships which were cut off in the waters of the Shatt al Arab in the early 80s, as Iran and Iraq struggled for sovereignty over the delta in their gruesome war. The ships found themselves targeted by both sides, weeks went by with the crews increasingly demoralised and terrorised. Ships were hit, and abandoned; others were left with skeleton crews to keep them running in the hope that they could escape. Eventually it became obvious to all that there was no hope of the war raging around them ceasing, and the last crews made their escape overland, often in hair-raising circumstances. Some of the ships were left in the hands of local watchmen, but there was nothing they could do to prevent them gradually being wrecked, looted, or blown to pieces by the artillery of both warring parties.

They pretty well all ended up in the Constructive Total Loss ledgers of their insurers, raw material, when the war eventually ended, for the local scrap-merchants. One would like to think that we are a long way from this grim sort of scenario, as the circumstances are somewhat different. But wars in this region, tend to drag on, consume a vast amount of humanity and material and it is probably wise to keep expectations of meaningful resolution realistically low. As for those afloat, one can only hope that they stay safe.

Michael Grey is former editor of Lloyd's List.

This article first appeared in *The Maritime Advocate Online* Issue No 907 of 9 May 2026. It appears here by kind permission of the Editor and the Author ©

Sri Lanka Cadet training

Sailors' Society input

Wellness at Sea

At Sailors' Society the charity's innovative Wellness at Sea training programme for maritime cadets has now been launched in Sri Lanka, marking a significant step in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the next generation of seafarers from one of the world's key seafarer supply nations.

This initiative supplements the island's maritime curriculum and is carried out in partnership with ITF Seafarers' Trust and is supported by the National Union of Seafarers Sri Lanka (NUSS).

Wellness at Sea programme

Devised specifically for cadets at the beginning of their maritime careers, the programme builds on feedback from the Society's Wellness at Sea Conferences, which have already reached more than 35,000 cadets, trainees and ratings, and the charity's acclaimed Wellness at Sea training programme.

Aiming to equip young seafarers with practical tools to manage stress, build resilience, and maintain positive mental health while at sea, the first batch of training took place at MSTI Maritime Academy, Sri Lanka.

The 35 engineering cadets and the Academy gave the training overwhelmingly positive feedback, highlighting the relevance and impact of sessions.

Comment

An Academy spokesperson said: *'MSTI is proud to introduce the Wellness at Sea programme in collaboration with Sailors' Society – marking a significant milestone as the first maritime institute in Sri Lanka to partner with this globally recognised initiative.'*



Sailors' Society is reshaping cadet training in Sri Lanka.

Photo: Sailors' Society ©

'It brings a well-rounded approach to cadet development. Through this partnership, MSTI Maritime Academy reaffirms its commitment to developing not only skilled engineers but also mentally resilient and well-prepared seafarers, setting a new benchmark for maritime education in Sri Lanka.'

Sara Baade, CEO of Sailors' Society, added: *'Cadets face various challenges as they transition into life at sea, including isolation, demanding workloads, and prolonged periods away from home. This programme addresses these realities through interactive sessions covering emotional wellbeing, coping strategies, peer support, and how to access help when needed.'*

'Cadets are the future of our industry, and it is vital that we invest in their wellbeing from the very start of their careers. By launching cadet training in Sri Lanka, we are helping young seafarers build the resilience and confidence they need, not only to succeed professionally, but to thrive personally.'

Readers wishing to learn more about the Sailors' Society's training programme for cadets are invited to use the link here: www.sailors-society.org/cadets/india

Africa

Earlier Sailors' Society had celebrated a successful year-end milestone in reshaping wellness at sea for cadets in Africa where the charity and the ITF Seafarers' Trust successfully completion a year-long transformative partnership in Africa.

Together, they have equipped more than 1,000 cadets and marine engineering students through leading maritime institutions in Ethiopia, Ghana, Tanzania, Liberia, Kenya and South Africa with the tools they need to thrive at sea.

This bespoke initiative, based on the Society's acclaimed and established Wellness at Sea programme, helps the next generation of African potential seafarers prepare for their future careers by focusing on mental health, resilience, relationships, conflict management, piracy awareness and overall wellbeing.

About Sailors' Society

For more than 200 years, international maritime charity Sailors' Society has been transforming the lives of seafarers and their families. The charity works to provide practical, emotional and spiritual welfare support around the clock, day in day out, to today's 1.9 million seafarers, supporting wellbeing across every area of their lives and giving them the best opportunity to enjoy a fulfilling – and productive – career at sea.

Hong Kong–Guangdong inland water transport

Advance electrification

Wah Kwong NatPower and CKS accord

It has been reported on 15 May that Wah Kwong NatPower Holdings signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Chu Kong Shipping Enterprises (Group) Co., Ltd., a subsidiary of Guangdong Provincial Port & Shipping Group Company Limited.

Mutual benefit, complementary strengths

The two parties have agreed to establish a cooperative framework based on the principles of mutual benefit, complementary strengths and collaborative development, with a focus on advancing industries related to the electrification of Hong Kong's waterborne transport. The MoU lays the groundwork for further exchanges and business exploration.

Under the MoU, the two parties will engage in in-depth discussions aligned with the shipping industry's low-carbon transition, focusing on areas including electric vessel construction and technological innovation, charging and battery-swap networks at Guangdong–

Hong Kong terminals, and the overall promotion of water transport electrification in Hong Kong.

Sharing information

It is understood that both sides will share industry information and jointly explore relevant policy and technical developments.

The MoU was signed by Mr Vincent Ni, the General Manager of Wah Kwong NatPower. Mr Ni noted that establishing industry-wide collaborative mechanisms is essential to translating low-carbon transition concepts into tangible outcomes.

A systematic endeavour

He stated that water transport electrification is a systemic endeavour that requires close coordination across the entire value chain. Cooperation with CKS reflects a shared vision for the development of water transport electrification in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area. He added that Wah Kwong NatPower looks forward to pursuing pragmatic discussions and identifying application-driven collaboration opportunities to contribute to the sustainable development of the industry.

Development of supporting infrastructure

It is well known that the shipping industry is entering an accelerated phase of green and low-carbon transition. As a leading hub for maritime innovation, the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macao Greater Bay Area is advancing the deployment of electric vessels alongside the development of supporting infrastructure.



Illustration per www.cksd.com
CKSD©.

At the same time, the region is building an interconnected green energy ecosystem, expanding shoreside charging networks and promoting standardisation across charging and battery-swapping systems. This coordinated approach is critical to enabling seamless cross-regional operations and overcoming key energy replenishment challenges.

Advancing the global shipping industry's energy transition

Wah Kwong NatPower is focused on advancing the global shipping industry's energy transition. Leveraging the combined expertise of Wah Kwong Maritime Transport Holdings Limited and NatPower Marine, the company is actively developing clean

energy, shore power, and related infrastructure solutions.

CKS, a wholly owned subsidiary of Guangdong Provincial Port and Shipping Group Company Limited in Hong Kong, brings strong operational capabilities and extensive experience in port logistics and waterborne transport. The signing of this MoU marks a significant step forward in accelerating maritime electrification, combining the complementary strengths of both organisations.

To deepen collaboration

Together, the parties will deepen collaboration to explore practical, scalable pathways for water transport electrification, aligned with Hong Kong's specific operating environment and broader industry trends.

To accelerate project development

Following the agreement, both parties will establish a joint working group and structure collaboration framework to accelerate project development, identify priority opportunities, and bring forward tangible infrastructure solutions.

The system is broken. We have had enough

ITF statement

World's seafarers' and dockers' unions demand immediate end to seafarer humanitarian crisis – call for governments to confront the Flag of Convenience system that enables exploitation and fails to protect seafarers

The world's maritime unions came together at the ITF's Fair Practices Committee* in an unprecedented show of solidarity to demand an immediate end to the humanitarian crisis faced by seafarers in the Persian Gulf. This was reported in mid-May.

The unions reiterate the ITF's call for a permanent ceasefire and full de-escalation by all parties, and the urgent initiation of diplomacy grounded in international law. They condemn the illegal bombing carried out by Israel and the United States, and the subsequent retaliatory attacks launched by Iran across the region, in violation of the most fundamental rule of international law: the prohibition on the use of force.

More than 20,000 seafarers remain trapped inside the Strait of Hormuz, facing fear and uncertainty, cut off from their families, and in many cases running short of food, water and fuel.

A personal appeal

Seafarers have been killed and injured in attacks in a war zone they did not choose to enter. They are workers largely from the Global South, far from home, carrying the world's cargo on behalf of all our economies and communities. Yet they are being used as pawns in geopolitical conflict.

The mental health of seafarers in the region is under immense strain, and employers – including our partners in the International Bargaining Forum – continue to deny enhanced protections for psychosocial harm, including suicide in the most desperate cases.

The ITF and our affiliated unions have been fighting the Flag of Convenience (FOC) system for decades. We have named it, campaigned against it, documented its human consequences, and demanded that governments act to end it.

We are naming it again now: the FOC system is the rotten apple at the core of seafarer exploitation. Within this crisis, it is behind many of the abuses our inspectors and support teams are dealing with daily. It is the enabling architecture behind the shadow fleet, behind record-breaking abandonment figures and behind the worst abuses of the Covid-19 crew change crisis. And governments have chosen, year after year, crisis after crisis, to fail seafarers.

The system is broken, we have the evidence

Since the US/Israel-Iran war began, the ITF has received over 2,200 requests for assistance from seafarers in the region. Half relate to unpaid wages and contractual entitlements; around 20% are requests for repatriation; and roughly 10% concern vessels running critically low on essential fuel and supplies. To date, the ITF has assisted in the repatriation of more than 540 seafarers.

This crisis did not arrive without warning. The ITF's data showed that 2025 was again the worst year on record for seafarer abandonment – with 6,223 seafarers abandoned, a 32% increase on the previous year and the sixth consecutive year of rising cases. A crisis that was already happening.



Image credit: REUTERS ©.

Under the FOC system, a shipowner can register a vessel in a state with no genuine link to its ownership, management or operation – in contravention of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In exchange for registration fees, flag states offer minimal scrutiny and near-zero accountability. They are selling enforcement-free sovereignty.

The simple fact that a shipowner can buy a flag, exploit a crew, abandon a vessel, and register under a

different flag tomorrow – legally – tells you everything about the parlous state of maritime governance.

Flag states and unscrupulous employers have failed seafarers repeatedly, without consequence. The worst FOC flags have shown a complete derogation of responsibility towards their crews. That is a choice, a choice to collect registration fees over enforcing and protecting seafarers' rights.

Our demands

1. Mandatory beneficial ownership transparency for all vessel registrations.
2. Government investigations into the FOC system.
3. Enforcement of the 'genuine link' – flag states that cannot demonstrate this link should lose the right to issue flags.
4. Full accountability for flag states that repeatedly breach their Maritime Labour Convention obligations.
5. A guaranteed right to repatriation, wage recovery, and legal redress for abandoned seafarers – with flag states held financially liable where shipowners cannot be found.

The FOC system was built and expanded through the active choices of governments. It can be reformed through different choices. Seafarer abandonment, false flags, shadow fleets, sanctions evasion – these are interconnected outcomes of a failing system. They will keep repeating until the system is reformed.

As representatives of the world's seafarers' and dockers' unions, we say this: *'We have had enough. Enough exploitation. Enough abandonment. Enough of a system that treats the people who keep the global economy moving as expendable.'*

The world is watching the Strait of Hormuz. The international community must decide whether it is serious about protecting the workers who keep global trade moving.

****The ITF Fair Practices Committee is a joint committee of ITF seafarers' and dockers' section affiliated unions, which oversee the ITF campaign against Flags of Convenience.***

Global seabed mapping

Five million square kilometres added in a year

At the end of April the Nippon Foundation-GEBCO Seabed 2030 Project announced that 28.7% of the world's ocean floor has now been mapped, with almost five million square kilometres of data added over the past year.

The 2026 figure was announced by Mitsuyuki Unno, Executive Director of The Nippon Foundation, at the Assembly of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO), which took place from 19 to 23 April in Monaco.

The latest update represents approximately 104 million square kilometres of mapped seabed – an area equivalent to more than two-thirds of the Earth's land surface. Over the past year alone, a further five million square kilometres of data have been incorporated into the GEBCO Grid.

A diverse global community

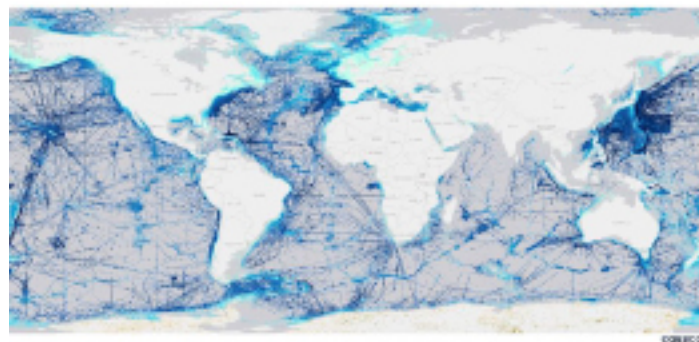
This progress reflects ongoing contributions from a growing and increasingly diverse global community. A total of 220 organisations have now contributed, including fifteen new contributors over the past year, with first-time data contributions from countries including Malaysia, Morocco, Papua New Guinea and Saudi Arabia, among others.

Comments

Reflecting on the announcement, Seabed 2030 Director Jamie McMichael-Phillips said: *'This update reflects what the global community can achieve when data is shared openly and collaboratively. Seabed 2030 exists to help bring those contributions together, and we are seeing that collective effort translate into meaningful results.'*

'We are grateful to The Nippon Foundation and GEBCO for their ongoing support, which enables us to accelerate progress towards a complete map of the ocean floor.'

Announcing the update, Mitsuyuki Unno, Executive Director of The Nippon Foundation, commented: *'The progress reflected in the 2026 Grid demonstrates what can be achieved through sustained international collaboration.'*



All data collected and shared with the Seabed 2030 project is included in the free and publicly available GEBCO global grid, supporting ocean science, policy and informed decision-making.

'At The Nippon Foundation, we are committed to supporting people and organisations working to deepen our understanding of the ocean, and to strengthening the connections between them – helping to ensure that knowledge of the seabed can be built upon and passed on to future generations.'

Evert Flier, GEBCO Chair, added: *"The GEBCO Grid is a global, collaborative dataset that brings together bathymetric data from a wide range of sources into a consistent and authoritative reference. With each update, it provides an increasingly robust foundation*

for ocean science and related applications – and today’s announcement reflects the steady progress being made in building a more complete picture of the ocean floor.”

The 2026 update includes significant regional increases in mapped coverage. The ROPME Sea Area more than tripled in coverage, increasing from approximately 6.4% to 20.5%.

Broad coverage

Coverage also increased across the Eastern Atlantic, North Indian Ocean, Meso American and Caribbean Sea, and North Sea regions. At the national level, substantial increases were recorded within several Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs).

Unshared datasets

Further highlights from the past year include the incorporation of a wide range of new and previously unshared datasets, including:

- Significant contributions from major data repositories, including NOAA-NCEI and PANGAEA.
- Expanded coastal mapping through datasets such as the Global Coastal SDB Dataset from Copernicus/EOMAP, adding new coverage in areas not represented in previous Grid releases.
- Notable satellite-derived bathymetry from the Greenwater Foundation, in partnership with TCarta and Caladan Oceanic.
- Additional bathymetric data from the Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology (JAMSTEC), expanding coverage in the North Pacific.
- Deep-water mapping data from NOAA-led Seascope Alaska campaigns.
- Multibeam survey data contributed by the Directorate of Hydrography and Navigation of the Brazilian Navy.
- Multibeam data around the Comoros, contributed by the Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières (BRGM), marking a new contributing organisation.

All data collected and shared with the Seabed 2030 project is included in the free and publicly available GEBCO global grid, supporting ocean science, policy and informed decision-making.

About Seabed 2030

Established in 2017, Seabed 2030 is a collaborative project between The Nippon Foundation and GEBCO, which seeks to inspire and accelerate the complete mapping of the world’s ocean, and to compile all the data into the freely available GEBCO Ocean Map.

The Project is formally endorsed as a Decade Action of the UN Ocean Decade. GEBCO is a joint programme of the IHO and the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO, and is the only organisation with a mandate to map the entire ocean floor.

The Danish Straits

BELTREP and SOUNDREP

IMO adopts amendments

Denmark, together with Sweden and the European Commission, has led the efforts behind amendments intended to strengthen navigational safety and authorities’ handling of safety and environmental risks in Danish waters.

On 22 May IMO’s Maritime Safety Committee (MSC 111) adopted amendments to the ship reporting systems BELTREP and SOUNDREP for the Great Belt and the Sound.

Amendments here mean that ships will in the future be required to report information on relevant insurance certificates when transiting Danish waters. The measure builds on existing international ship reporting systems.



These amendments were adopted with broad support following extensive and at times politically charged discussions.

The purpose of the amendments is to strengthen the maritime situational awareness, support the handling of incidents, and contribute to safe navigation and the protection of the marine environment, including in areas already designated as Particularly Sensitive Sea Areas (PSSA) under IMO.

Sub-standard shipping: growing international concern

Adoption here comes against the backdrop of growing international concern regarding substandard shipping and unclear ownership and insurance conditions.

The measure agreed will contribute to a stronger basis for authorities’ handling of safety and environmental risks, including insufficient insurance coverage.

It was reported by the Danish Maritime Administration (DMA) that amendments will enter into force six months after their adoption.

Now wipe your feet

By Michael Grey, Honorary IFSMA Member

As this is being written, and if nothing more untoward occurs, the little expedition ship *Hondius* is due to arrive at Rotterdam after her grim encounter with the deadly Hantavirus on her latest cruise in Southern waters. The crew, who have been operating this ship in what appears to have been heroic circumstances, will be received by the quarantine authorities and closely monitored until they can be pronounced free from any further risk of infection. It was not something they would have contemplated as they set sail all those weeks ago for their latest exciting voyage to unusual places.

The ship, one presumes, will be given an exceptionally thorough scrub down. *Hondius* was a tiddler in cruise ship circles, but the difficulties caused to the authorities in so many countries after the fatalities among passengers, who were dispersing to their home countries through the international airways, surely will have produced some uncomfortable lessons. Oxygen bottles and medics having to be airdropped over Tristan da Cunha, along with desperate efforts to trace people who might have been seated near to an infected ex-passenger on aircraft flying all over the world, were just part of the emerging difficulties. There were only a couple of hundred souls aboard this little ship, but what if it had been a large cruise vessel, with several thousand embarked? It was suggested that a couple of bird watching enthusiasts, who had been tramping around a Patagonian rubbish tip in search of rare feathered friends could possibly have brought the virus on rat droppings on their boots when they returned to the ship had, quite innocently, begun the emergency. Suppose it had been several coachloads of eager cruise passengers, off a really big ship, who had been tramping around the accretions of rodent faeces, as they keenly photographed the wildlife. One would like to think that such possibilities have now been factored in to future cruise programmes.

What with the half dozen big cruise ships which were trapped with their passengers in the Gulf when hostilities began, which nobody in their operational management seemed to have anticipated, cruising has had something of a singular start to the 2026 season. The operation to extract these ships through the so-called mine-infested straits, will be a story in itself. But on cue, while the port health people were digesting the intelligence about the *Hondius* incident, Ambassador's vessel *Ambition*, with 1187 folk embarked, was reporting 48 cases of Norovirus on board and being banned from her French port of call. The authorities, with clearly heightened sensitivity because of the media focus on cruise ship disease, were obviously taking no chances. Those operating cruise ships make the very valid point that most of these common stomach bugs come up the gangway with passengers who minimise any incipient illness because they don't wish to cancel their holiday at the last minute.

The staff, and on-board medical teams do their best, but these bugs do spread, despite the isolation of

those who have become unwell. Port Health authorities are also increasingly reluctant to have hundreds of potential carriers swarming ashore in their jurisdictions from cruise ships, which may well swell existing local intolerance to large-scale tourism. While those running ports and tourist facilities may work hard to market themselves, and encourage cruise ship calls, there is a growing blow-back against the sheer size of giant cruise vessels with their effect upon those who merely reside in these popular places and feel increasingly overwhelmed by tourist "invasions." Amsterdam, Venice, Barcelona and many other popular tourist destinations on the cruise ship itinerary are now actively discouraging calls, while there is pressure to use less frequented ports, which do not suffer such tourist numbers. However, there may be other health, or safety risks involved with less developed destinations.

It is likely that the larger cruise lines may elect to increasingly develop their own exclusive destinations, such as can already be found in the Caribbean, where the interference with the local population is less intrusive. There have even been suggestions that with so many extraordinary attractions aboard the largest and most exotic cruise ships, it would make perfect sense for them not to go anywhere once their guests are embarked. They would then serve as a combination of theme park and up-market resort; self-contained and employing the local facilities for fresh supplies. Then, after the season has finished, the giant holiday attraction can move on to another long-term berth elsewhere. It would save a lot of expensive fuel. Planning authorities, it might be expected, would require consultation.

Michael Grey is former editor of *Lloyd's List*

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Strait of Juan de Fuca

US, Canadian, and Japanese Coast Guards

Joint SAR exercise

From Seattle the US Coast Guard, Japan Coast Guard and Canadian Coast Guard conducted a trilateral search and rescue exercise in the Strait of Juan de Fuca near Victoria, British Columbia on 21 May.

The joint operation aimed to enhance interoperability, communication, and coordination among the three nations during complex maritime emergencies.

During the exercise, crews responded to a simulated sailing vessel in distress, requiring multi-national coordination to locate, recover and transport mock casualties. The scenarios tested joint communication, search pattern execution, and the safe transfer of personnel between vessels from different nations.

Working alongside the Japan Coast Guard's largest and most technically advanced training vessel,

Itsukushima, the exercise yielded a unique opportunity to forge partnerships alongside future Japan Coast Guard officers. The crew of *Itsukushima* collaborated with US and Canadian personnel, exchanging best practices and strengthening the longstanding maritime partnership between the three Pacific Rim countries.

In the words of Douglas Samp, Coast Guard Pacific Area Search and Rescue Program Manager: *'This exercise represents a critical opportunity for our nations to train together in the demanding environment of the Pacific Northwest.'*

'Search and rescue is a universal language. By working deck-to-deck and in the air with our partners from Canada and Japan, we ensure that when a real emergency occurs, our combined response is swift, seamless, and effective.'

Participating units included:

United States Coast Guard:

- Coast Guard Cutter *Osprey*
- 45-foot Response Boat–Medium from Coast Guard Station Port Angeles
- MH-65 Dolphin helicopter from Coast Guard Air Station Port Angeles

Canada Coast Guard:

- Joint Rescue Coordination Center Victoria
- Motor Lifeboat *Cape Calvert*
- Canadian Coast Guard Ship *Tanu*
- Canadian Coast Guard Ship *Legacy*

Japan Coast Guard:

- JCG Vessel *Itsukushima*

Conclusion of the successful exercise demonstrated the ability of the three Coast Guards to collectively respond and effectively operate together in complex maritime emergencies.



US Coast Guard and US Department of Homeland Security Copyright 2026 ©

The Japan Coast Guard and United States Coast Guard continue to strengthen their enduring partnership through SAPPHIRE; the Solid Alliance for

Peace and Prosperity with Humanity and Integrity on the Rule-of-law based Engagement.

SAPPHIRE embodies the integrity and shared values of both nations as they work seamlessly together to enhance maritime domain awareness, uphold international standards, and ensure a stable, free, and open maritime environment across the region.

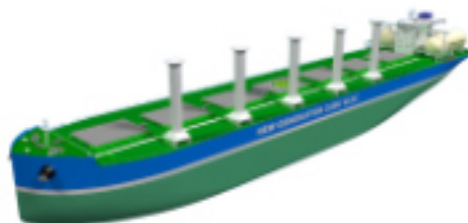
World-first ethanol-fuelled engine for ocean-going ships

2 x Newcastlemax vessels

WinGD orders

In mid-May Swiss marine power company WinGD's reported that its first ethanol-fuelled X-DF-M/E engines have been ordered for two ore carriers to be built for Chinese owner Shandong Shipping Corporation and to operate under long-term charters for Brazil-headquartered global mining company Vale.

These two Newcastlemax (325,000dt) vessels will be built by Beihai Shipbuilding in China, and will each be powered by a six-cylinder, 820mm-bore 6X82DF-M/E engine intended to run primarily on ethanol fuel.



WinGD's first ethanol-fuelled X-DF-M/E engines have been selected for two ore carriers ordered by Shandong Shipping Corporation and chartered long-term to Vale.

Credit: CSDC (China Ship Design & Research Center Co Ltd. ©)

The engines will be the first of the X-DF-M/E platform optimised for primarily ethanol use. The fuel supply and injection pressure will be modified from WinGD's methanol-fuelled engine concept already in service to account for the difference in energy density between the two fuels, which otherwise share very similar properties and combustion characteristics. The contract includes options for further engine deliveries should the vessel series be extended.

WinGD Executive Director Sales Volkmar Galke commented: *'These first ethanol-fuelled X-DF-M/E engines build on more than a decade of intensive investigation into alcohol fuels including ethanol and methanol.'*

'Securing orders for a top-tier charterer and ship operator is the best possible validation of those efforts. This is a clear signal that the shipboard technology and fuel infrastructure around ethanol as a marine fuel are ready, giving confidence to others considering ethanol as an option for maritime decarbonisation.'

Ethanol is gaining attention as a ship fuel due to its widespread and cost-competitive availability in several markets. These markets include Brazil, from where the vessels will deliver iron ore to China.

According to Vale's own investigations, the use of ethanol can reduce greenhouse gas emissions by around 90% compared with heavy fuel oil, depending on the fuel type and lifecycle assumptions.

Vale Director of Shipping Rodrigo Bermelho added: *'The adoption of ethanol as an alternative fuel is part of Vale's strategy to combine flexibility and efficiency in the ships that transport our ore and places the company in a unique position for the energy transition in global shipping over the coming decades, whilst driving similar initiatives in the sector.'*

It is understood that the engine deliveries are scheduled to take place in early 2029 depending on shipyard requirements.

Royal Navy's unmanned minehunter trials

Pre-Hormuz mission

The Royal Navy is currently taking steps to be prepared for a potential multinational Strait of Hormuz mission, as the UK and France plan strictly defensive operations when conditions allow – aimed at restoring confidence of commercial shipping along the critical trade route.

According to the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) the Royal Navy has successfully docked its crewless mine-hunting system in its mothership for the first time after extensive trials ahead of a potential operation to make safe the Strait of Hormuz.

In waters off Gibraltar in the last week of May the 12-metre uncrewed surface vessel RNMB (Royal Navy Motor Boat) *Ariadne* was delicately manoeuvred into the floodable dock of RFA *Lyme Bay*, the mothership for mine-hunting technology for the proposed Gulf mission.

This latest milestone comes after *Ariadne*, which is designed to detect and destroy sea mines without the need for personnel to enter deadly minefields, underwent strenuous operational testing by specialist assessors and mine warfare experts in the waters off Portland, Dorset on England's south coast.

Lieutenant Commander Craig Wadley, operations officer with Commander UK Mine Counter Measures Force, said: *'This was a successful first day of operations and great to see the integration of Ariadne with Lyme Bay.'*

Ariadne was designed and manufactured in the UK and uses the Thales TSAM system, one of the world's most sophisticated towed sonars, to hunt for mines on the seabed.

An accuracy analysis trial by the Royal Navy's Maritime Capabilities, Trials and Assessment (MCTA)

team checks all on-board technology is working correctly, gathering evidence of *Ariadne's* capabilities which will potentially play a key role in a future multinational mission in the Strait of Hormuz to secure the critical waterway and safeguard freedom of navigation.

Crucially, the accuracy of *Ariadne's* powerful towed sonar was tested on a target – recently surveyed by HMS *Magpie* – on the seabed.

During the trial personnel were embarked as a safety measure but *Ariadne* is designed to operate without a crew and can be controlled both locally and from a Portable Operating Centre, receiving operational and sensor data directly from the vessel to inform command decision making.



Illustrations: Ministry of Defence Crown Copyright 2026 ©.

Alongside the MCTA, members of the Mine Threat Exploitation Group's Yankee Squadron – two highly trained units, comprising Mine Warfare Operators supported by a hybrid team of Marine and Weapons Engineers to enable the deployment of next generation autonomous systems – operated *Ariadne*.

The vessel was carefully guided into the cavernous dock of *Lyme Bay* by members of Yankee Squadron, before the water was drained and *Ariadne* placed on a cradle in the RFA's hull.

The Royal Navy's Gibraltar Squadron provided additional safety and protection as this took place shortly after *Lyme Bay* had sailed from Gibraltar.

Commanding Officer of RFA *Lyme Bay*, Captain Simon Herbert RFA, added: *'This has been a very successful week for RFA Lyme Bay which has seen the embarkation of cutting-edge mine-hunting equipment and specialist personnel.'*

'This, together with the considerable work conducted whilst in Gibraltar has seen RFA Lyme Bay re-role as an Afloat Forward Support Base mother ship for mine-hunting operations.'

'She and the ship's company have again proven the versatility and flexibility of the Bay class and the RFA to be able to depart from Gibraltar ready to deliver an effective modern capability.'

Sailors' Society Wellness at Sea training

Strengthening support for the Chinese maritime community

Global maritime welfare charity Sailors' Society is strengthening its engagement with the Chinese maritime sector through a series of training sessions focused on crew wellbeing, mental health awareness, and practical onboard support.

Programme Manager Gavin Lim travelled to China to meet with maritime companies and seafarers, promoting the charity's Wellness at Sea programme and highlighting its round the clock, year in, you out support services, available to seafarers worldwide.



Sara Baade, CEO of the charity, commented: *'We were delighted to be able to give the Chinese maritime community a hands-on introduction to the concept of Sailors' Society's Circle of Care and show how we can equip seafarers and maritime leaders with practical tools to better manage the mental health challenges commonly experienced during life at sea.'*

Psychological First Aid training

During the China visit, Gavin Lim met with management teams and seafarers from several leading maritime organisations, including Wah Kwong Maritime Transport, where he delivered a three-hour Psychological First Aid training session to management staff at their Shenzhen Office in advance of a wider adoption for senior crew members.

Lim reflected: *'The session focused on connecting general mental health awareness with actionable support strategies that could be applied onboard and ashore. Feedback from attendees indicated the content was highly relevant and practical for maritime operations.'*

He also delivered the session to senior officers, junior officers, and management staff as part of an ongoing three-day Human Factors training programme at Seaspan in Shanghai. Here the session linked Psychological First Aid principles to Performance Influence Factors (PIFs) commonly assessed during

inspections, helping officers understand the operational relevance of mental wellbeing and peer support.

Cultural factors affecting mental health

Lim added: *'Discussions during the session highlighted cultural factors affecting mental health conversations within the maritime sector, including stigma and concerns around "saving face," particularly among older seafarers. Younger officers were notably more open to discussing mental health and support strategies. Participants described the training as useful in helping them connect mental health awareness with practical steps to support colleagues onboard.'*

Sailors' Society also engaged with 55 senior officers attending a multi-day leadership and organisational training programme hosted by Zodiac Maritime in Xiamen.

Multinational nature of shipping's workforce

The group included Chinese, Filipino, and Indian officers, reflecting the multinational nature of today's shipping workforce, and the session focused on the relationship between psychological support, leadership responsibilities, and increasing operational pressures resulting from evolving inspection standards.

Sharing crew welfare challenges

The session prompted open discussions among officers, many of whom shared firsthand experiences and real-life crew welfare challenges faced onboard.

Speaking after the visit, Gavin Lim concluded by saying: *'Positive feedback was also received from Zodiac Maritime's senior operational team.'*

To close Sara Baade said: *'These conversations in China demonstrated a genuine willingness to better understand mental health challenges at sea and to equip officers and managers with practical ways to support their people.'*

Sailors' Society's global support and ongoing commitment

The engagement with China forms part of Sailors' Society's ongoing commitment to supporting seafarers globally and working alongside shipping companies to build healthier, safer, and more resilient maritime workplaces.

Last year, the charity launched the translation of Sailors' Society's My Wellness e-learning platform, funded by Valles Steamship Company, Limited and Wah Kwong facilitated the translation of the Society's free Awareness Campaign material. Both companies are Hong Kong-based.

Alongside training, Sailors' Society also provides round-the-clock emotional and practical support through its 24/7 helpline and chaplaincy services,

ensuring seafarers and their families can access confidential assistance whenever needed, regardless of location or time zone.

Wellness at Sea

Wellness at Sea (<https://tinyurl.com/6e9mbmac>) includes Psychological First Aid training, resilience-building workshops, peer-support guidance, and wellbeing resources designed specifically for multicultural shipboard environments.

CHIRP on Fatigue: safe crewing on paper, risk in reality

Initial Report

The Confidential Human Factors Incident Reporting Programme (CHIRP: <https://chirp.co.uk/>) received a fatigue-related report highlighting the ongoing impact of tiredness across the maritime sector.

Drawing on the reporter's narrative and other fatigue submissions, CHIRP has presented this combined safety perspective to illustrate a broader systemic safety concern. The consistency of reports received by CHIRP suggests these are not isolated concerns, but recurring indicators of wider industry pressure. This report includes the actual SHIELD taxonomy (Safety Human Incident and Error Learning Database) to provide some more context

Fatigue remains one of the most persistent and under-reported risks in maritime operations. It rarely stems from a single long shift or an isolated, difficult week. More often, it develops gradually through sustained exposure to demanding schedules, insufficient recovery time, staffing pressures, and a culture in which 'coping' becomes the norm.

CHIRP continues to hear from personnel working patterns that involve repeated night shifts, disrupted sleep, elevated stress, and declining alertness. Although minimum hours of rest may be recorded as compliant, genuine recovery is frequently not achieved in practice.

This distinction matters: regulatory compliance does not always mean a person is fit for safe duty.

Many safe crewing models were developed using assumptions that no longer reflect modern ship operations. Crew members are now exposed to increased mental and emotional load, including constant connectivity with shore management, a 24-hour information environment, and rising administrative demands. Port turnarounds are faster, commercial schedules are tighter, and additional tasks are frequently imposed with little or no increase in the number of people or time available.

At the same time, recruitment and retention challenges in some sectors have reduced experience levels on board, placing further pressure on those who remain and increasing fatigue exposure. Uncertainty about timely relief can add further strain. Several

reporters described cumulative fatigue after prolonged night work, with recovery periods that did not fully restore normal sleep patterns.

These reports are particularly concerning because they often involve experienced personnel who recognise the hazards but still struggle to manage fatigue exposure. Microsleeps, lapses in concentration, and fatigue-related near misses during routine tasks were reported in several submissions. Such events should not be dismissed as isolated lapses or individual failings; they are indicators that safety margins may already be eroding.

Machinery alarms, maintenance defects, or equipment unreliability are recognised triggers for intervention, and the same principle should apply to degraded human performance. Systems are taken offline when machinery is unsafe; organisations should similarly act when personnel are no longer sufficiently rested to perform their duties safely.

Tension between operational safety and commercial efficiency

CHIRP has previously highlighted the tension between operational safety and commercial efficiency. In some cases, crewing levels appear to be based on minimum legal thresholds or cost benchmarks rather than the workload required for safe operation. Where planning depends on people continually "pushing through", the system may already be operating beyond safe limits.

Research initiatives such as Project MARTHA and the Horizon programme have contributed to an improved understanding of fatigue, human performance limits, and workload. Their findings reinforce a consistent message: fatigue cannot be effectively managed through paperwork alone.

Fatigue is not confined to a particular department, rank, or role. Similar patterns are evident across bridge, engine room, and other safety-critical functions, both at sea and ashore. Recognition, reporting, and intervention need to be applied consistently, regardless of experience level or position. Treating fatigue as a shared operational hazard rather than an individual weakness is essential for maintaining effective safety margins.

Effective fatigue management requires looking beyond minimum rest requirements to understand how work is actually experienced ('work as done'). Early indicators include repeated near misses, lapses in attention, rising error rates, or informal concerns raised by personnel. When such indicators are present, fatigue should be treated as a safety risk requiring active management, analogous to technical defects or degraded equipment. Adjusting workload, revisiting rosters, reviewing task allocation, or delaying non-essential activity may be necessary to protect safety margins. Where these signs are present, immediate mitigations are required to prevent further reduction in safety margins.

CHIRP Comment

Fatigue rarely develops suddenly. It accumulates over time and can become normalised within an organisation, making the risk harder to recognise.

This report highlights the gap between recorded compliance and genuine recovery. A logged rest period does not guarantee restorative sleep. Noise, stress, disrupted circadian rhythms, repeated night work, and accumulated sleep debt all reduce the quality of recovery.

The report also reinforces that fatigue affects everyone, including experienced personnel. Competence and professionalism are important safety defences, but they cannot overcome biological limits.

Near misses involving lapses in concentration or microsleeps are early warning signs that safety margins may already be narrowing, providing an opportunity to intervene before a more serious event occurs.

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MARITIME FEEDBACK

Maritime's 'Inconvenient Truth'

Alan Farrell
Director (Maritime)

In recent months, we have received a number of reports in which fatigue was a factor, and we have investigated these incidents. Although this may be seen as the responsibility of the industry, it has not been resolved, as the sheer volume of reports and increasing complexity of operations may be overwhelming. In some cases, fatigue was a factor and even though the industry's working conditions, particularly the need for 24-hour operations, make it difficult to manage fatigue through rest and recovery, and although there are some companies that do have good fatigue management systems, all these systems in place do not mean an individual is not fatigued when they feel tired and are unable to take the necessary care from their duties and responsibilities. If you have been contacted by your company to consider other options I have been granted, please do not do so.

That said, the fact that these reports – one in which the crew does not know the difference between pilot ladder and embarkation ladders, and the other in which the pilot ladder appears not to have been washed. This is a clear warning, but the number of reports has increased significantly. It may be only a matter of time before, in our industry, we will see a critical need at the pilot ladder management level, you must be aware you are not just a pilot.

It is also worth noting that the number of reports of crew members who are not aware of the need for 24-hour operations, but who are still responsible for the safety of the vessel, should ensure that crew members are encouraged to report when they feel tired after a long shift, and to take necessary care, the pilot ladder or embarkation ladders, or the other water or business products, or the other CHIRP resources, be useful to you.

These are all reports in which CHIRP was contacted by your firm. We have sufficient evidence to ensure the accuracy of your reports, and we will be able to provide you with a full report on the CHIRP system and how it works.

CHIRP has received previous reports linking fatigue to navigation errors, poor decision-making, ineffective communication, and unsafe shortcuts. These patterns appear consistently across sectors, demonstrating that fatigue remains a widespread systemic hazard.

Safe crewing levels require regular review. In some cases, minimum crewing may satisfy regulatory requirements but no longer reflect the operational reality onboard, where administrative workload, maintenance demands, commercial pressure, and port turnaround expectations have increased.

Where systems depend on people continually “pushing through”, warning signs may already be present.

Key Issues relating to this report

Human Factors Relevant to this Report

Fatigue: Cumulative sleep debt, repeated night shifts, and poor recovery reduce alertness, concentration, and decision-making ability.

Pressure: Commercial and operational demands may encourage continued operation despite reduced fitness for duty.

Communication: Concerns were raised without effective resolution. When people believe concerns will not lead to change, reporting may decline and morale will certainly suffer.

Complacency: Microsleeps, near misses, or fatigue may become normalised if not challenged or addressed.

Alerting: Individuals may continue working while fatigued rather than removing themselves from duty or escalating concerns. It is vital that crew members remain alert and stop work if they suspect they are fatigued.

Teamwork: Reduced staffing and fewer experienced personnel increase workload and reduce system resilience. Teamwork is vital in these circumstances.

Norms: Extended sequences of night work may become culturally accepted even when unsafe. Question this false normality and make the necessary changes to roster patterns to change it.

SHIELD Taxonomy identified

Acts

What goes wrong – Unintentional lapses in attention, reduced monitoring, delayed reactions, and fatigue-related errors.

Preconditions

Factors influencing performance – Sleep debt, circadian disruption, stress, poor recovery, high workload, and degraded vigilance.

Operational Leadership

Policies affecting work – Rosters, crewing decisions, task allocation, and day-to-day management of fatigue risk.

Organisational Influences

Influence of the company/external environment – Staffing models, recruitment pressures, commercial priorities, safety culture, and the effectiveness of fatigue management systems.

Key Takeaways

Minimum crewing does not always mean optimum crewing. Compliance on paper does not ensure fatigue risk is controlled in practice.

Regulators

Documented compliance should be assessed against actual workload, administrative burden, and operational tempo to determine whether fatigue controls are effective.

Operators / Managers

Systems that rely on tired people coping are unsafe. Crewing levels, schedules, and workloads must reflect operational reality. Fatigue indicators, like equipment alarms, should prompt management intervention.

Seafarers / Contractors

Professionalism is an important safety barrier, but it should not be the only one. Remain alert to early warning signs such as reduced concentration, irritability, or repeated mistakes. Raise concerns early, support colleagues, and cross-check critical tasks when fatigue risk is elevated.

For more on CHIRP readers are invited to use the link here: <https://tinyurl.com/ywuy2dne>

Here will be found links to other material available such as:

- Concerns over the lack of a pilot ladder on board.
- Human Factors: from the bridge to the pilot ladder.
- Forepeak tank welding without any safety checks.
- Stored energy in a towing line causes personal injury.
- Health and sanitation concerns on board.

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Editorial note:

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VIKING Pentagon Star

A rapid escape route from the water in disaster scenarios

VIKING Life-Saving Equipment reported early this month (June) that it had secured its first orders for VIKING Pentagon Star – a new mass rescue device designed to enable rapid recovery of large numbers of people from the water.

Initially developed as a response to a tender from a major coast guard, the device is now being formally introduced to the market following additional orders from coastal airports in Scandinavia.

Intended for governments and professional users in defence, search and rescue, and civil aviation, Pentagon Star addresses low probability, high consequence scenarios, such as aircraft ditching, passenger vessel incidents or other maritime emergencies where a large number of people are in the water.

Designed for swift deployment from rotary and fixed-wing aircraft as well as rescue vessels, the device inflates immediately to form a stable floating platform capable of accommodating up to one hundred persons via ten access points.

To quote Lasse Boesen, Senior Sales Manager Defence & Professional, VIKING Life-Saving Equipment: *'Where conventional open reversible life rafts have two points of entry, Pentagon Star features a dual-layer pentagonal design which creates ten access points at sea level.'*

'The Pentagon Star is all about getting people out of the water. Evacuees can board the large platform surface from all sides, which reduces boarding congestion and time in the water, while also facilitating more efficient SAR operations and subsequent evacuation. It is not hard to see how impactful this will be for people in distress in the water.'



VIKING Pentagon Star.

The device combines high capacity with a lightweight and compact design. While conventional mass evacuation systems compliant with SOLAS typically weigh around 330 kg, Pentagon Star weighs approximately 60 kg due to its optimised structure and materials. When inflated, it measures 738 cm by 696 cm with a height of 68 cm (291 in × 274 in × 27 in), and packs into a compact valise roughly the size of a large suitcase, allowing it to be easily handled and deployed by a single operator from helicopters, aircraft or rescue vessels.

Boesen emphasised that VIKING Pentagon Star has not been designed with SOLAS or other international legislation in mind. The solution is intended to

complement existing life-saving equipment by providing an immediate response capability in situations where rapid intervention is critical. Its configuration supports the prompt removal of individuals from the water, enabling stabilisation prior to onward recovery using conventional rescue assets.



VIKING Pentagon Star in rescue scenario.

VIKING Pentagon Star won its initial tender following open water testing using a helicopter with the coast guard. VIKING has since secured its first commercial contract from a Scandinavian airport, with several other airports following suit. It has also offered demonstrations to European navies, said Boesen, adding that further testing would involve launch from fixed wing aircraft for remote deployment.

Copernicus data

Higher sea surface temps Atlantic and Med

In late May 2026, several countries in Western Europe faced above-average temperatures. During the same period, large areas of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea also recorded above-average sea surface temperatures, which remain elevated.

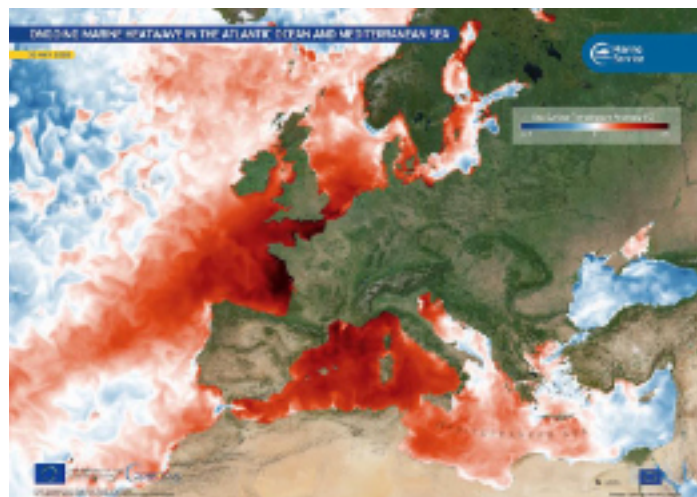
Sea surface temperature anomalies

This data visualisation shown, based on data from the Copernicus Marine Service, indicates sea surface temperature anomalies on 30 May 2026.

Above usual temps

Areas in red and dark red indicate warmer than average waters, which extend along the northern and western coasts of France and across parts of the western Mediterranean Sea, and anomalies in excess of 5°C above the usual temperatures for this time of year.

Copernicus Marine Service data provide timely information for monitoring ocean conditions, including marine heatwaves, and support environmental assessment, maritime safety, and climate-related decision-making.



*European Union, Copernicus Marine Service Data
EU Copernicus Copyright ©*

The 2026 Atlantic hurricane season

US Coast Guard urges preparedness

From Miami on 1 June the US Coast Guard Southeast District reminded mariners and residents of South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands to prepare for the 2026 hurricane season.

The Atlantic hurricane season runs from 1 June to 30 November, with the peak occurring between mid-August and late October.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Climate Prediction Center anticipates a below-normal Atlantic hurricane season this year.

Forecasters predict a 10% chance of an above-normal season, a 35% chance of a near-normal season, and a 55% chance of a below-normal season.

It is essential for mariners to take proper measures before a storm arrives and

the US Coast Guard has recommended preparedness tips for this hurricane season. Briefly, hurricanes are not just a coastal problem as rain, wind, water and even tornadoes could happen far inland from where a hurricane or tropical storm makes landfall.

Recognizing Warnings and Alerts.

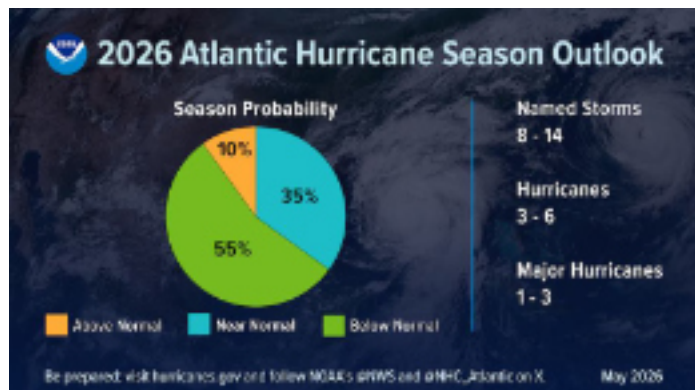
There are several ways to receive alerts. Advice is to download the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) app and receive real-time alerts from the National Weather Service for up to five locations nationwide.

There are community alerts and a need to be aware of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA), which require no sign-up.

It is understood that port condition changes in advance of storm systems and notification of hurricanes will be available on the Coast Guard

Navigation Center website here:
<https://www.navcen.uscg.gov/>

For more information about hurricanes and hurricane preparedness readers are invited to visit NOAA's and FEMA's websites, where will be found widgets that provide hurricane tracks and other updates.



These can be found at www.ready.gov/hurricanes
www.nhc.noaa.gov

and www.fema.gov

Information is also available in Español, Français and Kreyòl.

Mission to Seafarers' news

Links to the Greek Shipping community and a new Chair

Global welfare services to the Greek shipping community

From Athens on 28 May The Mission to Seafarers (MtS), one of the world's leading maritime welfare charities, launched its global services to the Greek shipping community at a special event held at the Yacht Club of Greece. The launch marks a significant milestone for the 170-year-old organisation as it establishes a permanent presence in Greece and deepens its engagement with one of the world's most influential maritime nations.

The event, held on 22 May, welcomed HRH The Princess Royal and her husband Vice-Admiral Sir Tim Laurence to the closing reception alongside Peter Rouch, Secretary General of MtS and Matthew Lodge, British Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic, the day-long programme was divided into four parts: A Lunch and Round Table hosted by Jan Webber, Director of Development, both bringing together 24 leaders from the Greek shipping industry for a series of presentations and discussions. This was followed by a drinks reception for 100 guests.

Suicide-alertness training

A SafeTALK suicide-alertness training session also took place at NorthStandard's offices in Piraeus. Delivered by Tom O'Hare, MtS' Programme Manager

and accredited SafeTALK trainer, the session brought together 40 crewing managers to experience this important training firsthand, with a view to extending it to their seafarers. With a waiting list of a further 20 it is expected that this course will be repeated in the Autumn

MtS has extended its thanks to headline sponsor, V.Ships, and Supporting Sponsor, Inmarsat, for their generous support of this event and the charity's presence in Greece.

Jan Webber, Director of Development, The Mission to Seafarers, said: *'Greece's shipping sector plays a vital role in global maritime trade, and we recognise its significant contribution to the lives and livelihoods of those who work at sea. We look forward to building trusted partnerships and ensuring our welfare support is well-targeted, relevant, and effective. My personal thanks go to Dimitris Patrikios, V.Ships for his vital assistance with our VIP guest list and Kostas Katsoulis for allowing us to use NorthStandard's offices. We have taken our first small steps in reaching out to the Greek shipping community and we have received nothing but warmth and recognition for our work, which is an encouraging sign.'*

Women at Sea

The round table sessions addressed: Women at Sea: How gender diversity strengthens crew culture and performance, and how much it depends on establishing the right culture and Supporting Mental Wellbeing at Sea: addressing severe distress and the risk of suicide, and focused on how the industry can respond with clarity and empathy.

Dimitris Patrikios, Vice Chairman, Senior Business Development – Mediterranean, V.Ships added: *'We are proud to support The Mission to Seafarers' presence in Greece at a time when seafarer wellbeing is inseparable from the safety and sustainability of our industry.'*

'It was a true honour to meet HRH The Princess Royal, whose longstanding commitment continues to inspire action across the maritime industry. Bringing the Greek shipping community together in this way reinforces our shared responsibility to keep the human element at the heart of shipping. We are delighted to contribute to that collective effort.'

One hundred and seventy years of service

Founded in 1856, The Mission to Seafarers provides practical and emotional support to the world's 1.9 million seafarers across more than 200 ports globally. Its services span chaplaincy and pastoral care, mental health support, emergency assistance, and advocacy. The organisation has supported seafarers of all nationalities – including Greek seafarers, throughout its long history.

Forging relationships

The Greek launch builds on this legacy, with MtS now focused on forging partnerships with Greek shipping companies, listening to their needs, and tailoring its welfare programmes to the realities of life aboard Greek-managed and Greek-owned vessels. The Seafarers Happiness Index for Q1 2026 recorded a score of 7.18 out of 10, underlining the ongoing need for proactive welfare support.

Appointment of Chair

On 30 April The Mission to Seafarers announced the appointment of Guy Platten as its new Chair.



A Chartered Master Mariner and one of the maritime industry's most respected figures, Platten brings more than four decades of senior leadership experience to the role, most recently serving as Secretary General and CEO of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS). He takes up the position from Tom Boardley, whose tenure as Chair is warmly recognised by the board, at a time when the welfare needs of the world's seafarers remain both complex and pressing. He will be remembered for addressing the IFSMA General Assembly during the Covid-19 outbreak. His activities at ICS were frequently reported in this Newsletter.

Platten began his career at sea with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service, and that grounding has shaped a professional life defined by commitment to the people who keep global trade moving. Named in *Lloyd's List's* Top 20 most influential figures in the industry, he has held senior executive and board-level positions across international trade associations, government-owned entities, and charitable organisations.

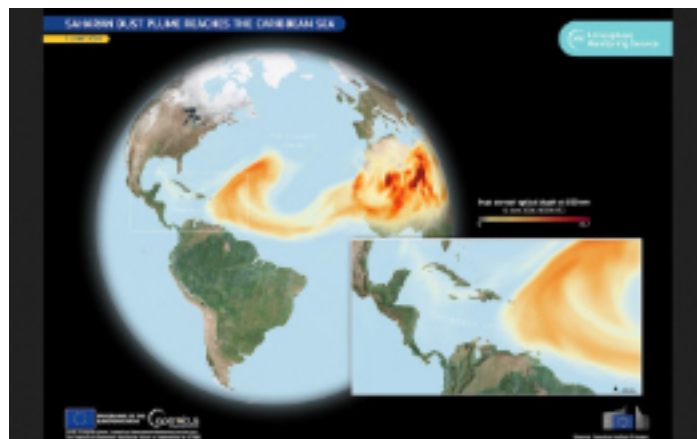
During his tenure as CEO of the ICS, representing owners and operators of more than 80% of the world's merchant fleet, he led the industry's global response to the Covid-19 pandemic, successfully lobbying governments to grant seafarers 'key worker' status and driving lasting improvements to seafarer welfare standards. He was awarded the Merchant Navy Medal in recognition of this work.

Guy Platten, Chairman of The Mission to Seafarers said: *'I am deeply honoured to take on the role of Chair of the Mission to Seafarers. This is not merely a new professional chapter for me – it is a homecoming*

of sorts. Having spent years at sea myself, I know firsthand the loneliness, danger, and sacrifice that seafarers face every day.

'The Mission was a beacon of support then, and I have never lost my admiration for the extraordinary, often unsung, work they do to support seafarers and their families. I look forward to giving back to an organisation that has given and continues to give so much.'

Saharan dust reaches the Caribbean



European Union, Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service
Copernicus EU ©

At the end of May 2026, a large Saharan dust plume stretched from the west coast of Africa towards the Americas. Countries such as Cabo Verde saw declining air quality as the dust plume passed over the region.

This data visualisation, based on Copernicus Atmosphere Monitoring Service (CAMS) forecast data, shows a large dust plume on 1 June 2026 at 00:00 UTC, stretching across the North Atlantic and reaching the Caribbean Sea.

CAMS data support the assessment of air pollutants and aerosols, and help track their transport in the atmosphere, supporting near-real-time monitoring and global forecasts of atmospheric composition.

Don't forget, we post new information to our website, Facebook and LinkedIn pages every week.

Website: <https://www.ifsma.org>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ifsma/>

LinkedIn: <https://tinyurl.com/46aeydtf>