



PRESS RELEASE

SHIPPING UNITES TO CREATE \$1M TARGET EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 SEAFARER CRISIS

Major shipping organisations pledge their support, including Ardmore Shipping, Cargill, Pacific Basin and V.Group

LONDON, Wednesday 5 May 2021 – Leading seafarer welfare charities and shipping industry players have launched an emergency relief fund in order to support seafarers and their families devastated by the rampant COVID-19 pandemic in India and other countries.

Seafarers have been the invisible victims of COVID-19, with hundreds of thousands marooned on vessels for months beyond agreed contracts, in some cases. Despite suggestions that the crew change crisis was near its end, the escalation of COVID-19 cases in India to more than 400,000 per day has prompted some major ports to prohibit ship crew changes for seafarers with recent travel history to India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

In response, the Seafarers International Relief Fund has set a target of US \$1 million. It has been established by bringing together leading international seafarer welfare organisations, The Seafarers' Charity (formerly Seafarers UK) supported by The Mission to Seafarers, ISWAN, Sailors' Society and other charities - in a united appeal to the shipping industry - to deliver urgent support to seafarers and their families in India.

Esben Poulsson, Chair of the International Chamber of Shipping, commented:

"We have all been shocked by the images and stories coming from India and our hearts go out to the people of India and those from India working around the world who are suffering from the impact of this pandemic. It often takes a crisis to bring people together and this is no different. The fact that seafarer charities have come together signifies the scale of the challenge before us in the short term and looking further ahead.

"I am calling on shipowners and all those engaged in the maritime sector to support this initiative and consider increasing your contribution to seafarer charities at this time. When faced with significant challenges that maritime community always come together - this is what we do."

Speaking on behalf of the newly established relief fund, Catherine Spencer, Chief Executive of The Seafarers' Charity, commented:

"We are all shocked by the scenes from India, where an already critical situation is getting more desperate with every passing hour. India is facing a crisis on the frontline of its fight against the pandemic and this is directly affecting seafarers and their families who have



already suffered tremendously over the past 15 months. Although we are under no illusions about the scale of the challenge, our collective help can make a difference.

“By joining forces to form the Seafarers International Relief Fund, our aim is to send a clear message about the urgency of the crisis faced by seafarers globally; pooling our resources to ensure that support can be delivered as quickly as possible. We are calling on companies and individuals from across shipping. This great industry can make a real difference if it puts its weight behind the fund and donates now to support this appeal.”

A number of major shipping organisations have already pledged their support to the fund, including Anglo-Eastern, Ardmore Shipping, Cargill, Hapag-Lloyd, IRI (Marshall Islands Flag), MSC, Pacific Basin and V.Group.

One of those donors, Mark Cameron, COO of Ardmore Shipping, spoke on behalf of those organisations who are supporting the Fund:

“As we have seen the situation in India deteriorate rapidly over the past few days, it is clear that this unprecedented crisis required an unprecedented response from all of us. Shipping is a global family and right now, our Indian seafarers need our help.

“Many of those at sea are desperately worried about their families, as the situation in India continues to get worse. With limited contact with home, they are caught between ongoing travel restrictions and the crew change crisis, and the understandable desire to continue working to support their families. I would urge everyone to donate to this critical appeal, so that we can deliver the support and relief that will be needed for many months to come.”

Also commenting on the Fund, Henriette Hallberg Thygesen, CEO of Fleet and Strategic Brands and Executive Vice President at A.P. Møller – Mærsk A/S said:

“We have all been struck by the latest news from India and we stand with our seafarers as we deal with the scourge of the COVID-19 pandemic. Maersk supports the creation of the Seafarers International Relief Fund, and we will do our utmost to support our Indian seafarers and their families at this difficult time.”

The Fund will be used to deliver aid through existing welfare programmes run by the welfare partners in India, to make sure that support reaches seafarers and their families as quickly as possible, as well as ensuring that support can remain in place over the challenging weeks and months ahead.

Although the immediate focus of the campaign is India, other countries also remain highly vulnerable to the pandemic, including those with large numbers of international seafarers. The goal of the SIRF is to stand ready to support seafarers and their families afflicted by the pandemic in other countries, should the need arise.

To donate to the Seafarers International Relief Fund, please visit <https://donate.theseafarerscharity.org/sirf>. Alternatively, email keziah.cunningham@theseafarerscharity.org or call +44 (0) 20 7932 0000.



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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Seafarers International Relief Fund:

The Seafarers International Relief Fund is an emergency appeal coordinated by the Seafarers' Charity and supported by The Mission to Seafarers, ISWAN, Sailors' Society, and other charities. The funds raised by the appeal will be distributed to the supporting charities to support their vital work in support of Indian seafarers and their families. The Fund will also be responsive to the needs of seafarers affected by the pandemic elsewhere in the world, in line with the international remits of the charities involved.

The Fund will be administered and overseen by The Seafarers Charity (formerly Seafarers UK), a grant funder which has embedded and well-established governance mechanisms and processes for monitoring and evaluation to ensure efficiency and transparency.

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