



NOTES OF THE SEAFARERS' WELFARE – CRISIS WORKING GROUP VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 5th OCTOBER 2022

PRESENT: Ms Sharon Coveney (Chair)	MNWB
Revd. Ijeoma Ajibade (IA)	Mission to Seafarers (MTS)
Mr John Cousley (JC)	Department for Transport (DfT)
Capt. Marc Evans (ME)	The Fishermen's Mission (TFM)
Ms Hannah Gilbert (HG)	UK Chamber of Shipping (UK CoS)
Ms Sophie Peacey (SP)	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA)
Ms Carla Rockson (CR)	Marine Society & Sea Cadets (MSSC)
Mr Tim Springett (TS)	UK Chamber of Shipping (UK CoS)

The meeting opened at 11.00am. The Chair introduced Nicky Cantello, the Board's new Executive Assistant and reported that MNWB had received an additional 5,000 SIM cards from Vodafone. So far, over 2500 of the cards have been distributed to Port Chaplains to deliver to Ukrainian seafarers visiting UK ports. Front-line service providers are encouraged to contact Aiden Harvey, MNWB Projects & Welfare Co-ordinator aiden@mnwb.org.uk if they require additional SIMs. Members were then invited to give Crisis specific updates from their respective organisations as follows:

TS, UK CoS – A meeting took place last week of the ICS Ukraine taskforce - there are concerns reported that seafarers in some ports are not receiving medical care, with one death as a result. The ICS has taken this up with the IMO, the ILO and the Ukrainian Ambassador, whilst the ITF has followed up with Russian unions to see if any help can be directed to the affected vessels. Regarding Russian seafarers, there was an issue with the European Union because the facilitation agreement which allows Russians to apply for visas has been withdrawn. This doesn't necessarily mean that that Russian seafarers are unable to get visas, the process is a lot more difficult. ECSA is trying to get this resolved as there are around 30,000 Russian seafarers just in EU fleets, including those who are seeking asylum to avoid being conscripted. In addition, some Ukrainian seafarers are finding it hard to leave Ukraine either for fear of leaving their families or being asked for payment to leave. TS was due to attend a meeting later today with the ship owners (organised by the ILO) - there is concern as to whether the ship owners will face any penalty for having Russian seafarers who don't want to go home; they currently have the right under MLC to request contract extensions.

HG, UK CoS – HG added to Tim's report that they are still waiting for the official text of procedures from the Ministry of Infrastructure to enable Ukrainian seafarers to leave Ukraine. An unofficial translated text of the resolution of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers allowing seafarers to leave Ukraine and a helpful graphic to accompany it, has been received from the MTWTU ([attached to these minutes](#)). They have essentially separated seafarers into three separate categories; cadets, those departing on ships from a foreign port, and those departing on ships from Ukrainian ports. CoS had been informed there are currently 73 vessels stuck in Ukrainian ports - there are early talks on ships using the grain corridors being allowed to swap crew to ease welfare issues. Talks are also ongoing regarding seafarers who are onboard vessels which were stuck in annexed areas.

JC, DfT – JC reported that the Home Office are not currently considering any asylum for Russian seafarers in the UK. Regarding Ukrainian seafarers who have settled in the UK under the Home for Ukrainians scheme, the Home Office is considering whether to allow them to receive UK seafarers' documentation.

SP, MCA – There are now only three reported seafarers onboard over their contract and they should be getting off tomorrow. With regards to the current notice MIN674, which provides guidance on the extension of Ukrainian Certificates of Competency (CoC) in line with IMO Circular Letter No. 4232/Add.16, SP stated that she would start conversations within the MCA to see whether it could be extended to include Russian seafarers.

IA, MTS – IA advised they had now moved to their new premises in Bath Place. Three new chaplains have been appointed and a new chaplain is about to be recruited in Belfast, however one is due to leave from Felixstowe. The Regional Directors conference took place a few weeks ago; she will forward on her new email address to the Chair as she is willing to help in future if she can. The Chair thanked IA for her support and wished her well in her new role.

ME, TFM – The Home Office has ordered a clampdown on migrant fishermen operating within the 12 mile limit operating under a transit visa wef 01/01/22. Concern was operators would not be able to get them off transit visas onto other visas; due to threat of being fined £20,000 a number of migrant fishermen have returned to their home countries. The Home Office have now indicated this will be deferred until sometime in the spring of 2023. The cost of living crisis, particularly the increased cost of fuel, was discussed and its impact on the fishing communities. TS, UK CoS noted the concern regarding transit visas and the abuse/misuse of them in respect of overseas fishers who may be being exploited. He emphasised that transit visas per se, are essential to enable them to travel to the UK to join ships or for an onward flight elsewhere to join a ship. There is a need to ensure they are on the correct visa to enable them to be accommodated appropriately.

CR, MSSC – The Redundancy & Training bursary closed on 16 September and a small last flurry of applicants were received. 105 bursaries have been awarded, amounting to just under £48k.

Closing Remark – SC noted concerns of the effect of the cost of living crisis and suggested that this could be incorporated into future meetings. All in agreement.

The meeting closed at 11:40am.

Members to forward any links, extra information and note amendments to Nicky Cantello nicky@mnwb.org.uk Notes from the meetings to be posted on the MNWB website <https://www.mnwb.org/ukraineandpoferries> Meeting format to remain flexible.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday 2nd November at 11:00.