



Letter to the Editor

27 July 2020

Dear Editor,

Shipping industry urges action to curb irresponsible behaviour

Recently, there have been media reports about the irresponsible behavior of individual practitioners. A few rotten apples have brought disrepute not only to their peers but also to the industry, which has been working extremely hard to ensure the smooth operation of the world's supply chain for essential items such as food, fuel and medical supplies, during this most difficult time for all. We are extremely disappointed with this. We have urged both international and local unions to remind their members to strictly follow all the rules, protocols and precautionary measures set by the port authorities and shipping companies to protect public health. We have also suggested the government to impose penalties on any parties who break the rules.

The United Nations International Maritime Organization and International Labour Organization require governments to take measures to facilitate crew change operations for both safety and employee protection. Presently, about 300,000 seafarers unfortunately remain trapped at sea and are unable to go home even after serving many months at sea, owing to lockdowns, travel restrictions and a severe reduction in the number of commercial flights in many parts of the world. Crew change operations are essential to relieve these stranded crews and to enable world trade to continue.

In May this year, the international and local unions have urged governments, including the HKSAR Government, to address the crew change issues by 15 June. As responsible employers, we deemed it necessary to pursue the matter with the government. We urged the government to fulfil its international obligation, while of course taking all necessary precautionary measures to reduce the risk of the spread of the coronavirus.

Since crew changes were facilitated on 9 June, as responsible community stakeholders, we advised our members to take appropriate measures, **in addition to** the government mandatory requirements, to safeguard the local community. These included requiring all seafarers to be tested COVID-19 negative before coming to Hong Kong. We also recommended other possible precautionary measures to the government. These included requiring all seafarers to be tested COVID-19 negative again on their arrival in Hong Kong, and imposing penalties on those companies and individuals breaking the rules.

On 20 July, in view of the fast-changing situation in Hong Kong, the two Associations already asked all their members to re-schedule or postpone crew changes, for at least three weeks.

We hope the above clarifies our position. Once again, we would like to stress that like other “key workers”, seafarers are essential for the global community, including Hong Kong people, to fight this battle against the virus. Without these heroes at sea, world trade would come to a screeching halt. If any of them are unfortunately infected, they deserve our support, not bias.

Bjorn Hojgaard
Chairman
Hong Kong Shipowners Association

Roberto Giannetta
Chairman
Hong Kong Liner Shipping Association



致主編的信：航運業敦促對不負責任行為採取行動

編輯先生：

最近，有傳媒報道個別從業員的不負責任行為。這些極少數害群之馬，不僅損害同行聲譽，也給整個業界帶來負面影響。在疫情嚴峻時期，航運業一直努力不懈，確保食品、燃料和醫療物資等必需品的世界供應鏈，順利運輸。我們對一些極少數人的不負責任行為十分失望。我們已經要求國際和本地工會，提醒會員嚴格遵守政府制定的所有船員換班規定，以及船公司所訂立的各種預防措施，保護社區。同時，我們已建議政府，對於任何違規行為，予以懲罰。

根據聯合國國際海事組織和國際勞工組織的要求，各地政府有責任採取措施，為船員換班提供便利，既是出於安全原因，也是為了保護海員。目前，由於許多地方的旅遊限制和飛機航班大幅減少，大約有 30 萬海員不幸滯留海上，服役超過一年仍然無法回家。為了協助這些被困船員，並且使到世界貿易得以繼續，船員換班是不可避免的。

早於今年五月，一些國際和本地工會已經要求各地政府，包括香港特區政府，在 6 月 15 日之前解決船員換班的問題。作為良心僱主，我們也認為有必要與香港特區政府磋商，請求官員為船員換班提供便利。當然，與此同時，也應該採取一切必要的預防措施，減少疫情散播風險。

6 月 9 日的船員換班新措施後，我們作為負責任的社會一份子，除了提醒會員公司遵守政府的強制要求外，亦應採取額外措施，保障社區安全：包括要求海員在前往香港之前進行病毒陰性測試。

我們還向政府建議了一些其他可行的預防措施，包括要求所有海員在抵達香港時再次進行病毒陰性測試，並且對任何違規行為採取懲罰。

此外，上週一（7 月 20 日），由於香港的嚴峻情況，我們已經要求所有會員公司停止或更改在香港換班至少三星期。

我們希望市民大眾了解情況，並且強調，與其他「關鍵員工」一樣，海員對國際社會包括全港市民抗疫至關重要。如果沒有這些英雄出海工作，世界重要運輸將陷入停頓。如果海員不幸被病毒感染，他們應該得到的是我們的支持，而不是偏見。

香港船東會主席
Bjorn Hojgaard

香港定期班輪協會主席
Roberto Giannetta

2020 年 7 月 27 日