



Informal Multidisciplinary Advisory Group on Transport Responses to the COVID-19 Crisis – Fourth Session

Geneva, 17 September 2021

Agenda item: “Key messages on way forward – Protecting transport workers, securing our economies”

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Mr. Chair, colleagues:

As regards key messages on the way forward, allow me to highlight two issues.

We need to protect transport workers while also facilitating trade and transport.

To ensure the facilitation of trade and transport while at the same time protecting transport workers and our populations from the pandemic, many existing UN solutions are being implemented. These include global standards such as those developed by UN/CEFACT, the TIR Convention, corridor solutions, ASYCUDA, Trade Information Portals, port reforms, and much more.

UNCTAD, together with the ECE and the other regional commissions, have embarked on a major joint project that builds on our existing successful programmes.¹ We address three priorities:

- First, contactless solutions that reduce physical contact among people in supply chains.
- Second, seamless connectivity that eliminates obstacles to cross-border trade and transport.
- And third collaborative solutions that strengthen regional and sectoral cooperation.

The case of seafarers

UNCTAD has today published an advance copy of a special chapter on seafarers issues of our next Review of Maritime Transport.² Allow me to quote and summarize 7 key recommendations:

¹ For further information see <http://UNTTC.org>

² The Advance Copy is available here https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/rmt2021ch5_en.pdf

1. Vaccination – Concerted collaborative efforts by industry, governments and international organizations should ensure that seafarers are designated as key workers and are vaccinated as a matter of priority.
2. Crew changes – Governments and industry should continue to work together, including through the Neptune Declaration initiative, and in collaboration with relevant international organizations, to facilitate crew changes, in accordance with international standards and in line with public health considerations. They should also ensure the availability and access to related seafarer data.
3. Route deviations – Charterers and other industry stakeholders should be flexible in accepting requests from shipping companies for route deviation to facilitate crew changes and should refrain from using “no crew change” clauses in charterparties.
4. International legal framework – States and other relevant stakeholders should, in consultations and meetings on seafarers’ issues at ILO and IMO, keep under review the relevant legal framework and ensure that international obligations are respected and implemented.
5. Maritime single windows – Port community systems should implement the Single Window concept, similarly to the customs-centric Single Window powered by ASYCUDA, to cover all the information and formalities resulting from FAL and other relevant instruments.
6. Information exchange – Relevant public and private sector stakeholders should continue their regular exchange of views and best practices on seafarers’ situation and needs, and lessons learned, including from the COVID-19 pandemic, and promote further harmonization and standardization.
7. Outbreaks and emergencies at sea – In line with developing scientific insights, governments, international organizations and all stakeholders should regularly update specific guidance on measures to prevent and deal with COVID-19 and other outbreaks at sea and ensure that mechanisms are in place to reduce, and respond to medical emergencies at sea.

Public and private stakeholders must continue to work together to implement relevant labour standards and address health, safety, security, welfare, and other challenges faced by seafarers. All should be working to protect seafarers’ human rights and advance the objectives of SDG 8 of decent work and economic growth for sustainable development.

Thank you