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### **SG-STAR FUND: First Global Tripartite Initiative to Support Countries for Crew Change**

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC) have jointly contributed US\$500,000 to the Singapore Shipping Tripartite Alliance Resilience (SG-STAR) Fund to support countries that adopt best practices for crew change. This adds to the S\$1 million SG-STAR Fund established by the Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS), Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), Singapore Shipping Association (SSA), and Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU). The total fund now amounts to S\$1.68 million (approximately US\$1.2 million).

Besides ITF and IMEC, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) will also lend support to the SG-STAR Fund including technical expertise in shipping. With the contribution and support by ITF, IMEC and ICS, the SG-STAR Fund is the first global tripartite initiative bringing together like-minded international partners from the industry, unions and government to facilitate safe crew changes. The fund, based in Singapore, will be disbursed for use upstream in countries where seafarers come from. We continue to welcome like-minded partners to join us in this global alliance.

ITF General Secretary Mr Stephen Cotton said the SG-STAR Fund has the potential to support practical solutions to reduce the severity of the crew change crisis for the world's 1.4 million seafarers.

“For over six months, the crew change crisis has seen hundreds of thousands of seafarers either trapped on ships or unemployed at home, desperate to get to work. For the world's seafarers, they need practical solutions now, not tomorrow, to end this humanitarian crisis and get seafarers to and from ships in a safe manner. This joint initiative, working with tripartite partners to promote practical solutions to the crew change crisis, will be key to breaking the current deadlock.”

“We need to see progress especially on ways seafarers can show authorities and employers their negative COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test results

from verified medical institutions, so that quarantine times can be reduced on board and while waiting to join vessels,” said Stephen Cotton.

“The crew change crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has brought various maritime players to work together more closely than ever before. IMEC has participated and contributed to both global and Singapore based discussions aimed at finding solutions and providing guidance as the crisis evolved. We are pleased to join the SG-STAR Fund and hope bring our expertise to help find solutions to this crisis. I am confident this determined partnership will lead the way to practical approaches to a crisis that is expected to stay with us for months to come,” said IMEC Chairman, Capt. Belal Ahmed.

Mr Guy Platten, Secretary General of the ICS, said, “The COVID-19 pandemic is unfairly trapping seafarers. This initiative is exactly the type of project needed to resolve the crew change crisis.”

“The ILO warmly welcomes the contributions from the ITF, IMEC and ICS to the SGSTAR Fund which not only provides much needed resources but confirms the tripartite and truly global reach of the initiative. This is exactly the type of response that we need to the dramatic and worldwide problems of crew changes,” said ILO Director-General, Mr Guy Ryder.

Mr Kitack Lim, Secretary-General of International Maritime Organization, said, “This is a commendable global initiative bringing together the collective efforts of governments, the shipping industry and maritime unions to take concrete steps to address the urgent issue of crew change.”

Following the signing of the letter of intent for the SG-STAR Fund on 28 August 2020 between SOS, MPA, SSA and SMOU, a task force has been formed to work with stakeholders on solutions for safe crew change. Led by SSA Council Member and Chair of SSA Services Committee, Mr Nitin Mathur, with initial members from SOS, MPA, and SMOU, the task force will first work with seafarer supplying countries such as the Philippines and India on key initiatives, which include the accreditation of quarantine and isolation facilities, COVID-19 PCR testing certification, “white-listing” of clinics for PCR testing, digital solutions for tracking crew change, and interactive training sessions for crew to help them understand crew change procedures and guidelines.

SSA President Ms Caroline Yang will chair the Governance Committee for the SGSTAR Fund, comprising MPA Chief Executive Ms Quah Ley Hoon, SMOU General Secretary Ms Mary Liew, SOS President Mr Kam Soon Huat, ITF General Secretary Mr Stephen Cotton, and IMEC Chairman Capt. Belal Ahmed. Dr Lam Pin Min, Honorary Member of SSA, and CEO of Eagle Eye Centre, has been appointed as the Senior Advisor to the Governance Committee.

“The SG-STAR Fund initiated by the tripartite partners in Singapore aims to help support ship crew supplying nations enhance facilities and capabilities to establish safe and scalable “bubbles” or “corridors” to enable crew change - from the time

to/from home country or country of origin, to the country where the crew joins the ship, as well as safe holding facilities at the home/origin country and the country where the crew change occurs. We are heartened to have ITF and IMEC join our initiative and contribute to the fund. The ICS is also supporting this initiative including their technical expertise in shipping. We look forward to have more like-minded international partners come on board this tripartite initiative so that safe crew change can be further accelerated,” said Ms Yang.

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### **About the Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS)**

The Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS) is a global maritime trade union commissioned by the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) to promote positive industrial relations between seafarers and their employers, shipping companies. Since 1971, SOS has been representing ratings and helping them receive their dues through Collective Bargaining Agreements with shipping companies. SOS also works actively with tripartite partners to improve the working and living conditions of seafarers and helps members acquire and upgrade skills that meet the demands of the industry. SOS is affiliated to the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and the Nautilus Federation.

### **About the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA)**

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) was established on 2 February 1996, with the mission to develop Singapore as a premier global hub port and international maritime centre (IMC), and to advance and safeguard Singapore's strategic maritime interests. MPA is the driving force behind Singapore's port and maritime development, taking on the roles of Port Authority, Port Regulator, Port Planner, IMC Champion, and National Maritime Representative. MPA partners the industry and other agencies to enhance safety, security and environmental protection in our port waters, facilitate port operations and growth, expand the cluster of maritime ancillary services, and promote maritime R&D and manpower development.

### **About the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA)**

The Singapore Shipping Association (SSA) represents a wide spectrum of shipping companies and other businesses allied to the shipping industry. It is a national trade association formed in 1985 to serve and promote the interests of its members and to enhance the competitiveness of Singapore as an International Maritime Centre. The SSA is a trusted advisor and partner in the local and international shipping community and collaborates with relevant maritime stakeholders to protect the marine environment as well as promote freedom and safety at sea. Despite being a not-for-profit organisation SSA, on behalf of its members, strives to give back generously to the community through Corporate Social Responsibilities activities. Currently, the SSA represents over 460 member companies; comprising ship owners and operators, ship managers, ship agents and other ancillary companies such as shipbrokers,

classification societies, marine insurers, bunker suppliers, maritime lawyers, shipping bankers and technology start-ups amongst others.

### **About the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU)**

The Singapore Maritime Officers' Union was established in 1951 to safeguard the interest and well-being of seafaring officers. The primary role of the organisation is to promote good industrial relations between members and their employers, improve the working conditions of members in the maritime industry through the terms and conditions of collective bargaining agreements negotiated on behalf of members and signed with shipping companies which employ them and to advance the cultural, recreational and educational aspirations of its members.

### **About the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)**

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) is a democratic, affiliate-led union federation recognised as the world's leading transport authority. We fight passionately to improve working lives; connecting trade unions from 147 countries to secure rights, equality and justice for their members. We are the voice for nearly 20 million working women and men in the transport industry across the world, including over a million seafarers.

### **About the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC)**

The International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC) is the only international employers' organisation dedicated to maritime industrial relations. Established over fifty years ago, we operate from offices in Hampshire, UK and Manila in the Philippines and represent over 250 shipping companies located all over the world.

IMEC is run by and exists for the benefit of its members, who enjoy exclusive privileges including the benefits of IBF agreements, access to funds to support the welfare and employment of seafarers and advice and guidance from the dedicated Secretariat team.

IMEC's Recruitment and Training Committee is engaged in career development programs for officers, Ratings and Cadets. IMEC provides assistance to its members to maintain and upgrade training facilities. Working together with Universities and Global Training provider, IMEC contributes to the seafarers training at all levels.

### **About the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS)**

International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) is the principal international trade association for merchant shipowners and operators, representing all sectors and trades and over 80% of the world merchant fleet.

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