MV Kapitan Gregorio Oca

New ship to boost cadets’ quality training onboard
MAARITIME ACADEMY OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
KAMAYA POINT BRGY. ALAS-ASIN, MARINELES, BATAAN, PHILIPPINES
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COURSES OFFERED:

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<tr>
<th>BSMT</th>
<th>BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN MARINE TRANSPORTATION</th>
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<td>BSMARE</td>
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CENTER FOR ADVANCE MARITIME STUDIES

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MAAP Profile

Geographic destiny has given the Filipino the innate talent to be an excellent seafarer. To enhance this natural skill, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) was established on January 14, 1998. The Academy stands on a 103-hectare property in Kamaya Point, Mariveles, Bataan.

The Associated Marine Officer's and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) founded by the late Capt. Gregorio S Oca. capitalized and developed the Academy. The new AMOSUP President, Dr. Conrado F. Oca. heads the Academy's board of governors. The board is comprised of representatives from the private sector, the International Transport Workers Federation, the Filipino Association of Maritime Employers, the International Mariners Management Association of Japan, the Norwegian Seafarer's Union, the International Maritime Employers' Committee, the Danish Shipowners' Association, the Norwegian Shipowners' Association, and the Japan Shipowners' Association.

MAAP conducts shipboard training aboard T/S Kapitan Felix Oca, a 5020 DWT dedicated training ship capable of accommodating 180 midshipmen and 9 instructors in 30 air-conditioned cabins and six berths.
Welcome. Our very own education and training institution, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), is marking another milestone as it receives a newly built training ship for its midshipmen.

As the second vessel to be run and operated by the academy, the training ship Kapitan Gregorio Oca can accommodate more than 100 cadets, who will be future ship officers to run some of the world’s merchant ships. The continuing thrust of MAAP to provide quality education to our future officers has led our social partners to extend the needed support of having a vessel for the education and training of their sponsored cadets in the academy.

Still on education, we also bring you updates on the school buildings for our youth that we have constructed and turned over to their beneficiaries. Since we completed the first five-classroom buildings in typhoon-ravaged areas in Cebu, Samar and Leyte in 2015, the endeavor has now been followed by a chain of new classrooms in various parts of the Visayas.

Likewise, we highlight education and training from the perspective of maritime lecturers and researchers within the industry. MAAP's hosting of a four-day international convention in Manila saw how more than a hundred participants from 27 countries shared trends, innovations and programs through a plethora of papers delivered and workshops held.

We feature the issue of mental health of our seafarers that stakeholders should no longer skip or set aside. As stakeholders adopt a number of measures to alleviate this psychological concern prevailing in the seafaring profession, we’ve responded with the launch of hotlines that would attend to our members who are experiencing issues or problems of mental health while working on board their ships.

Our participation and coverage at the recent ITF Congress in Singapore gives you some perspectives of the vital issues confronting transport workers. How delegates addressed vital issues like automation and the empowerment of women, for instance, are some of the remarkable ones that have been brought to light.

We tackle the Asian crewing nations’ initiative on the fair treatment of seafarers in the event of maritime accident. The Manila Statement issued by senior government representatives from more than 10 countries in the region asserted that the time was right to protect their seafarers.

We also report on the identified causes of bulk carriers’ sinking over the last decade. As bulker owners analysed the casualties for this type of ships over the last 10 years, seafarer’s life and the safe carriage of dry bulk cargoes are the growing concerns.

Lastly, we continue our series of stories among our members. Now in its seventh part, the segment comes with narratives that vary with specks of shortcomings, struggles and successes of our ship officers in the pursuit of their profession.

Happy Sailing Forward!

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(Ratings/Unlicensed)
MTRMN. Joel T. Sevilla
O/S Ernel P. Rodriguez

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Advocating youth’s education

The AMOSUP-JSU joint initiative has completed 25 school buildings including 23 one-classroom and two two-classroom structures, constructed and turned over to their respective beneficiaries in the Visayas.

Educating young people has become an integral part of an advocacy in tandem of maritime unions that provide high priorities on the welfare and benefits of their members.

Since AMOSUP and the All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) completed and turned over the first five classroom buildings at typhoon-stricken towns in Cebu, Samar and Leyte in 2015, the endeavor has been followed by a chain of new classrooms for pupils in various parts of the Visayas.

To date, around 25 of such structures, consisting of 23 one-stet classroom and two two-classroom school buildings have been erected and turned over to their respective beneficiaries.

Known as the Seafarers Project for Emergency Assistance in Rebuilding Classrooms (SPEAR), the JSU-AMOSUP initiative initially began with the construction of five two-classroom and three one-classroom school buildings with toilets and chalkboards. These were furnished with teachers’ tables and chairs, armchairs and ceiling fans for the schoolchildren.

The SPEAR project beneficiaries included public elementary schools in Bantayan Central in Bantayan Island and Obo-ob, Bantayan in Cebu, Basper Elementary School in Tacloban City and Catbalogan III Central Elementary School in Catbalogan, Samar.

Completion of these project came with another set of new classrooms in other areas of the main island. This second batch consisted of nine one-classroom and two two-classroom buildings completed and turned over in 2016 and 2017. Beneficiaries included elementary schools in Daanbantayan, Cebu, Sara in Iloilo, Guiuan in Eastern Samar, Cortes and Antequera which are both in Bohol.

The latest completion for the third batch that was turned over in November and December 2017 were 10 one classroom buildings, where donated to beneficiary towns including Baslayon, Maribojo in Bohol, Bantayan and Santa Fe in Cebu and in Tacloban City.

Ten one-classroom buildings are in the pipeline. These will be built in the elementary schools located in Biliran, Lico in Ormoc City, Bullones in Bohol, Panglao and Oslob in Cebu.

Donated school buildings are equipped with armed-chairs for students, teacher’s table and chair, computer set with printer, and toilets.

The head of the two unions, JSU president Yasumi Morita and AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca, who led the blessing and turn-over ceremonies have encouraged pupils from the school to pursue their dreams to become maritime professionals in the future. Morita-san stressed the grateful partnership between the two maritime unions as he hoped that more similar projects would be built in the future.

Many of the beneficiaries are hometowns of hundreds of JSU-AMOSUP members who have either worked are currently sailing on Japanese-controlled ships.

An agreement signed between the unions and the Department of Education provides policy guidance and directions for DepEd in coordination with AMOSUP to ensure proper implementation of the project. DepEd also provides proper management, maintenance and care for the improvement to be received by the beneficiary schools through the school heads or Principals.

Sailing Forward
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Buildings</th>
<th>Name of Schools</th>
<th>Date Inaugurated</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Batch 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bantayan Central Elementary School, Bantayan, Cebu</td>
<td>June 15, 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cbo-ob Elementary School, Bantayan, Cebu</td>
<td>June 15, 2015</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Bliss Catbalogan Elementary School, Catbalogan, Samar</td>
<td>June 19, 2015</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Basper Elementary School, Tacloban City, Leyte</td>
<td>June 19, 2015</td>
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<td>Batch 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Paaralang Elementary ng Bakhawan, Daanbantayan, Cebu</td>
<td>March 20, 2017</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Hugo T. Apelo Memorial Elementary School, Sara, Ilo-Ilo</td>
<td>July 26, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Salug Elementary School, Guiuan, Eastern Samar</td>
<td>July 1, 2016</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Bungtod Elementary School, Guiuan, Eastern Samar</td>
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<td>Campoyong Elementary School, Guiuan, Eastern Samar</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Cogon Elementary School, Guiuan, Eastern Samar</td>
<td>July 1, 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>New Lourdes Elementary School, Cortes, Bohol</td>
<td>March 21, 2017</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Paaralang Elementary ng Tupas, Antequera, Bohol</td>
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<td>Obujan-Tagubaas Elementary School, Antequera, Bohol</td>
<td>March 21, 2017</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Lourdes High School, Cortes, Bohol</td>
<td>March 21, 2017</td>
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<td>Batch 3</td>
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<td>Dauis Central Elementary School, Dauis, Bohol</td>
<td>Dec. 18, 2017</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Libertad Elementary School, Badayon, Bohol</td>
<td>Nov. 27, 2017</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Punta Cruz Elementary School, Marlbojoc, Bohol</td>
<td>Nov. 27, 2017</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Sandingan National High School, Loon, Bohol</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Balintawak Elementary School, Bantayan, Cebu</td>
<td>Nov. 22, 2017</td>
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<td>Botigues Integrated School, Bantayan, Cebu</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Santa Fe Central Elementary School, Santa Fe, Cebu</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Palanog Elementary School, Tacloban City, Leyte</td>
<td>Dec. 4, 2017</td>
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Many of the beneficiaries are hometowns of hundreds of JSU-AMOSUP members who have either worked or are currently sailing on Japanese-controlled ships.
New wave of excellence in maritime education and training

Hosted by the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific, the four-day conference was the first for International Maritime Lecturers Association (IMLA) and its two subcommittees IMEC and ICERS to have jointly gathered in such an event.

They’ve linked up by common interests as lecturers and researchers in the global field of maritime education, training and technology. This year the International Maritime Lecturers Association (IMLA) and its subcommittees International Maritime English Conference (IMEC) and International Conference in Engine Room simulators (ICERS) have assembled in a joint convention that tackle issues and developments in the maritime academy.

Navigating on the theme “New wave of excellence in maritime education and training,” 104 participants from 27 countries attended the convention that was held at the Manila Diamond Hotel last 22-25 October 2018. IMLA, IMEC and ICERS consist of members who are teachers, former and active seafarers, researchers, technology inventors, teaching innovators and leaders.

In co-operation with the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), the conference was the first for IMLA-IMEC-ICERS to have jointly gathered in such an event. MAAP president Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma R Santos, the local organising committee chair, said the conference has strengthened the link and network among members worldwide.

The four-day conference, including the visit and session at MAAP campus in Mariveles, Bataan, enabled the delegates to share trends, innovations, projects and programmes that promote safety and competence in maritime education and training. Vice Admiral Santos stressed the knowledge shared by and generated from the conference could “serve a greater purpose not only for IMLA, IMEC or ICERS, but also for policy makers, students and other stakeholders of the global maritime industry.”

A plethora of papers and workshops were presented and held from day one to the next, right after the joint plenary of the three committees. Each sector held parallel sessions where delegates heard hot topics and quality presentations of papers.

The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) administrator Rey Leonardo Guerrero, who graced the conference as its guest-of-honour, detailed a number of developments that his agency has done in complying with the standards of training and certification system for Filipino seafarers.

MARINA, he said, is approaching an integrated technology referred to as the MARINA Integrated Online System, a digital platform that integrates the agency’s systems and processes to be in full service in 2019. It will allow the online issuance of seaman’s book, online payment of assessment and certification, online verification of authenticity of documents issued to them by state agencies.

Prior to the joint conference, IMLA, IMEC and ICERS respective gatherings annually or biennially had been held to share their
The conference has strengthened the link and network among members worldwide.

Both sub-committees aim to support the activities of IMLA by providing an interactive forum for simulator community. ICERS seeks to achieve this aim by promoting international contact and cooperation between engine room simulator operators, researchers, commercial simulator manufacturers and courseware developers, software publishers, relevant government administrations, international and national maritime organisations, marine engineers and shipping companies.

With the positive and amiable leadership of Prof Dr Yongxing Jin of IMLA, Prof Dr Clive Cole of IMEC, Prof Dr Takeshi Nakazawa of ICERS, and Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma. R. Santos AFP (Ret) of MAAP, the first joint international event became possible for the maritime lecturers and researchers to meet in one place.

The participants have had a much wider range of sharing good practices in maritime education, training, administration and technology and learning experiences from each other that built a strong rapport and network among maritime institutions.

IMLA’s subcommittee IMEC was established next “as a no-border forum.” It’s a roundtable for discussions on sea-related communication concerning a universally accepted language, which is Maritime English. IMEC provides a global forum for teachers and other parties interested in learning, teaching and its usage for the shipping industry.

To create avenues for the navigators and engineers, the International Navigation Simulator Lecturers’ Conference (INSLC) and its engine section counterpart ICERS was founded as well. Both sub-committees aim to support the activities of IMLA by providing an interactive forum for the simulator community.
New ship to boost cadets’ onboard quality training

The MV Kapitan Gregorio Oca can accommodate more than 100 cadets for their shipboard training

A MOSUP-run Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) will run and operate its second training ship that will be utilised by its growing midshipmen beginning 2019.

The new-building MV Kapitan Gregorio Oca, which was ordered by International Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ) from Miho Shipyard in Shimizu, Japan, can accommodate 108 midshipmen including six instructors for the shipboard training. The 78.69m training ship will be manned by 24 officers and crew when MAAP receives delivery of the ship on January 2019.

Ordering the ship for MAAP is part of IMMAJ’s vision for the academy’s continued academic standing as one of the best maritime institutions in the shipping industry. The shipowners and shipmanagers group has been one of the leading employers of Filipino seafarers on board Japanese-controlled fleet with around 2,200 oceangoing ships. It is estimated that the group employs an average of more than 45,000 officers and crews, majority of these are Filipinos.

The MV Kapitan Gregorio Oca will also complement the first class maritime simulators being utilised by an average of 170 cadets IMMAJ has sponsored to study and train at the academy each year.

The Tokyo-based owners, along with their local agents Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC), has supported the academy as part of developing and maintaining ship officers for Japanese fleet.

MAAP president Vice Admiral Eduardo Santos said the new vessel is really necessary since the existing training ship, the 5,000 GT Kapitan Felix Oca “is getting old and accruing high maintenance cost each year.”

Naming and launching

IMMAJ and Miho Shipyard hosted the naming and launching ceremonies of the new training ship last 08 and 09 August respectively. IMMAJ chair Capt Koichi Akamine and AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca led a Japanese traditional tossing of celebratory rice cakes during the naming ceremony at the shipyard in Shimizu.

After tossing of rice cakes, Dr Oca officially named the ship after his father, AMOSUP founder and former president Capt Gregorio Oca, whose leadership gave a legacy of maritime education and training that is on a par with the world’s best. Ma Socorro Oca, Capt Oca’s daughter, led the ceremonial cutting of the launching cord which tied above the ship bow.

A reception dinner in Nippodaira Hotel at Shizuoka follows the ceremonies where IMMAJ president Capt Akamine, AMOSUP’s Dr Oca, Mr Kobatake of Tsuneishi Shipbuilding, JSU president Yasumi Morita, and PJMCC’s Capt Ted Quijano delivered their congratulatory remarks. IMMAJ vice chair Shunsuke Imada led the toast to celebrate the success of the event. As part of the celebration, tokens from Tsuneishi Shipbuilding Company and Miho Shipyard Company were presented to Yvette Oca, sponsor at the launch of MV KGO.

10 Sailing Forward
MV Kapitan Gregorio Oca specs:
Length: 78.69m
Breadth: 12m
Gross tonnage: 2,098gt
Speed: 13.8 knots
Capacity: 138 people (24 crewmembers, 108 trainees, 6 instructors)

IMMAJ Chair Capt Koichi Akamine (top picture) hosts the ship naming ceremony at Miura shipyard. In attendance include (from left) MAAP President Eduardo Santos, JSU president Yasumi Morita, Dr. and Ms Conrado Oca, Capt and Ms Akamine, Ms Maria Socorro Oca of AMOSUP and Capt Teodoro Quijano of PJMCC.
Getting ready for AMOSUP’s 60th year

As AMOSUP celebrates its 58th anniversary this 2018, the Union now looks ahead to a grand celebration when it turns 60 on 2020. Readyng for this event, we are starting to line up activities and programmes that will drum up support for the significance of this new milestone. Sailing into nearly six decades of service for thousands of our members and their dependents, the Union counts its major achievements in the area of seafarers’ rights and welfare. Our social partners have been with us throughout this journey. It will indeed be a fitting tribute to mark our 60th founding anniversary in November 2020 to recollect the fruitful endeavours AMOSUP has achieved in fighting for seafarers rights and welfare.

PJMCC-AMOSUP bond: A history of strong alliance in upgrading seafarers’ skills and welfare

The employer’s group sends its message to AMOSUP on the maritime union’s 58th founding anniversary

“The Philippine Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC) congratulates the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) on the occasion of its 58th founding anniversary.

The relationship of AMOSUP and PJMCC traces its roots way back in 1989 when the PJMCC was still a motley group of manning companies providing seafarers to Japanese owned, operated or chartered vessels. It was under the auspices of Capt. Gregorio S. Oca, the Father of Filipino Seafarers when the group organized formally to provide a single venue to maintain industrial peace and promote a climate of stability between the Philippine seafaring industry and the Japanese shipowners.

Through the years, the partnership between AMOSUP and PJMCC, together with its Japanese counterparts the All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) and the International Mariners’ Management of Japan (IMMAJ), developed as parties closely liaise on issues relating to training, regulations, wage level, and collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) before local and foreign maritime bodies and industries.

The collaborative efforts between the unions and employers were further enhanced as several funding schemes intended for the upgrading of seafarers’ skills and welfare promotion were introduced under various IBF JSU/AMOSUP Agreements. These funding schemes include the Training Levy Fund, the Provident Fund, and the Widows Pension Fund, whereby shipowners contribute a fixed amount per seafarer per month.

In the pursuit of developing the competence of Filipino seafarers serving the Japanese fleet, the Training Levy Fund was established for the purpose of providing training to member-seafarers as well as education to maritime students. Today, the fund supports more than 30 training and upgrading courses being availed of without charges through the IMMAJ-PJMCC Foundation, Inc. In addition, the fund sponsors students from the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), a maritime school established by AMOSUP in 1997. MAAP scholars are, in turn, distributed to IMMAJ/PJMCC members for shipboard training and employment opportunities. On the other hand, the JSU-AMOSUP Provident Fund and Widows Pension Fund were likewise established to provide financial security and stability to Filipino seafarers and their families. These funds support member-seafarers in the event of retirement, financial needs, illness, disability or death. JSU, AMOSUP, IMMAJ and PJMCC representatives sit as members of the Board of Trustees of the Training Levy Fund, the Provident Fund, and the Widows Pension Fund.

Aside from the aforementioned private-led initiatives, AMOSUP and PJMCC have become strong voices in crafting Philippine policies and legislations not only advocating the best interests of seafarers but the entire maritime industry as a whole. Through AMOSUP and PJMCC’s active participation and constant consultation and dialogue with the government, it could be attested that tripartism at the Philippine maritime manning industry is alive at its truest sense.

In view of these, we extend our sincerest appreciation to AMOSUP for being an ever-reliable supporter and partner of PJMCC since the time of Capt. Oca and until now, under the equally capable leadership of Dr. Conrad F. Oca. With AMOSUP’s cooperation and dedication to achieve common good of the industry, the Philippine-Japan relations in the maritime manning industry is able to find a balance between safeguarding the dignity of our Filipino human resources and at the same time securing the Philippines’ position as the premier manning capital of the world.

Thank you very much and more power to AMOSUP!

Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council, Inc. Eduardo U. Manese, President
Seafarers’ mental health rightly requires attention

Stakeholders have adopted a number of measures that can help alleviate the worsening psychological problem distressing maritime professionals.

It is not an enjoyable task writing about what is killing our people. But it is vital that we share and talk about this information, and that we continue to highlight where improvements need to be made.

So explains Scott Bergeron, the CEO of the Liberian Registry. He is not referring to a series of murder of sorts due to hate and political reasons in a land-based setting. Bergeron is referring to the rising number of seafarers’ death at sea due to mental illness as one of the causes over the last five years.

According to the Liberian Flag Cause of Death Data, which Bergeron shared in a commentary in the online publication Splash 247, the highest number of deaths registered from 2013 to 2018 were due to incidents such as “heart attack, collapse, and unconscious.” Though the Death Data made no mention of mental health issues, Bergeron implied that these cases, along with “suicide” (in another category) had been aggravated by such psychological condition as mental illness.

Seafarer health, welfare and mental illness in relation to the death figures appear as “areas that rightly require attention; mental illness is the largest killer by these records.” And according to the Registry’s investigations, Bergeron writes, “it is also likely that many of the missing crew are victims of suicide (though there is not enough evidence to classify their deaths as such).”

‘Kumusta Kabaro’

Likewise, NGOs and unions have expressed a growing concern about the issue of mental health. “It is a problem that we should no longer deny or set aside,” stressed Maria Socorro Oca, founder of the GOLD Foundation.

The Foundation held their Mental Health Day forum last October, titled “Kumusta Kabaro, the Seafarer community for global mental wellness.” Seafarers alongside their families and midshipmen attended the occasion at the Mall of Asia.

“There was a time in the past that the issue of mental illness was always a stigma, which people preferred not to tackle” as the
Toll on seafaring

In a health and wellness study the ITF carried out among 122 respondents at AMOSUP Sailor's Home and Mariner's Home in Manila in 2016, it found out anxiety and depression significantly affected the mental health of the union members. Of the 122 respondents, 75 said they know workmates who were depressed, while 41 said they know workmates who had considered suicide.

Almost 50% of the respondents said feelings of depression are the result of loneliness (48), long separation from home and family (47), temporary/insecure contract (49) and long hours of work. They just talked to 122 seafarers and the union has thousands of members. One could just imagine how many more seafarers are depressed or have considered taking their own life.

"In as much as we should continue to inspire the youth to embark on a maritime career, we should remain vigilant in looking out for their wellbeing not only ensuring fare treatment at work but also protecting them from social threats and guaranteeing their safety and wellness in body, mind and spirit," Mr Salinas suggested.

The IMO, he said, recognises that mental health and psychological wellbeing are no less crucial. In fact, the theme of IMO International Day of the Seafarers last June was centred on two hashtags, #supportseafarerswellbeing and #gooddayatsea.

Salinas spoke at the GOLD Foundation's mental health forum. He cited a 2013 study by the Swansea University in the UK, which concluded that shipping suicide rate is second only to coal mining. It's just short on the top of the list among all the industries, he said.

"In some cases seafarers who suffer from mental illness may be deemed unfit for work; in others, appropriate action by employers may have beneficial effects on the seafarer's wellbeing and their work performance," according to a newly crafted joint policy guidelines issued by shipowners and unions.

The terms "mental health" and "mental illness" refer to the social, psychological and emotional wellbeing of individuals. They include conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, anorexia nervosa, obsessive compulsive disorder, psychosis and schizophrenia, which can be less visible than many physical disabilities but their effects on affected individuals can be very serious.

As one of the vulnerable sectors, seafarers have been susceptible to depression due to their nature of work, being secluded away from their loved ones and other factors on board for long period of time.

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"In some cases seafarers who suffer from mental illness may be deemed unfit for work; in others, appropriate action by employers may have beneficial effects on the seafarer's wellbeing and their work performance," according to a newly crafted joint policy guidelines issued by shipowners and unions.
Guidelines to follow

The UK Chamber of Shipping, Nautilus International and the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) have jointly agreed on and issued guidelines to shipping companies on drawing up policies on mental health and mental illness. Companies are recommended to adopt such policies.

The aims of shipping companies’ policies on mental health and mental illness should include: to promote the health, safety and welfare of seafarers; foster a company culture that is conducive to improving the mental health of seafarers; and ensure awareness of the importance of good mental health among company managers.

It also aims to provide support for staff who are identified as having mental health problems, ensuring that they are treated with sympathy and respect and in confidence, increase awareness among all staff of the potential signs of mental health problems and provide training to staff in having conversations with others about their mental health.

The policy, which should be in writing, should promote to a workplace environment that is conducive to good mental health, including management styles that treat seafarers with respect and value their opinions and eliminating harassment and bullying.

The policy should promote the organisation of social and teambuilding events that are inclusive and open to all, free access to external sources of support for seafarers, whom they can contact in confidence and adopt procedures for making reasonable adjustments to working arrangements for seafarers who are identified as suffering from mental health problems or who are returning to work after absence resulting from a mental health problem.

AMOSUP’s Mental Health Hotline launched

AMOSUP has soft launched hotlines that would serve union members experiencing issues or problems affecting their mental health on board ships.

The Mental Health Hotline is the newest feature of the existing Telehealth that will serve as the seafarers’ hotline of communication with AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital on mental health problems. The round-the-clock service is based at the Seamen’s Hospital with two phone lines and internet specifically dedicated to mental health concerns. The Mental health hotline numbers are: (+632) 241 9465 and (+632) 241 9463.

AMOSUP president Dr Comrad Oca said qualified “responders” trained and evaluated by AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital psychologists are in-charge of the hotline. It aims to be an accessible avenue for seafarers to share and vent out their concerns which the responders could ably acknowledge, assess and if necessary - endorse to the psychology and/or psychiatry expert of the hospital.

Dr Oca has urged crew managers and manning agents the dissemination of this information to members on board their ships.

Liberian Flag Cause of Death Data
2013 - 2018

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<th>Cause</th>
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Fascinating insight to seafarers daily lives

Men and women in shipping shared images of what a “Good day at sea” actually looks like, reflecting their experiences of a positive working environment in a photo competition.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then what if more than a thousand enthusiasts take pictures for a prize.

The result was the submissions of more than 1,700 compelling entries from across the world for a photo competition the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) organised for this year’s Day of the Seafarer campaign. It’s the UN body’s first ever competition, providing a fascinating insight into the daily life of a seafarer.

The photo awarded first place is a bold geometric composition, focusing on the deck of a ship and the blue ocean beneath (pictured here). The overall effect is one of immediate visual drama but with clear underlying references to the swirling rhythms and patterns of life at sea and the solid dignity of the seafarer’s labour, according to the judges. It was submitted by Zay Yar Lin, a Master Mariner from Myanmar, who will receive a tablet computer and an action camera.

Hanbo, a third mate from China, got the second place for an image of crewmen precariously sitting while painting an upper shipside. Five shared the third spot, including two from the Philippines—a deck cadet and a Master. Fifteen further images were highly commended.

The entries were reviewed by the IMO’s panel of judges. This year’s focus was on seafarers’ wellbeing, particularly their mental health. The photo competition invited men and women working at sea to share...
images of what a “Good day at sea” actually looks like, reflecting their experiences of a positive working environment, saying: “A seafarer’s job can be rewarding and fulfilling, but it’s also a demanding job.”

The IMO said submissions came from seafarers of all ranks - from deck cadet to captain - spanning dozens of nationalities. They ranged from evocative seascapes, to depictions of onboard camaraderie, to the often long and arduous tempo of life at sea, from oily engine rooms to enclosed spaces.

The 2018 Day of the Seafarer campaign advocated for higher standards of welfare and invited shipping companies and others within the industry to show how they provide a good working environment for seafarers and thereby make a positive contribution to their wellbeing.

The Day of the Seafarer is recognized by the United Nations as an official observance day and is celebrated on 25 June every year. Its main purpose is to recognise the unique contribution made by seafarers from all over the world. Each year, the IMO, the global regulatory body for shipping, leads a themed campaign to promote the Day.

Organized in conjunction with the International Seafarers’ Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN), the photo competition was partly sponsored by The North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA) together with IMO.  

Second Place Photo

Photo credits: IMO

Third Place Photo B

Sailing Forward 17
AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital Manila expands new ward

The refurbishment of the hospital’s main building has been supported by the All Japan Seamen’s Union and the International Transport Workers’ Federation.

The AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital has partly completed the refurbishment and expansion of its facilities in Intramuros, Manila with the opening of a new ward, clinics and offices.

The inauguration and opening of the Male Ward and Ambulatory Surgical Complex of the hospital last 16 November consisted of a number of line services that include the ambulatory surgical clinic, endoscopy unit, stone treatment centre, high risk pregnancy, and the male surgical ward, including a doctors’ lounge. The male ward can accommodate around 20 patients at any one time.

Established at its current site in the Walled City in 1986 as part of AMOSUP founder Capt Gregorio Oca’s vision of a happy and healthy seafarer, the Seamen’s Hospital has undergone refurbishment to regain bigger and modernised accommodations for the union’s increasing membership.

The refit follows the completion and inauguration of an extension building, the four-storey South Wing Building, which took place most of the medical services being performed by the adjacent facilities of the main building.

The newly opened ward has been provided with bigger area, giving the 17-bed accommodations space for patient’s privacy.

Refurbishment of the hospital’s main building, which is expected to finish by end of 2019, has been supported by the All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) and the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF). ITF general secretary Stephen Cotton and JSU president Yasumi Morita graced the blessing and inauguration of the medical facilities.

“It’s been constructed by the Union to deliver high quality healthcare services to the general membership and dependents. The facility is dedicated to all hardworking Filipino seafarers and the social partners who have consistently cooperated with the Union in uplifting seafarers’ lives and welfare,” said AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca.

Dr Oca said the expansion of the hospital facilities is also geared towards the Union’s increasing membership. He cited the union’s recent collective agreements in the cruise shipping sector that includes not only deck and engine members, but also in the hotel and catering department as one of the key increases.
Nuclear Medicine: Obtaining earlier diagnosis of critical illnesses and other diseases

Nuke Med Department chair at AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital Dr Eddie Lim tells Sailing Forward the vital functions the section provides in support to the Hospital’s frontline medical services

Nuclear medicine is a medical specialty involving the application of radioactive substances in the diagnosis and treatment of disease.

It involves the safe use of minute amounts of radioactive tracers to detect and help treat medical problems. Typically, a scanning machine called a gamma camera is used to create images of how organs function, or how different areas of the body look, to assist care providers with medical diagnosis and treatment evaluation and monitoring.

“Radiology Done Inside Out”

In a sense, Nuclear Medicine is “radiology done inside out” because it records radiation emitting from within the body rather than radiation that is generated by external sources like X-rays.

Procedures that involve the use of nuclear medicine are designed to complement other imaging procedures because they go beyond just presenting a structural overview of the anatomy being scanned.

Nuclear Medicine scans differ from radiology in that very important aspect. The emphasis of nuclear medicine scans is not on imaging anatomy. Rather, the scans are regarded as a physiological imaging modality because they demonstrate organ function.

Because of this, patients can receive earlier diagnosis of critical illnesses such as cancer and many other diseases. Using nuclear medicine, diagnostic information on key pathological processes can be obtained even before the onset of structural changes.

Where We Are

At AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital, the Nuclear Medicine Department was established in 2007, with the purchase and use of a single gamma camera.

Today, a wide array of services are accessible to AMOSUP members and their dependents for free, such as diagnostic services which include bone scan, thyroid scan, cardiac scan and renal scan, among others.

The Department also provides specific therapeutic modalities to
provide treatment to address thyroid pathologies such as thyroid cancer and hyperthyroidism, using its advanced nuclear medicine facilities and equipment. For instance, patients with thyroid cancer can avail of free radioactive iodine therapy at the hospital.

Patients enjoy prompt scheduling of appointments, competent professional care, and timely generation of reports.

**Constantly Improving**

Eleven years after the Department’s inception, the Nuclear Medicine Department of AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital is still constantly improving, in terms of quality of care, professional expertise, and its facilities, particularly in a field that measures growth in technological leaps and bounds.

At present, the Department strives to efficiently manage an increasing patient base through a scheduling system that makes it convenient for the patients that come to secure a confirmed appointment in a timely manner.

There are numerous avenues for improvement. The hospital is always open to carefully evaluate new processes and equipment which can improve the quality and level of care it is capable of providing to patients, including adopting best practices in the industry.

**Leveling Up Through Collaboration**

Currently, the Nuclear Medicine Department serves at least 60 to 70 patients a month, depending on the load of other services that refer patients to it.

The Department’s staff are all comprehensively trained and up-to-date with their knowledge and skills. Care is taken to ensure their continuing medical education, enabling them to always be ready to deliver an updated level of care to patients at all times.

In support of its field of interest from the outside, the Department also collaborates with other agencies in the advancement of research and development.

For instance, and partially in recognition of the level of competency and care that AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital provides, the hospital now has a request from the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute (PNRI), to participate in a study on the Measurement of Gamma Airborne Dose from Iodine.

The study aims to evaluate the amount that is emitted from the stage where radioactive substances are mixed. It also aims to assess the level of radiation dose that workers who are administering the therapeutic procedures to patients receive.

Participation in such a study underscores the credibility of the hospital's Nuclear Medicine Department as a source of empirical and experiential data for an industry-wide study by PNRI, the country’s licensing body in Nuclear Medicine.

**“Wind Beneath Others’ Wings”**

To provide a consistently high level of support, quality patient care, and the best patient experience, AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital’s Nuclear Medicine Department strives to constantly improve its facilities, systems, and professional resources.

These are things that will significantly improve delivery of care, ensure quality patient experience, and make any waiting, no matter how long or short, worth the wait.

The Department, by its very nature, is not in the frontline of the hospital’s services. Rather, it serves as a support section to others. “Because we support others, our success is their success. We value our role as the wind beneath their, (the departments that refer to us), wings.”
Unions tackle automation: Is it boon or bane for the Maritime Industry?

Further development in technology will certainly have an impact on shipping which the International Transport Workers’ Federation has addressed at its recent Congress in Singapore. Camille A Simbulan reports from the Seafarers Section Conference

Automation is here to stay and the ITF stands firm: No automation without negotiation.

ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton revealed at the Seafarers Section Conference that the chairs and the Executive Board members unanimously decided that the Congress should deal with what is future of work and what is going to be the impact of technology.

Mr. Cotton encouraged everyone to start the timely conversation on automation and challenged the unions to work together to stop misinformation. “No automation without negotiation. But the challenge will be, negotiation for what? Job security, better education, up skilling – these are questions that can only be tackled by you,” he said.

The General Secretary further stressed that different transport sectors are under different kinds of pressure and different kinds of timeline for the possibility of implementation of automation. At the moment, he said automation is potentially more impactful on high-cost regions where labourers are higher cost, as the cost of automation is quite substantial, “there’s still bits of the world that needs some more help and support on campaigning, communicating, delivering different outcomes, so for me we still have some capacity to do more work on the ground,” Mr. Cotton added.
As automation continues to emerge in the transport industry, ITF Maritime Coordinator Jacqueline Smith called on the whole ITF family to come up with a general policy to take a stand on automation. She said, “as a movement we need to be collective, we need to be supportive and to make sure that any policies that we have can be adopted to assist the affiliates in those unions.”

Ms Smith also highlighted the need to make sure that any changes in technology will allow members to have the opportunity to be reskilled and retrained, “so that they also become organised workforce and that it’s not slipping away in the union-busting exercise. We also need to have a voice in this whole conversation because at the moment, the dominating voice in this conversation is the tech companies,” she added.

As for Dr Doumbia-Henry, aside from job security, the industry should also focus on gender equality in the imminent era of automation. “As these technological developments take place we have to ensure that the design of these technological advancements takes into account gender dimension. This is one of the greatest challenges of the maritime industry,” she said.

The former ILO Director revealed that the 2019 World Maritime Day will be dedicated to women and the central theme will be empowering women in maritime. According to her, it will be an opportunity for the entire industry and for the trade union movement to take the lead in making sure to have more women in Maritime.

Dr. Doumbia-Henry said she is hopeful that with the focus on women next year, the technology development could be an opportunity to make the maritime industry more gender-sensitive.

"The introduction of automation will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Especially in the seafaring sector, you will have a couple more years to give the industry a chance of adapting to those challenges created by automation and technology over the coming years," Dr. Jens-Uwe Schröder-Hinrichs explained.

Seafarers Chair, David Heindel, affirmed that several shipping companies have guaranteed to keep their seafarers at work. “Maersk quite emphatically indicated that they would never have vessels running without seafarers on board. They look at automation as a way of augmenting seafarers through a system in their daily work,” Heindel said.

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**HOW FACTORS CAN AFFECT TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT**

**HIGHLY AUTOMATED SHIPS**

**Enablers**

- **Economic Benefits**: 48%
- **Regulation and Governance**: 20%
- **Government Support**: 20%

**Hurdles**

- **Cost**: 14%
- **Economic Benefit**: 25%
- **Regulation and Governance**: 39%

**Cost of Develop and Deploy**

- Lack of Economic Benefit
- Physical Infrastructure
- Regulation and Governance

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"The introduction of automation will be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Especially in the seafaring sector, you will have a couple more years to give the industry a chance of adapting to those challenges created by automation and technology over the coming years."
Women delegates to the ITF Congress in Singapore raised their views on the empowerment of the female workers on various issues in the transport industry. They see active participation as an impetus that can gather a strong voice for women, writes Camille A Simbulan.

Libyan Trade Unionist Nermin Al-Sharif stole the show at the Women Transport Workers’ Conference on Day 5 of the 44th ITF Congress in Singapore. Al-Sharif, general secretary of the Dockers and Seafarers Union of Libya, made an emphatic testimony about her experience of being denied to travel to an ITF event in Morocco as authorities confiscated her passport.

Al-Sharif shared before the delegation how the ITF helped her gain international support and sympathy and how that massive support she got from men and women all over the world resulted in her liberty. She also challenged all the women at the conference to never settle and always aim for higher roles and greater responsibility and influence in the organisation they are in.

AMOSUP Women’s Committee Chairperson, Captain Jasmin Labarda, initiated the Call to Action during the Women’s Conference. Capt Labarda led hundreds of women delegates and participants to find their voices to say, “This Is Our World Too!”

Elected as the ITF Women’s Committee Youth Representative, Capt. Labarda also discussed about the Women Transport Workers’ Conference before the Congress Plenary. It was reported that the women at the conference agreed to have two priorities that they deem significant not only to women, but to humanity as a whole.

First, building women transport workers’ economic power by ending gender-based occupational segregation in the global transport industry, and second, building the power of trade union action to end violence against women transport workers, including the achievement and ratification of an ILO convention and recommendation on violence and harassment in the world of work.

The women at the conference have agreed to build the “Our Public Transport programme” where gender is strongly embedded, to support warehouse, hubs and informal workers’ programmes by promoting gender equality, women’s leadership and organising women workers, and to mark global action days such as International Women’s Day on 8th of March, UN Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls on 25th of November and World Toilet Day on 19th of November.

Launched at the Women’s Conference is a new report on the impact of the future of work for women in public transport. A very interactive and free flowing discussion also took place at the conference where delegates from different parts of the world share their own experiences, learning, and even words of encouragement and hope for women in the other unions.

Delegates raised their views on the empowerment of women transport workers through training to work with digital technologies, increasing union membership of women transport workers, equal pay and working conditions, recognising the impact of the menopause on women.
workers and putting pressure on employers to introduce policy, violence against women, including the global women’s advocacy programme and domestic violence, paid leave, integration of women into leadership and decision-making structures, as well as women’s structures, ending gender-based occupational segregation and addressing safe access to toilets.

The Women’s Conference then endorsed a motion on informal workers and reconfirmed that there is no place for hostility and disrespect at any ITF event.

The women also remembered the inspiration, devotion and contribution of ITF Executive Board-elect Ann Anderson, who was the ITF Women Transport Workers’ Committee Vice-Chair and General Secretary of CCWU in Guyana.

The Women’s Conference completed the elections of the ITF Women Transport Workers’ Committee with Diana Holland as the Chair. “We are making a difference. Our unions now report 800,000 women members. But nothing is ever handed to us on a plate. This increase comes from organising and struggle across the world,” Holland said.

During the Closing Plenary at the Congress, AMOSUP’s Capt. Jasmin Labarda powerfully wrapped up the women’s piece, “With strong voice - expect more active participation, as we say, “THIS IS OUR WORLD TOO!”
The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and its affiliated unions work together to fight for the rights of all seafarers around the world.

To support seafarers the ITF has a global network of more than 130 inspectors and contacts in 57 countries, who can be called upon to deal with any problems seafarers face. For those areas of the world where no inspector is available, the ITF Seafarers Support team based in the ITF Head Office in London can be contacted.

The Contact details are:

Email          seasupport@itf.org.uk
SMS            +44 7984 356 573
WhatsApp/Viber +44 7523 515 097
Facebook       www.facebook.com/itfseafarerssupport

Please remember that when contacting the ITF Seafarers Support team or the ITF Inspectors, you should provide the Name and Flag of the vessel, the IMO number, your current location and full details of the problem or problems you have.

In addition to these contact details the ITF has developed a FREE iOS and Android app called ITF Seafarers. Using this app you can look up vessel details taken directly from the ITF system, find and contact an ITF Inspector or ITF Maritime affiliated union plus much, much more.
Asia’s crewing nations commit to enforce ‘Fair Treatment of Seafarers’

Issuing the Manila Statement, senior government representatives from more than 10 countries in the region said the time was right for action to protect their seafarers in the event of maritime accident.

As the region that leads the presence and supply of seafarers to the world’s merchant marine fleet, Asia has highlighted the plight many sailors face in other jurisdictions in the event of maritime accident.

For that concern, Asia’s seafaring nations have vowed to lead the drive towards proper and effective implementation of the IMO and ILO agreed Guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the Event of Maritime Accident.

A regional meeting in Manila last 13 November - organised by Seafarers’ Rights International (SRI), a world leading international pan-industry body researching maritime and seafarers’ law, and the Philippine Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE) - made the first ever statement on the issue. Issuing the Manila Statement, senior government representatives from more than 10 countries in the region said the time was right for action to be taken to protect their seafarers.

Majority of seafarers serving the international merchant fleet came from Asia, with their profession being recognised as essential to the conduct of world trade and as a special category of worker. Due to the global nature of the shipping industry and various jurisdictions that seafarers may be brought into contact with, they need special protection, especially in relation to contacts with state authorities in the event of a maritime accident.

The decision by the Asian countries to take the lead in the fight for the Fair Treatment of Seafarers is significant and will now pave the way for other regions to follow suit, the SRI said in a statement.

SRI executive director Deirdre Fitzpatrick said announcement of the Manila Statement on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers is a crucial step in the fight to raise awareness over the issue. “We were delighted to host this first Regional Meeting in Manila in cooperation with Silvestre H. Bello III, Secretary of the Philippine DOLE. It is especially significant to see Asia taking the lead in respect of this vital issue for seafarers.”
Now the hard work begins, we must create an implementation plan to roll out the statement to ensure that they receive fair treatment.

Maritime unions welcomed the Manila Statement saying, the powerful declaration charts the way forward for their work on fair treatment of seafarers.

Speaking at the meeting, International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) general secretary Stephen Cotton said the ITF is totally committed to work to ensure for the success of the statement and results in better working conditions for all seafarers.

"Now the hard work begins, we must create an implementation plan to roll out the statement to ensure that they receive fair treatment," Mr Cotton said.

The Fair Treatment Guidelines, which are voluntary, do not seek to interfere with any State’s domestic, criminal, or civil law. Instead, they balance the rights and obligations of stakeholders to whom the Guidelines are addressed, namely port and coastal states, flag states, the seafarers’ states, shipowners and seafarers.

Ms Fitzpatrick said, “A number of governments have already implemented the Guidelines but many others need to consider them and look at how they can be implemented within their own legislation. Other considerations are how capacity can be built among all stakeholders and role players to ensure more effective implementation and enforcement of the fundamental rights contained in the Guidelines.”

DOLE Secretary Silvestre Bello III, SRI Executive Director Deirdre Fitzpatrick and ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton show off the Manila Statement.

Fitzpatrick: A number of governments have already implemented the Guidelines on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the Event of Maritime Accident.
The Regional Meeting in Manila aimed at raising awareness of the Guidelines amongst stakeholders and role players, and at exploring how the region could develop resources, knowledge and expertise in relation to the Guidelines. It received international support from the Secretary-General of the IMO, the Director of Standards at the ILO, as well as Ambassadors and Embassy staff from more than 30 countries from outside the region. A keynote address was delivered to the Regional Meeting on behalf of the President of The Philippines. Sponsored by the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and the ITF Seafarers’ Trust; participants at the conference included senior Government officials and Ambassadors from Asian countries; senior representatives of the maritime industry, including shipowners and seafarers’ unions; senior representatives of the IMO and ILO; senior representatives of maritime of maritime administrations from Asian countries; judges; professors; auditors; casualty investigators; prosecutors; Master Mariners; and seafarers.

The objective of the regional meeting in Manila was to raise awareness of the Guidelines amongst all stakeholders and to explore how to develop resources, knowledge and expertise in relation to the Guidelines. It also aimed to look at cooperation amongst States at regional and international level.
Beyond decent, fair and commensurate wages

AMOSUP President Dr Conrado F Oca delivers the Union’s statement at the first Asian regional meeting on the ‘Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the Event of Maritime Accident’

According to Aristotle, “The only stable state is the one in which all men are equal before the law.”

Wise as they are, there is an inherent difficulty in understanding these words given the intrinsically global nature of shipping involving multinational stakeholders with the overlapping interests and impacted differently by the national laws and policies of several countries.

Yet, we are here today because we find a common ground in advocating for the individual rights and freedom of every person, regardless of race, gender, age, religion, creed and political beliefs.

The human aspiration for freedom is so basic and universal, that Thomas Jefferson once said: “The God who gave us life gave us liberty at the same time.”

Every human being has the right to life and liberty. Take those away and you make that person less human. Of course, the authority of every State to enforce its national laws within its jurisdiction, must be recognised. But there must be a balancing force that shall ensure that the penal and criminal laws of each state will be fair in the conduct of their enforcement, with due process observed in the investigation and prosecution of offences committed within the national territory.

Such was the resounding clamour by governments and social partners across the aisle, when the IMO Assembly and the ILO Governing Body jointly adopted a resolution in 2005 which agreed to adopt guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident and urged every state to respect the human rights of seafarers involved in maritime accidents.

But the provisions of the Guidelines would be mere words unless we do our part in ensuring that its objectives are met. There is that need to constantly affirm and confirm that seafarers are a special category of workers. Given the global nature of the shipping industry and the different jurisdictions that seafarers may be brought into contact with, they must be given special protection.

To be sure, much has changed from the time when seafarers suspected of violating anti-pollution laws were taken into custody, handcuffed and shackled. It was that very image of Filipino crewmembers of the Greek-owned M/V Katerina detained by the US Coast Guard in California, and of many other similar cases, which drew the attention of governments and social problems of the unfair treatment of seafarers under investigation for maritime accidents in 2004. Unfortunately, the problem persists to this day.

Fast forward to 2015 in Panama, where another Filipino seafarer of a Dutch-flagged vessel was taken into custody for almost two years while undergoing investigation for the accidental death of a fellow crewmember. Bosun Jelcris Rontale may not have been handcuffed nor kept in a jail cell. But living in a hotel room in a foreign country thousands of miles away from his family for 19 months without being allowed to leave and with so much uncertainty hanging over his head, sounds so much like being a prisoner.

Such is the very situation contemplated in the Guidelines which defines “detention” as “any restriction on the movement of seafarers by public authorities, imposed as a result of a maritime accident, including preventing them from leaving the territory of a State other than the seafarer’s country of nationality or residence.”

Decent, fair and commensurate wages and benefits are not the sum total of the labour standards prescribed by international law. Beyond these elements, seafarers must be protected against criminalization, harassment, bullying and discrimination. They have become more vulnerable to detention, abandonment, involuntary repatriation, piracy and other dangerous situations. SF
Maritime profession drives seafarers career, family better

Amidst the hazards and sacrifices of working away from families and friends, many seafarers have succeeded in their careers including the realisation of dreams for their next of kin. AMOSUP members share segments of their experiences in a series of interviews with Sailing Forward’s Andy Dalisay

Photo: Noel Gabrido
Romeo Tumarao, Armed Guard/Chief Security Officer: The Pastor who pursues pirates too

He normally brandishes an M-14 rifle on board either overseeing or enforcing the ship security plan in the high seas. But as soon as he disembarks for vacation, he gets armed with the Holy Bible to preach the word of God.

Such are the contrasting jobs Romeo Tumarao performs as an armed guard or chief security officer on board ships and as a pastor to his congregation at the Evangelical Christian Church. Yet Romeo, or “Romy” to friends, has no qualm over his two-fold, offbeat roles as long as he is able to perform his calling and to provide support for his family.

“One of his team’s only fears is when pirates used RPG (rocket propelled grenade) to attack the ship. Not only will it put our lives in danger but the ship as well.”

Romy was educated in a seminary, completing a theology course at Theology University in Zamboanga City in 2005 and was ordained as a pastor or a solemnising officer in 2011. He believes “it was a call from God” that sent him to pursue his pastoral mission.

But prior to completing his theological studies, Romy was no stranger to working at sea. He spent several years in a number of jobs such as deck steward, dining server and bar steward on several cruise ships for almost a decade during the 1990s. To upgrade his skills, Romy decided to take up a training course for ship security officer. The IMO’s enforcement of security plan on marine facilities like ships and ports following the 9/11 attacks in the United States in 2001 mandated the employment of ship security officer (SSO). Romy became one of them. The former steward had been employed in a series of contracts as SSO for Miami-based cruise lines since he trained for the role.

Romy got even more wanted for the required security post among vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden when Somali pirates began attacking ships and crews in mid-2000. UK-based Gulf of Aden Group Transit (GoAGT), the former leading private maritime security company, deployed him as an armed guard to escort and protect vessels and their multi-million dollar cargoes against pirate attacks.

“Ship owners feel safe when they hire armed guards on their ships,” stressed Romy, who has escorted almost all types of ships in the Gulf of Aden. Once the merchant ship passed the “critical area”, his security team would disembark at a designated point, and the ship would sail to its next port. The now-defunct GoAGT once had its floating armoury along the International Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Red Sea where armed teams disembark for their next tour of duty.

At the peak of piracy, Romy says ships passing through the Gulf of Aden always had the possibility of getting hijacked. “But we’re
confident since the port and starboard sides were shielded,” he noted, referring to the coils of barbed wires and water cannons installed to prevent pirates from climbing the ship. “Most likely we will defeat them if they engage us,” he added.

His team’s only fear is when pirates used RPG (rocket propelled grenade) to attack the ship. “Not only will it put our lives in danger but the ship as well,” he said. It happened on the cruise ship Seabourn Spirit, when one of the armed skiffs fired three RPG shots while the 10,000 GT Spirit was sailing off the coast of Somalia in November 2005. Though Romy was not aboard when the attempted piracy happened, he saw the damage — the RPG holes on the cruiseship — when his team escorted the vessel in 2009.

As armed guards, his team is mandated by the Captain to test their firearms each time they embark to escort a vessel. “Our confidence gets boosted once the captain requested us to go on a firing exercise on board to make sure that our firearms are working. We normally carry M14 rifles with 500 rounds of ammo, apart from the issued glock 9mm pistols,” he said.

Romy normally led a three or four-man armed team, mostly on ships helmed by Asian captains. Ships with Filipino, Japanese and Thai captains were some of the ships they have escorted. Security for ships with European masters are assigned to their British counterpart. While his team never had actual engagement with the pirates, he concedes, “the risk of armed encounter is always there.”

One time they escorted a tug-towed oil barge, “We almost had an armed encounter with a fast approaching skiff as they fired a hail of bullets. We had to respond by firing upon them just to remind: Hey better think twice, we’re also armed,” Romy recollected. The skiff changed course away.

Romy recently disembarked from the Disney Dream, the 129,690 GT ship of the Disney Cruise Line. Ashore, he is one of the associate pastors in the evangelical church in Zamboanga City, where he performs chaplain duties like officiating weddings and ministering to those who are troubled. He preaches on Sundays. “If we are called by God then we are bound to minister, preach his word regardless whether we are on board or on vacation.”

According to Romy, “when I stand in the pulpit and preach God’s word, I get fulfilled from within. It’s because we are called to go and make disciples of all nations,” he said, quoting that last line from Matthew 28:19-20.
It’s been smooth sailing since he embarked on his career as a maritime professional on ships overseas. But Victor Garciano still has to tackle the biggest challenge of his job in a journey to achieve his goal as a Master Mariner.

Yet, already possessing his Master's ticket, Victor or Vic seems willing to take time grooping the rope up to the peak of his career. As a Second Officer, Vic has gotten word of upcoming promotion to a First or Chief Officer when he joins his next ship this December.

“It took a lot of adjustments since I was with colleagues of different nationalities and religions in the big ship. I got along with them, though. They treated me well. You just really need camaraderie among them.”

Coming home last September from the 61,436 DWT Maritime Longevity, a bulker belonging to Japanese shipowner Shoei Kisen Kaisha. Vic has received good recommendations for his next post. The 38-year-old sees himself to take the helm in command as a Captain in the next three years.

Vic has worked with several shipowners. But he observes that the lack of job permanency with a shipping employer affects one’s career development, especially when competition gets stiff. But he says he can still manage finding a suitable job.

“When I first boarded my first ship in 2004, it was already like a fulfillment since I really worked for it,” he says. “At dahil iba't ibang lahi at relihiyon ang mga kasama ko sa barko, maling adjustment ang kinalangan. Pero maayos raman ang pakisama nila sa akin. Kelangan mo rin lang makibegay sa kanila.”

(It took a lot of adjustments since I was with colleagues of different nationalities and religions in the big ship. I got along with them, though. They treated me well. You just really...
need camaraderie among them.)
Vic first sailed as a general purpose deckhand on the ships of UK-based Princess Cruises, where he worked for two contracts. He got hired right after completing his year-long cadetship in the domestic run for Cebu Ferries in 2001. He sat down later for the marine board exam for a Third Officer license.

"Sa passenger ship overseas noon wala lang chance ang Filipino officer kaya lumiipat ako ng ibang kumpanya." (There was no chance of promotion for a Filipino on passenger line overseas before, so I went to another company.)
He jumped to the container ship of Jebsen Shipping where he accepted an ordinary seaman job even though he held his Third Officer ticket. He acted as an officer after getting promoted on his third ship at Jebsen.

Vic encountered a few snags too while performing his role. One of these was in Port State Control (PSC) inspection. "Kailangan pagtuunan ng pansin (ang PSC) para hindi ko sumabot o magka problema. Kasi minsan kahit okay ang prepration mo, hahanapan ka ng butas para magmula (ang barko). Since sila ang host country, kahit compliant ka, minsan sumasabit pa rin. (You need to give it (PSC) importance so the ship won’t encounter a problem. Sometimes even if you’re compliant, they can still find a loophole. As they are the host country, you’re at risk to be fined for non-compliance.)

Although these are minor deficiencies, Vic says, they could be easily fixed. "Pero nakaka disappoint din. Pinagbubuti mo na nga, sasabit pa rin." (But it’s disappointing too. It gets you into trouble even if you’re doing your best.)

Apart from Port State issue, Vic continues: We were also chased by pirates in Nigeria in 2010 during my last ship with Jebsen. But we’ve already mustered ourselves in the cliadel just in case. Pero parang hindi kami ang target, kasi bumiata sila nang hinabol kami habang papunta kaming port Harcourt." (But it seems like we were not the target as they stopped chasing us while on our way to Port Harcourt.)

Vic finished his BS in Marine Transportation at the University of Cebu in 2001. "I decided to take up a maritime course as I thought it would lead to a financially rewarding career than any jobs ashore," he said. He got inspired to take up the course after his two elder brothers both became radio operators and became well-off.

"Parang madali lang silang kumita ng pera kaya na impluwensyahan nila ako. Dahil galing kang mabirha na panluya, gusto ko nung ayad makaahon. Sa obersbasyon ko, madali ang maritime kaya ito ang ini-enroll ko." (It seemed like money came in fast in their jobs so they were able to influence me to follow their footsteps. I came from a poor family, so the immediate goal was to pursue a better life, and fast. In my observation, maritime was the best way to get there, so I enrolled.)

Vic has already invested in a house and lot for his family. He has two children. When his first child was born, he said they were struggling in the middle of the storm near Incheon, Korea in August 2012. "We had to maneuver and pull out from berth due to the strong typhoon," he shared.

Fear and excitement had gripped the Cebuano mariner that day as giant swells battered their ship while his wife was labouring for the delivery of their first born back home. "I was on the phone texting and calling home while my wife was delivering our first baby in Canadian waters." He can never forget it. "Kasi natabunan ng galak ang atmosphere ng takot namin sa barko sa pagdilang ang awr ayun. (Happiness replaced an atmosphere of fear on board the ship when our first child came out.)"
Cruise ships have long been the key floating assets that employ thousands of Filipinos overseas. Apart from the deck and engine departments, the cruise lines hotel department has produced many professionals and staff who have rendered various lines of services on board ships.

Jovencio Talam, who spent many years in a number of cruise vessels, is one of those who honed his skills since he worked as a cook trainee on board the Legend of the Seas in 1997. He began on the job assisting in meal preparation, helping the chef in chopping vegetables and cleaning the galley as among his tasks over a 10-month stint on board the 69,130 GT Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines (RCCL) operated ship.

Jovencio, or 'Jov' for short, went further working on a number of cruises at the galley and dining sections of other RCCL vessels. When he embarked on the Legend's sister ship Radiance of the Seas, Jov moved up as a second cook. He also served as chef de partie or line cook on another RCCL ship, the Explorer of the Seas. He says he would be assigned to different food stations for each succeeding contracts at RCCL.

The former first cook of a five-star hotel admits facing a lot of challenges and adjustments when he shifted his career at sea. Since he's dealing with a lot of foreigners and staying in a new environment on board, Jov says, he had to bear some culture shock when he started to work. But his previous experience at Marriot Hotel in Cebu helped him to catch up with the challenges of the job.

The hardest part, Jov concedes, was coping with the daily life in the new environment at sea. "Since we're sailing, you become worried about what would happen while in the middle of the ocean, along with homesickness and longing for the family,” said Joy of his first few months on board his first vessel. Another challenge he dealt with included interactions with foreign staff, which Jov says, had put him into bouts of misunderstanding due to language and cultural differences. He also had to familiarize himself as a chef with the cuisines he encountered while preparing the menu, which are new to him.

Jov already knew the basics such as making the sauces and methods of cooking, which made preparing a bit easier. "We have this food demonstration that you need to follow instructions for each menu. Without it, could be a problem during actual cooking,” he shared. Jov, however, was not content as an aid or helper in the cruise galley. He pursued to level up his post to earn higher, which he easily found in cargo ships. "I had to look for greener pasture as my children would be entering college by then,” he stressed, saying the decision
had given him twice the wages he previously received.

Jov aimed to be a chief cook and got hired in one of the container ships of German shipowner Rickmers Line in 2011. It was followed by a new contract in another box ship for the same role. He also worked for other owners of Greek-flagged bulk carriers in succession.

“Those cargo ships I joined in were mainly dominated by European officers,” he noted. With enough knowledge in foreign cuisines — both European and American dishes — his shift into a number of cargo ships as a chief cook gave him the advantage to become an expert, and allowed him to advance even further.

“I’m thankful that I became familiar with foreign cuisines and honed my skills in cooking after all those years in cruise lines,” Jov admitted. He considers it a great experience working with people from different cultures having a taste of different cuisines. He got acquainted with experienced chefs who are not only talented, but are also keen on their team development.

He says his experience in cruises led to better results in his succeeding employment in the galleys of bulkers and tankers. “The experience I’ve had also gave me the confidence to meet their expectations,” Jov said, stressing that he used to receive “good appraisals” for his performance from both officers and ratings. While it’s not unusual to receive complaints on the taste of the food he served, the Chief Cook said he rather liked it as a way to learn in the process. “Nobody’s perfect since we are cooking daily for nine months, within which there can surely be mistakes,” he said.

Jov disembarked last August after a nine-month contract from the 306,097 DWT Ridgebury Progress, a VLCC belonging to the Connecticut-based Ridgebury Tankers.

Jov’s aim was only to work in a hotel when he took up Hotel and Restaurant Management at the University of San Jose Recoletos in Cebu, where he graduated in 1994. However, he saw an opportunity to earn big when he first sought to work at sea.

True enough, Jov claimed seafaring brought improvement to the family’s financial status over the years. Apart from having their own home, he was able to send his two children to good schools, in college and secondary education. The 47-year-old chef plans to set up his own business when he retires from the sea, perhaps a restaurant or an enterprise that supplies food to hospitals and other establishments. He also plans to produce his own brand of food condiments. 

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Jeffrey Formacion, 2nd Asst Engineer: Seeking more career milestones

It was a thrilling experience when he boarded his first ship on an LPG carrier as an engine cadet in July 2008.

“I was really blind about what’s going to happen with me on board as I knew theoretical was different from the practical side. I had no idea how the machineries in the engine room operate,” shared Jeffrey Formacion of his experience on his first ship.

He was just following what the oiler had instructed him, and he was nervous in joining the ship to do the actual on the job training.

a maritime professional. “I’ve been used to hard work in the farm, and so having a tough job like the one on board was not new to me,” he stressed, recalling the tough life in the province each time he threw up from bouts of seasickness during his first few days on board.

To be in the maritime profession is not Jeff’s dream job. When he was planning to enter college, he says, the maritime course was one of the available choices. He wanted to be a professional but wouldn’t want to pursue long years of study. So he opted for maritime which only takes three years in school and a year on finished the course and had worked, I just couldn’t express my contentment. And when I started to get my regular pay and visited places, I’ve learnt to love my job,” he says.

After finishing three contracts, Jeff prepared and sat for the marine board exam for his first journey to be a ship officer. But when he passed and joined his first ship as a Fourth Engineer, Jeff was haunted by the same feeling of tenseness that he felt when he embarked on his first ship as a cadet. “There were new set of duties and responsibilities that you have to undertake,” he said.

When I finished the course and had worked, I just couldn’t express my contentment. And when I started to get my regular pay and visited places, I’ve learnt to love my job

Jeffrey, or “Jeff” as friends call him, became an oiler six months later. “I was so happy for the promotion as I already learned my tasks. There was no major changes from my duties as a cadet, except the wage that went up,” Jeff recalled.

Hailing from a poor family, Jeff used to plough the field in Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat prior to becoming board the ship. He originally wanted to go into Forestry but wouldn’t want to travel as far as Marawi City, where the college offering the course is more than 250km away from his hometown.

Jeff finished his BS in Marine Engineering at Mindanao Polytechnic College in General Santos City in 2007. “When I

Assuring to have well-maintained engines was one of Jeff’s key responsibilities. He was glad the ship was still new when he took over. “We’re the second set of officers and crew when we assumed manning during my first OIC role as there was less preventive maintenance system (to do),” he stressed.

However, it was the exact opposite when he came on board an
old tonnage where they had to undergo trouble shooting in the machineries. Sometimes they had to troubleshoot at 2:00 AM until sundown and had to be on duty for the next eight hours. Jeff also experienced having stalled at mid-sea and with no spare. Consequently, a call for tug assistance was the last remedy, which happened one time while they were sailing from China to Japan.

Jeff says the maritime profession built in him the moral fabric of the job in terms of handling responsibilities, which includes dealing with people. “One can have proper treatment of much older colleagues as your subordinate so that at the end of the day, magkaibigan pa rin kayo. Kailangan talaga ang pakisama upang pagkatapos ng kontrata masaya kayong lahat.” (...you’re still on good terms. You really need to get along well so that when you finish your contract, your bond is strong and everyone is just happy).

Financially, Jeff admits that seafaring has provided his family a better life. “Dahil nagmula kami sa mahirap, umangat ang buhay namin. Retired na ang mga parents ko. Ako na lang ang sumusuporsa sa kanila. (Our life improved as we came from a poor family. My parents no longer work. I’m the only one who supports them).

The Second Engineer also wishes to attain the highest post in the engine department: the Chief Engineer. He says he still has many years to fulfill many of his dreams. But the 31-year-old is just a heartbeat away from the top of his career. Jeff obtained his Second Engineer ticket in August 2017.

It will be his seventh ship when he embarks on his next tour of duty on a V Ships-managed bulker in November. Jeffrey says he wants to go back to the farm when he retires from seafaring. He sees the 5,000 sq m farmland he acquired in Tacurong as a good start to work on.

“Kelangan din natin magpapawis sa lupa para sa ikahalababa pa ng ating buhay,” he adds. (We also need to put in hardwork ashore as life goes on.)
Arlen Alvarez, 4th Engineer: Determined to stay on the job

He started working on an old Taiwanese bulk carrier as a messman sometime in September of 1996. The downturn in shipping at the time gave Arlen Alvarez a hard time in finding a job onboard. So he worked doubly hard, straight up to his 22nd month when he finally disembarked for a holiday.

Only the word “determination” had kept him to last that long period on board, Arlen says. He seemed to have abhorred the idea of returning home, wondering if he could find the next job right away. “Kaya pinasok ko sa isip ko na kahit na anong hirap ng trabaho sa barko susuungin ko.” (So I had to bear in mind that no matter how difficult the work is, I have to keep persevering.)

From a messman, Arlen became a wiper after eight months on his first vessel, where he found his baptism of fire in the engine department. “Bukod sa luma na ang barko, panay trouble pa ang makinarea, kaya puro overhaul,” Arlen laments. (Aside from the fact that the ship is old, engine trouble always occurs that we had to fix.)

Sometimes their aging ship would suddenly halt at mid-ocean due to engine trouble. “Kaya kahit nagpapahinga ka na tatawagin ka upang magtrabaho,” (Even when you’re already resting, you’ll be summoned for duty.)

For instance, when he and his mates needed to change an ejection pump of a faulty generator. They had to overhaul the boiler water circulating pump in the middle of the night while the ship was stalled in the Indian Ocean. “Determinasyon na lang kaya ako tumagal sa ganung mga sitwasyon namin.” (Determination was the only thing that kept me going in such situations.)

Arlen admitted, though, that he used to take job-hunting for granted when he was just starting in the profession. He only realised that he needed to work when he married and had two kids. “Sumakay ako noong tativo na ang anak ko, kambal pa ang panganay. Naisip ko kalangan ko na pala talagang magtrabaho. (I embarked on my first job on board when I already had three kids, with the twin as our eldest. I thought, I really have to be responsible and work hard this time.)

So when Arlen found a job, he almost did not want to go home, to be able to continue supporting his family. “Gusto ko na lang magtrabaho ng totoo para susuportahan ang pamilya ko,” he said. (I just wanted to work continuously to support my family.)

Arlen saw the marine profession as the fastest way to get a job and be well off. He went to John B Lacson College Foundation in Bacolod where he completed a Certificate in Marine Engineering in 1993. “I thought it was the fastest way to a better life. It wasn’t even my ambition to be a maritime professional,” he shared.

However, he has taken to practise his job diligently. “Kaya ayaw ko ng mga nanggugulang sa trabaho. Pero mapapagsenasaya ako at kung sumosobra kinukumparts ko na,” Arlen added. (That’s why I hate those who pass on their responsibilities to others. I am patient, but I confront them when they become abusive.)
Arlen says he saw how some engine officers took advantage of their ratings subordinates, especially when summoning them to do tasks. He experienced it himself, he points out.

It’s one of the reasons he pursued to uplift his status from a rating’s role to an engine officer when Arlen decided to take a course review and sit for the marine board exam. He became a 4th Engineer in 2010 and went about to take his post the following year. “I strived for 10 long years as a rating. I realized that it’s possible to move up both professionally and financially.”

Arlen now holds a Third Engineer ticket. Although he became a marine professional at a gradual pace, he says he learned a lot from his experiences.

He wants to save up further when he sails on his upcoming tour of duties. He plans to continue with his current employer TMS Tankers of Greece, which also owns and manages the 112,936 DWT tanker he signed off from last July.

“*
So I had to bear in mind that no matter how difficult the work is, I have to keep persevering.

The 49-year-old says he is still in the pink of health to work further over the next few years amidst growing competition among younger officers in the profession. “That’s why I want to move up further to the next rank for the next chapter of my career. Mas marami na kasing mas bata at foreign officers ang kinukuha ng mga owners.” (Owners now prefer younger officers including foreign officers).

Arlen says he has a lot to thank seafaring for. Apart from being able to travel to a lot of places in various parts of the world, he has sent his children to college- all of them are now working professionals. He also helped send his brother to college, and is now a maritime professional as well.
GLOBAL STRUGGLE FOR SAILORS

Remarkably, all seafarers are protected by an international wage agreement, but we’ve got to show it delivers, writes Mark Dickinson

Consideration of the full implications of our own behaviour is an important element of the progressive mindset. In what conditions is our food produced? Could our vehicles be less polluting? Might our decision-making tend to advantage one group over another? All deserve serious-minded attention.

In the long list of ethical issues that worry us, very few people I meet, without experience of the sea, give much thought to the conditions in which ship’s crews labour.

It is not an obscure issue. Around 90 per cent of all the world’s goods are transported by sea. Look around your home or office. Nearly everything you see has arrived through our ports. And the 1.6 million seafarers who convey those goods work in more dangerous, isolating conditions than almost any other industrial workers – some with very little pay for their trouble.

Typically, ships crews sign on for nine months at a time. The vast majority are drawn from the Philippines, China, Ukraine and Russia. Once on board, modern practices – sailing slowly to reduce fuel consumption, loading and unloading at port in a few hours – mean that few spend more than a handfull of days ashore. Working a minimum 48-hour week – but often over 90 hours – they face multiple privations and even piracy and armed robbery and kidnap.

Anthropologist Gunnar Lamvik has spent much of his professional life studying Filipino seafarers, interviewing more than 150. He paints a complex picture of their lives but says that it is very common for them to speak of ships as “prisons” and the time the voyages for which they have signed on as “sentences.”

The good news is that they are the only group of workers covered by a global minimum wage agreement. The bad news is that it is set so low – currently $614 a month, equivalent to approximately £2.12 (P146.28) an hour in UK terms. Some shipping lines pay more, but the floor on which all seafarers’ remuneration is based is that negotiated between the ship owners and the International Transport Workers Federation, in talks convened by the International Labour Organisation.

The usual form in these talks is that the employers set out their stall with a blizzard of negative market and economic indicators. With these they hope to prove that their crews neither require a rise nor do the underlying economic factors make one possible. It is a case that they will struggle to make convincingly in this round.

The key preparatory document for negotiation is prepared by the ILO, in its capacity as a neutral “civil service.” This shows that seafarers from 47 countries have seen the purchasing power of their wages fail. In the case of 19 countries the drop has been by more than 10 per cent, in some countries it has been by as much as 15 per cent.

Just as important, after a tough decade, the prospects for global trade volumes are looking better than for many years. The International Monetary Fund is currently predicting that 2018 and 2019 will see “the hitherto synchronised growth” since 2009. Others predict global growth of around 4 per cent.

World Trade Organisation director general Roberto Azevedo told a press conference in April how he saw the next couple of years, saying: “World merchandise trade volumes will grow nearly as fast in 2018 as they did in 2017, with growth of 4.4 per cent. And we expect that growth will remain quite strong in 2019 at around 4 per cent. It represents the best run of trade expansion since before the crisis, supporting economic growth, development and job creation around the world.”

That is not to say that shipping does not face challenges. International trade still depends on reams of time consuming paperwork to certify cargo as it passes from country to country. Today, shipping lines talk excitedly about the prospects of “digitisation” in a way that most industries did more than a decade ago. Competitors promising to be the “Amazon of the seas” are nipping at today’s logistics giants. And, emissions targets require heavy investment, the benefits of which do not appear on balance sheets.

For the current shipping lines to prosper, however, what they need more than anything is a committed and enthusiastic workforce that solves problems as they occur, goes the extra mile to hit targets and strives to make seaborne transport a force of which the world can be proud. It goes without saying that paying a decent wage is a vital first step in motivating such a workforce.

It is important for the rest of us too. No-one wants goods marked by the taint of unsavoury labour practices, whether that be what the producers are paid or those who convey goods to market.
There is a broader issue for the labour movement too. Much attention these days is rightly devoted to how we can reach employees with no experience of union organisation – the million providers of adult social care, for example.

Today, shipping lines talk excitedly about the prospects of “digitisation” in a way that most industries did more than a decade ago.

Where we have a long-established negotiating framework, in a highly regulated industry, such as we do for seafarers, we must be able to demonstrate that it delivers for workers. Do that, when we are called on to make the case for trades unions in unorganised sectors, then we have an ace up our sleeves.

Those roaming the earth’s most distant oceans aboard their floating mountains of containers might well, on first consideration, seem remote. But as with so much in the modern world, the fate of seafarers is actually deeply entwined with every one of us. It is incumbent on those of us who aspire to be progressives to ensure that our engagement with them is as supportive as it is active.

Photo: George Tyson
IKAW NA KAYA ANG SUSUNOD NA MILYONARYO?

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**Question of bulkers structural integrity**

Cargo shift and liquefaction continue to be a great concern for the life of seafarers and the safe carriage of dry bulk cargoes, says an Intercargo report.

Bulkers ship operators have identified more than 50 bulk carriers over 10,000 DWT that had sailed to total losses over the last 10 years. The loss of these 53 bulkers accounted for 202 crew members who have lost their lives or an average of 20 deaths per year over the last decade, according to INTERCARGO, the International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners.

Intercargo said the 2017 tragic losses of the 266,141 DWT Stellar Daisy and the 81,944 DWT Emerald Star, both carrying ore cargo of iron and nickel respectively, "raised questions of structural integrity and safety condition of high density cargoes carried on board.”

The two bulker casualties caused the loss of 32 seafarers, the highest annual loss of lives since 2011, Intercargo said in its recent Bulk Carrier Casualty Report. The report covers bulk carrier casualties from 2008 to 2017 and provides an analysis on statistics and trends over the last 10 years.

The age of bulk carriers lost had an average of 24.2 years, with total tonnage of 2,77 million DWT or an average of 276,508 DWT per year.

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**Analysis of total losses for previous ten years 2008 to 2017**

- 53 bulk carriers over 10,000 dwt have been identified as lost, or on average 5 ships per year.
- 202 crew members have lost their lives as consequence, or on average 20 lives lost per year.
- 24.2 years was the average age of the bulk carriers lost.
- 2.77 million dwt have been lost, or on average 276,508 dwt per year.

**Losses by cause**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported Cause</th>
<th>Losses of Life</th>
<th>Losses of Ships</th>
<th>Likely Root Cause</th>
<th>Losses of Ships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cargo Shift/Liquefaction</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Cargo Failure</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collision</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Machinery Failure</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire/Explosion</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flooding</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collision</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Machinery Failure</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Structural</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounding</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Machine Failure</td>
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<td>Navigation</td>
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<td>Weather</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Collision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Intercargo
Lessons learnt from past incidents play an important role in determining where additional safety improvement is necessary.

Cargo shift and liquefaction continue to be a great concern for the life of seafarers and the safe carriage of dry bulk cargoes over this period, stressed the Intercargo report.

It said that those nine casualties of suspected cargo failure consisted of six bulk carriers carrying nickel ore from Indonesia, two vessels with laterite (clay) iron ore from India and one with bauxite from Malaya, and with 101 lives lost associated with the nine casualties of cargo failure against a total of 202 lives for all the 53 casualties.

Last year, the Intercargo database recorded 337 bulk carrier incidents, including the casualties Stellar Daisy and Emerald Star. It said: “Serious concerns arose on the safe carriage of ammonium nitrate based fertiliser, following the incident of the high temperatures in the cargo holds and the release of gases from the cargo on the 57,000 dwt supramax MV Cheshire in August 2017.”

The report noted that bulk carrier owners are “confused with the existing individual schedule for ammonium nitrate based fertilizer (non-hazardous) in the International Maritime Solid Bulk Cargoes (IMSBC) Code which covers a wide range of different fertilizers with the safety requirements varying depending on their specific properties, types and compositions.”

Lessons learnt from past incidents play an important role in determining where additional safety improvement is necessary, Intercargo pointed out.

It added that the importance of flag States’ timely submission of casualty investigation reports to IMO should be stressed, as a means for identifying the cause of incidents and enabling corrective actions to be taken. The IMO GISIS database showed by end January 2018 that 29 investigation reports of 53 losses had not been submitted to IMO by their flag States.

Some details further highlight the issue of slow reporting:

- The highest loss of life has been attributed to cargo failure (liquefaction), totalling 101 lives lost from the 9 casualties during 2012 and 2015. Three investigation reports of those 9 cases have not been submitted to IMO.
- The most common reported cause of ship losses has been grounding, totalling 22 losses among the 53 cases. Ten investigation reports of those 22 cases have not been submitted to IMO.
- Six ships lost with unknown causes claimed 61 lives. Five investigation reports of those six cases have not been submitted to IMO.
- Reported flooding led to losses of eight ships and 14 lives. Five investigation reports of those eight cases have not been submitted to IMO.

INTERCARGO stresses the importance of timely submission of the casualty investigation reports to IMO from relevant flag States, as a means of identifying the causes of the incidents and enabling corrective actions. SE
Bulk owners call for corrective action on certain cargo designation

Bulk owners and operators INTERCARGO, the International association of dry cargo ships, have called on the IMO to correct the designation of certain ammonium nitrate-based fertilizer cargo under the IMSBC code in response to the publication of the casualty report into the total loss of the mv Cheshire.

The 2012-built Cheshire, a supramax bulk carrier, was en route from Norway to Thailand in August 2017 laden with cargo declared by the shipper as being “ammonium nitrate based fertilizer (Non-hazardous)” and not liable to self-sustaining decomposition.

The vessel, however, suffered cargo decomposition that led to rising temperatures in the cargo holds and the generation of toxic gases. The decomposition spread throughout the length of the vessel to such an extent that, after several days, the vessel’s Master took the decision to evacuate the crew. After several days adrift under the supervision of the Spanish Authorities, the vessel was eventually salvaged but, due to extensive damage, it was declared a total loss.

Now a year later, the Isle of Man Ship Registry, to which the Cheshire was registered, released its casualty report into the incident, which determined that the thermal decomposition of the ammonium-based fertilizer cargo took place despite the fact that all required safeguards were in place on board the vessel.

Ammonium Nitrate Based Fertilizer (non-hazardous) is currently designated in the IMSBC Code as a group C cargo, meaning it does not liquefy (group A) nor possess chemical hazards (group B). INTERCARGO says it is clear from the Cheshire incident that this cargo, or at least some of the ammonium nitrate-based fertilizers shipped as this cargo, should not be treated as group C.

“It is INTERCARGO’s hope that future work at the IMO will lead to the correct designation and description of this cargo within the IMSBC Code, thus furthering the safer carriage of cargoes and safer voyages,” INTERCARGO said in a statement following the release of the report.
AMOSUP led the kick-off ceremonies to celebrate Maritime Week 2018 last 23rd September at the Seafarers Monument along the Baywalk in Malate, Manila.

Rev Father Eligio Santos officiated the traditional holy mass thanking the Almighty for the safety of thousands of Filipino seafarers sailing the world seas and for their valuable services they contribute to the growth of the Philippine economy. He also prayed for the continued services of AMOSUP employees to thousands of the union members.

AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca and VP Eduardo Santos led a wreath laying ceremony at the Seafarers Monument to honour brothers and sisters in the profession including AMOSUP founder Capt Gregorio Oca who had sailed to the great beyond for their contributions to the industry. They also tossed flowers to the sea as part of the commemoration of the National Seafarers’ Day.

Midshipmen from the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific also joined in the celebration. Their immediate families came along to see and rejoin the cadets, who came all the way from the Mariveles campus for the commemoration.
kick-off ceremonies
"No automation without negotiation."
ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton, on the ITF-Congress decision on how it should deal with in the future between work and the impact of technology.

"Most likely we will defeat them if they engage us."
Armed Guard/Ship Security Officer Ronseo Tumara, on the combined defence installed on the ship and armed security team against pirate attack.

"It's a problem that we should no longer deny or set aside."
GOLD Foundation Founder Marla Socorro Oca, on the industry's growing concern about the issue of seafarers' mental health.

"The good news is that they are the only group of workers covered by a global minimum wage agreement. The bad news is that it is set so low."
Nautilus International General Secretary Mark Dickinson, on how shipping lines pay more, but the floor on which all seafarers' remuneration is based is that negotiated between the shipowners and the ITF in talks convened by the ILO.

"This long separation from family and friends is hard enough."
Philippine Ambassador to IMO Cesar Salinas, on one of the situations that affects the seafarers which certainly take toll on the profession.

"A number of governments have already implemented the Guidelines but many others need to consider them and look at how they can be implemented within their own legislation."
Seafarers' Rights International Executive Director Dolores Fitzpatrick, on the Manila Statement as a crucial step in raising awareness on the Fair Treatment of Seafarers in the Event of Maritime Accident.

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