

VOLUME 11 | ISSUE 41 | DECEMBER 2023

SAILING FORWARD

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ASSOCIATED MARINE OFFICERS' AND SEAMEN'S UNION OF THE PHILIPPINES



SEAFARERS RECEIVE WAGE HIKE

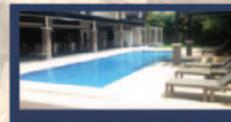
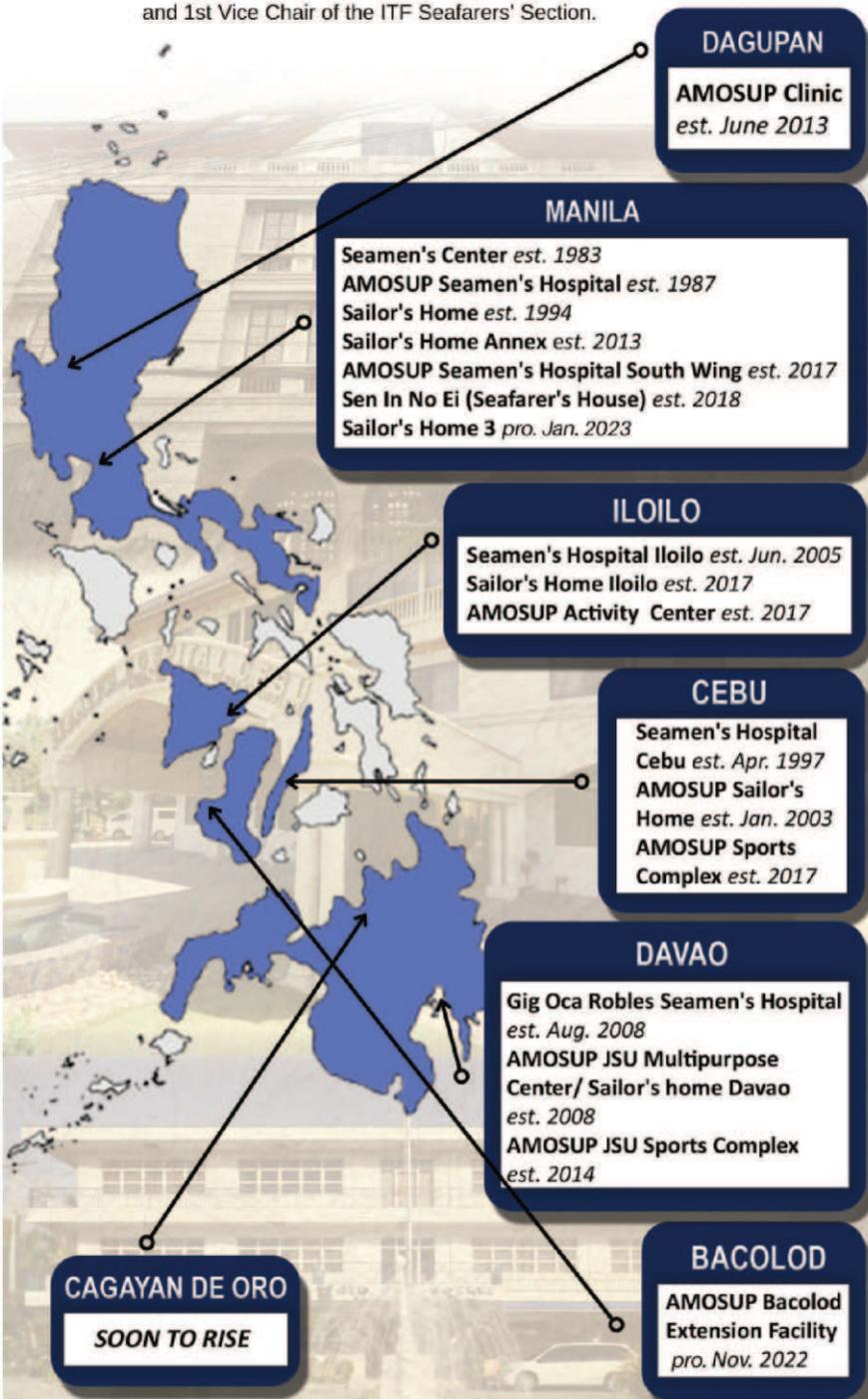
**Congress approves
Filipino Seafarers'
Magna Carta**

**AMOSUP inaugurates
Museo Mandaragat
(Filipino Seafarers' Museum)
in Intramuros**

ASSOCIATED MARINE OFFICERS' AND SEAMEN'S UNION OF THE PHILIPPINES AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF

The Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF) was established in 1960 by Master Mariner Captain Gregorio S. Oca. He saw a bright future for Filipino Seafarers and to make his vision a reality, he pioneered the negotiation for welfare benefits and advocated the upgrading of seafarer education and training in the country. Captain Oca dedicated his life to championing the rights and welfare of Filipino Seafarers.

AMOSUP's strong partnership and collaboration with industry stakeholders bound by Collective Bargaining Agreements is at the core of the Union's extensive and holistic welfare programs and services. For over 60 years, AMOSUP has cultivated a harmonious and constructive synergy with ITF-affiliated unions, companies/shipowners and international maritime employer groups in ensuring that members are accorded with the best benefits they deserve for their vital role and contribution to the industry. AMOSUP also actively engages in national, regional and global forums to champion the protection and advancement of Filipino seafarers' rights and welfare, having the Union's leadership designated as International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Executive Board Member for Asia Pacific and 1st Vice Chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section.



LEGEND:
est. = established
pro. = projected

From the *President*

Greetings of hope and goodwill!

In the last quarter of 2023, we have seen promising outcomes on key issues we deeply care about. Last December, the Philippine Senate and House of Representatives jointly approved and ratified the Bicameral Conference Committee Report on the much anticipated Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers. This welcome development brings us one step closer to finally having a national legislation that seeks to further protect the labor rights and social welfare of Filipino seafarers.

Of course, we celebrate the 6% wage increase for seafarers following our successful negotiations at the International Bargaining Forum in Berlin, Germany last September. This is one of our major accomplishments last year, as it will directly benefit not just our seafarers, but their families as well.

Furthermore, we join our government and the whole national maritime industry in celebrating the Philippines' successful campaign to secure a seat at the IMO Council for 2024-2025.

We successfully staged the AMOSUP Info Caravan in celebration of the National Maritime Week. It was definitely an important occasion attended by the most prominent figures in the industry, such as Migrant Workers OIC Secretary Hans Cacdac, OWWA Administrator Arnell Ignacio, and SSS President and CEO Rolando Macasaet, among others.

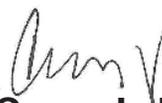
With great pride, I recognize and congratulate our very own, AMOSUP Executive Vice President and MAAP President, Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma. R. Santos, for having received the prestigious Certificate of Commendation by no less than Japan's Minister of Foreign Affairs last November. It is a well deserved recognition for VAdm. Santos' relentless efforts in upgrading, modernizing and constantly improving the standards of maritime training and education at MAAP and in the country. As part of his initiatives in ushering in Filipino seafarers to the future of shipping, VAdm. Santos also recently led the pilot testing of a Green Skills Academy platform aimed at exploring more ways to upskill seafarers towards green shipping and just transition.

Another good news is the inauguration of AMOSUP Museo Mandaragat (Filipino Seafarers' Museum) - a modern state-of-the-art museum dedicated to Filipino seafarers then and now, and was built in honor of AMOSUP's beloved founder, Captain Gregorio S. Oca.

We proudly share with you some insights from a research conducted by AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital on mental health, which was presented before the 16th International Symposium on Maritime Health in Greece.

This issue also features vibrant contributions from our seafarers both onboard and ashore. Indeed, we are always proud and honored to be a vessel of their stories that inspire us even more to be their strongest champion and ally. **SF**

Together, Let's keep on Sailing Forward!



Dr Conrado F. Oca



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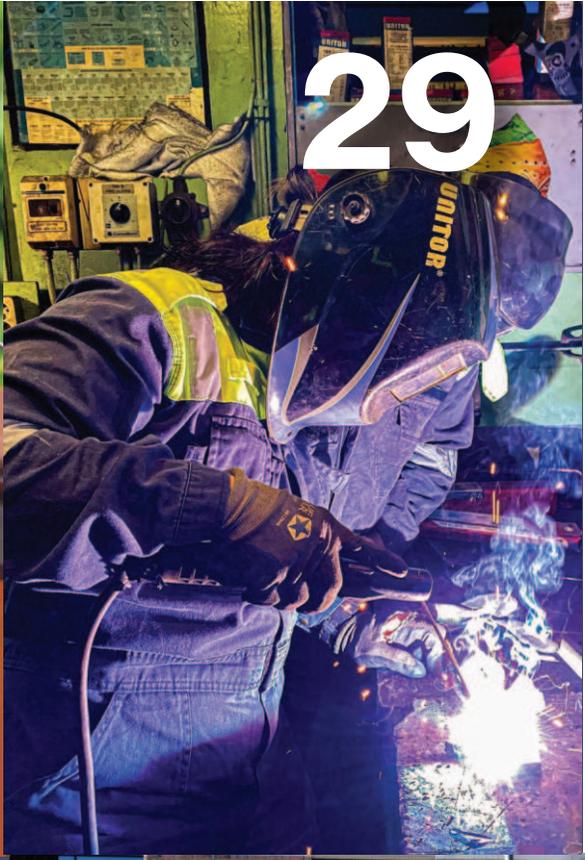
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Cover: Seafarers with AMOSUP President Dr. Oca and KFO training ship deck

Photo courtesy of Raffy Tulfo in Action FB page



Filipino Seafarers' Magna Carta Passes Congress

In a landmark move, the Senate and House of Representatives unanimously ratified the bicameral conference committee report on the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers on December 13, 2023. This crucial step harmonizes the previously differing provisions of Senate Bill 2221 and House Bill 7325, bringing the long-awaited legislation one step closer to becoming law.

The bicameral-approved Magna Carta incorporates nearly all rights outlined in the landmark Maritime Labor Convention 2006, offering crucial protection and fairer treatment.

One key provision tackles predatory practices by some unscrupulous manning agencies. The bill prohibits

underpayment by mandating the use of official exchange rates, preventing seafarers from losing one or two pesos for every dollar they earn.

Furthermore, the measure ensures faster access to wages and benefits by requiring manning agencies to settle dues within a month. This swift processing also applies to claims for accidental death, natural death, or permanent disability benefits, protecting both seafarers and their families.

Further empowering Filipino seafarers, the Magna Carta grants the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) the power to regulate training fees, combating exorbitant charges by providers. This safeguards seafarers from financial exploitation.

Recognizing the crucial role of inter-island trade seafarers, the legislation dedicates a specific chapter to detail their rights and benefits. This ensures fair treatment and improved working conditions for this often overlooked segment of the maritime workforce.

Supposedly addressing the critical shortage of cadetship berths, the bill mandates all compliant Philippine-registered ships to accept cadets. This fosters career development and opens doors for young Filipinos aspiring to join the maritime industry.

The Magna Carta also prohibits maritime schools from charging tuition and miscellaneous fees during onboard training.

A Fairer System for Resolving Seafarers' Claims

The Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers establishes clear and protective procedures for handling monetary claims, ensuring both swift justice for seafarers and safeguards for employers. Here's how it works:

Balancing Fairness and Protection:

Section 57: Execution of Judgment and Monetary Awards prioritizes fair, speedy, and equitable resolution of claims for salaries, death, disability benefits, and other statutory benefits. It also ensures timely restitution if a decision is reversed on appeal, protecting employers' rights.

Streamlining Monetary Awards:

Maritime arbitrators and labor arbiters must specify amounts for:

- Salary or wage
- Statutory monetary and welfare benefits
- Undisputed amounts
- Disputed amounts and damages
- Other similar awards

Immediate Execution for Undisputed Claims:

If a labor arbitrator or arbiter decides in favor of a seafarer's claims for salary, wages, statutory benefits, or undisputed amounts, the decision is immediately executory, even pending appeal. Employers must pay promptly.

Protecting Employers' Rights During Disputes:

For disputed amounts and damages, final awards are made only after a favorable court decision.

While employers appeal, a writ of execution for these amounts is issued only if the seafarer posts a sufficient bond to ensure restitution if the decision is reversed.

Curbing Ambulance Chasing:

Section 58: Prohibition on Appearance and Fees targets unethical practices that exploit seafarers.

Lawyers and legal representatives must submit notarized certifications and affidavits agreeing to:
Not charge fees exceeding 10% of the awarded amount
Refrain from lending money to seafarers or engaging in usurious practices
Hold any excess fees in trust for the seafarer.

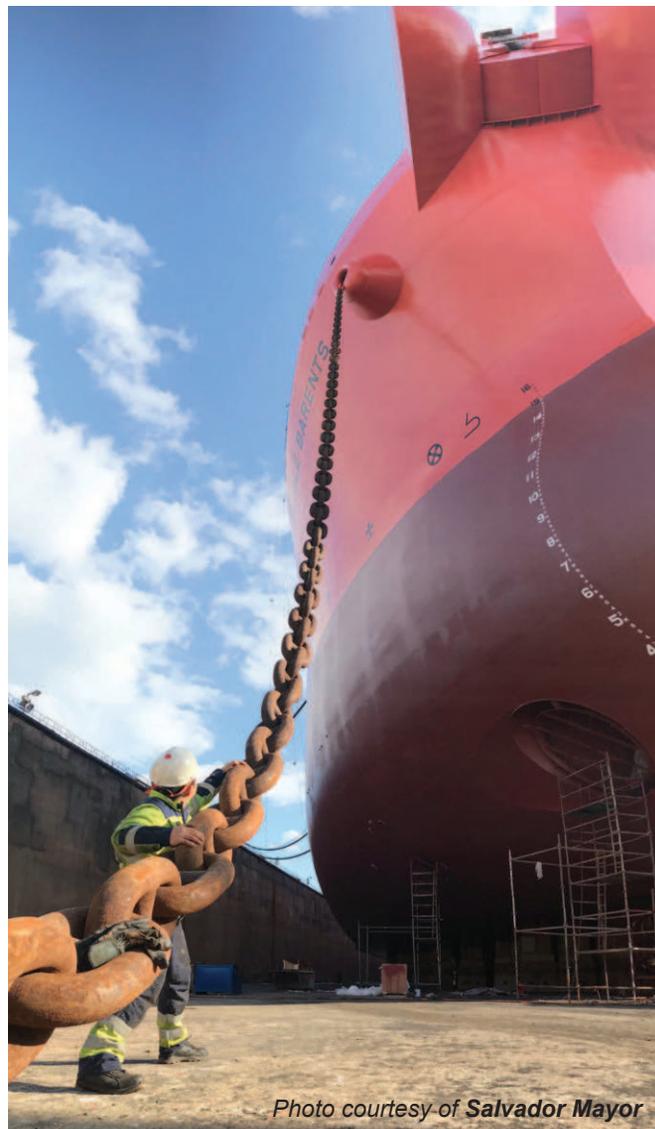


Photo courtesy of Salvador Mayor

Senator Rafael "Raffy" Tulfo, author of the senate version of the Magna Carta and one of its key architects, hailed the bicameral ratification as the culmination of a collaborative effort between the Senate and the House. He emphasized that

the new law represents a significant step forward in protecting and promoting the rights and well-being of Filipino seafarers.

Kabayan Party-list Representative Ron Salo, a champion for overseas workers

and a key architect of the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers, hailed the bill's passage as a well-deserved gift for the nation's maritime heroes.

As chairman of the House Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs and a primary author of the measure, Salo expressed joy at the bicameral ratification, calling it **"an early Christmas gift for our esteemed seafarers and their families."**

Aside from Tulfo and Salo, the bicameral committee was also composed of Party-list Representatives Marissa "Del Mar" Magsino (OFW

and Sandro Gonzalez (Marino), Zamboanga City 1st District Rep. Khymer Olaso, Pangasinan 6th District Rep. Marlyn Primicias-Agabas, Senators Francis "Chiz" Escudero, Maria Imelda Josefa "Imee" Marcos, Emmanuel Joel Villanueva, and Ana Theresia "Risa" Hontiveros. 🇵🇭

With contribution from the Manila Times



Photo courtesy of AMOSUP



Photo courtesy of AMOSUP

From left to right; AMOSUP Executive Vice President VADM Eduardo Ma R Santos, IMMAJ Chairman Toshihito Inoue , AMOSUP President Dr. Conrado F. Oca
Photo courtesy of AMOSUP

AMOSUP inaugurates Museo Mandaragat (Seafarers' Museum) in Intramuros



In celebration of AMOSUP's 63rd Anniversary on 11 November 2023, the Union inaugurated its newest museum inside the walls of the historic Intramuros, Manila: Museo Mandaragat (The Filipino Seafarers' Museum). AMOSUP's modern and interactive museum is located on the ground floor of Sailor's Home 3 along Cabildo street.

In his message, AMOSUP President, Dr. Oca highlighted that Museo Mandaragat (The Filipino Seafarers' Museum) is dedicated to all the Filipino seafarers then and now, including AMOSUP's Founder - Master Mariner, Captain Gregorio

S. Oca - who was given a tribute in one of the museum's sections. At the entrance, guests were welcomed by Museo Mandaragat's iconic metal facade bearing the AMOSUP logo. The museum's flooring features a blown up version of the world map, showing the vast expanse of the oceans where seafarers' voyages embark on.

There are several showcases inside Museo Mandaragat, such as the collection of scale models of ships, a display of different seafarers' uniforms, informative infographics on seafarers' jobs, ranks and titles, facts about the maritime industry, an exhibit of winning photo

graphs and videos taken by seafarers onboard, and a tribute to Captain Gregorio S. Oca's legacy in championing seafarers' rights, social protection, and their families' welfare. Museo Mandaragat also features an actual simulator that aims to familiarize seafarers on the advancements in ships, especially amidst the ongoing automation, digitalization and decarbonization in the industry.

The inauguration was preceded by a holy mass and blessing which was attended by over a hundred AMOSUP members and concluded with a fellowship at the Sailor's Home. 🇵🇭



Photo courtesy of AMOSUP

Sailing Smoothly!

AMOSUP Hosts Successful Info Caravan, Prioritizing Seafarer Well-being and Union Benefits

Seafarer concerns took center stage as the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines' (AMOSUP) Info Caravan 2023 anchored at National Maritime Week, tackled welfare, rights, and job stability.

The event, held on Sept. 28, 2023, at the AMOSUP Seamen's Center in Intramuros, Manila, featured the latest issues, trends, and updates on maritime labor, seafarers' rights, and welfare services and facilities provided by the union to its members and their families.

Among the highlights of the

information caravan was the discussion on current maritime labor issues such as ambulance chasing, just transition, the future of work, diversity, equity, and

inclusion.

Dr. Conrado Oca and VADM Eduardo Ma R Santos, AMOSUP president and executive vice president,



Photo courtesy of AMOSUP

led the info Caravan program.

Dr. Oca gave his appreciation to all those who attended the event, reaffirming AMOSUP's crucial role in protecting the Filipino seafarer's rights and empowering its members.

With an ever-evolving maritime landscape, Dr. Oca said AMOSUP will continue to chart the course, advocating for technological advancements, mental health support, and environmental sustainability in the industry.

In a solemn moment of remembrance, Dr. Oca led a hushed gathering in a few minutes of silence for the late DMW Secretary Susan "Toots" Ople. A dear friend and steadfast partner to both AMOSUP and Dr. Oca, her dedication to seafarers transcended generations, echoing the shared legacy of her father, Blas Ople, and AMOSUP founder, the legendary Captain Gregorio Oca.

Guest speakers include Migrant Workers OIC-Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac, and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) Administrator Arnell Ignacio.

During the event, OIC Secretary Cacdac revealed that the DMW was pushing for Filipino fishers or seafarers

deployed in foreign commercial fishing vessels included in the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers.

He expressed categorically DMW's position on Filipino fishers serving fishing vessels plying overseas.

"Dapat kasama ang fishers sa magna carta,"

Cacdac said, adding that they are most oppressed among sea based OFWs.

Unlike other seafarers, Filipino fishers on foreign vessels often confront unfair labor practices. From hefty placement fees to phantom contracts and vanishing wages, their dreams of a brighter future can get cruelly shipwrecked.

Most of them work in sub-standard conditions with extended working periods, and many do not have overtime pay. In some instances, information on their whereabouts is kept from their families. They could hardly communicate with their families while onboard.

Unfortunately, both the Senate and the House of Representatives versions of the proposed Magna Carta exclude seafarers onboard fishing vessels in their definition of seafarers.



Hans Leo Cacdac
DMW OIC-Secretary
Photo courtesy of AMOSUP



Dr. Conrado F. Oca
AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF President
Photo courtesy of MAAP Productions



VAPin Eduardo Ma. R. Santos
AMOSUP Executive Vice President
MAAP President
Photo courtesy of MAAP Productions

Cacdac said DMW is preparing to review the 2016 Revised Rules and Regulations Governing the Recruitment and Employment of Seafarers under the defunct Philippine Overseas Employment Administration.

"We will come out with [separate] rules for fishers to provide them protection,"

Cacdac said.

The DMW OIC further said the department intends to introduce new provisions in the rules, apparently in line with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s call for ease of doing business.

During the Info Caravan, he also announced that the Board of the Overseas

Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) had approved the establishment of a seafarers' hub where they could avail of government services. Cacdac also sits on the OWWA Board.

OWWA Administrator Arnel Ignacio, meanwhile shared that the OWWA Board allocated a P14.8 million budget for setting up the seafarers' hub.

"We decided to set up a seafarers' hub so they will have a place to hang out safe from ambulance chasers," Ignacio said.

"We will tap lawyers, in cooperation with IBP (Integrated Bar of the

Philippines), who expressed willingness to join in this venture," he said.

Ignacio said that the seafarers' hub will be equipped with copying machines.

The Event was also graced by Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) MDS Director Arsenio Lingad II, DMW Aesc. Augusto San Diego III, Asec. Jerome Pampolina, SSS President and CEO Rolando Macasaet, PAG-IBIG OFW Center Acting Dept. Manager Ms. Mercedita Lusanta and representatives from the SSS, PhilHealth, and Pag-IBIG presented their services and put up booths to service the members. 🇵🇭





Photo courtesy of IMEC

Seafarers receive wage hike

Starting in 2024, more than 250,000 seafarers working on more than 10,000 ships will receive significant pay increases and a range of workplace benefits.

The international negotiating forum, which negotiates the world's largest collective agreements, agreed the terms of the IBF's 2024-2027 "framework agreement" last September in Berlin, Germany.

Seafarers covered by the agreement will receive a 6% pay increase over the next two years (a 4% increase in wages and compensation effective 01 January 2024, and a 2% increase in wages and compensation effective 01 January 2025). The payment agreement for 2026–2027 and expenditure items will be agreed upon in 2025.

In addition, the agreement includes a reference to ILO Violence and Harassment Convention No.190 to strengthen the shared commitment to provide a safe workplace, free from violence, discrimination and harassment, for all seafarers.

There was also general recognition of the importance of safe cargo securing practices in the overall fight against abuse. It also created a new working group focusing on the future of shipping and key issues facing the industry, including the impact of new technologies, the introduction of alternative fuels and ensuring a just transition as the industry responds to climate change.

The working group's remit

will also include issues related to seafarers' working hours, crew levels, fatigue and length of employment.

Under the agreement, JNG also undertakes to remind its members of the importance of complying with national cabotage regulations and undertakes to work together with the ITF on a strategy to ensure that more and more seafarers receive a reasonable amount of free internet access.

JNG Spokesperson for IMEC, Chairman Captain Belal Ahmed said: "Once again, the strong partnership between JNG and ITF has resulted in outstanding results in the latest round of the IBF, which both parties and their constituents will be pleased to present to their members."

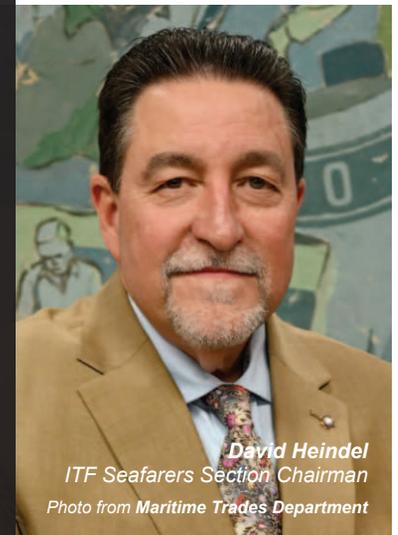


He said:

“ Seafarers have been rewarded for the sacrifices they have made during the Covid pandemic by providing themselves as key workers. Joint JNG and ITF initiatives post-Covid to jointly address new and unprecedented challenges for our industry will now be the focus. ”

ITF spokesman and ITF Seafarers Section Chairman David Heindel said:

“ This has been a particularly difficult series of negotiations caused by the Covid pandemic, which has required enormous effort and compromise on both sides to get it right for the times. ”



And Heindel noted that “It’s a fair deal. We have agreed on a working group that will look to the future needs of a changing industry, taking into account the needs of seafarers, with special attention to recruiting.

ITF President and Dockers’ Section Chair Paddy Crumlin said: “The pay deal locked into this agreement provides concrete financial recognition for the critical

contribution that seafarers make to the global economy and also recognizes the sacrifice that seafarers have carried over the past few years and throughout the pandemic. The relationship between ITF and the JNG remains in good shape despite the challenges that these negotiations faced.

ITF General Secretary Stephen Cotton said: “Over the four years of this agreement,

we have a lot of important issues to discuss so that we can continue to enhance the living and working conditions of all seafarers on IBF covered vessels. The biggest challenges we all face is the just transition and the move to alternative fuels. How the industry recruits and motivates our seafarers and ensures they have the skills for the future, this is firmly on our forward-looking agenda.”



Francis Montinola
Photo courtesy of Francis Montinola

Engaging tales of riches and travels

By: *Andy Dalisay*

When he was young, Francis Montinola had a set of relatives who used to regale him with stories of their incredible adventures as seafarers, painting vivid tales of the maritime profession. His uncles and cousins would boast about their overseas maritime

careers, how their pockets would be laden with cash each time they returned home, and most enticingly, the privilege of

“**seeing the world for free.**”

These captivating anecdotes left an indelible mark on young Francis, inspiring him to pursue a maritime career as he entered college. Fueled by these stories, Francis diligently studied and earned a degree in BS Marine Transportation from John B Lacson Colleges (JBLC) in Iloilo in 1992.

After completing several contracts and gaining extensive experience, Francis now serves as a bosun or boatswain aboard the 18,270 TEU Maren Maersk.

In this role, he supervises the deck ratings and, under the Chief Officer's guidance, is responsible for planning, scheduling and assigning work to the deck crew. Francis attributes much of his success to his alma mater, which facilitated his swift transition into the workforce after graduating from JBLC.

He proudly acknowledges the institution's role in shaping his personality and equipping him with the knowledge and skills necessary for his maritime profession.

He emphasizes the industry's recognition of the institution's high standards, stating, "When you hear about the school, what immediately comes to mind is the exceptional quality of education and training it offers."

Reflecting on his early experiences as a cadet,

Francis recalls memorable-training exercises on land, where cadets would train outdoors, shirtless, under the sun, covered in grease oil.

“**We were instructed to roll, run, jump into the pool, and even enter a smoke chamber, which I found both challenging and exhilarating.**”

However, life at sea brought a different set of memorable experiences for him as a cadet. He recounts an unannounced visit by the US Coast Guard in the middle of the night, which added a layer of complexity to their training exercises.

“**When the general alarm sounded, almost everyone seemed prepared at the muster station, but some were late, others weren't dressed properly, and a few needed to be called from their cabins. The US Coast Guard stressed that**

emergencies have no fixed schedule.”

Comparing his cadet experiences to his current role as an experienced crew member, Francis underscores the importance of seasoned members mentoring inexperienced cadets, particularly in safe working practices onboard. He takes pride in fulfilling this responsibility with the cadets on their ship.

Francis has dedicated over 15 years to his current shipowner, serving on Danish fleet containerships during each contract. Although he worked with other employers at the beginning of his maritime career, he found a home with his current shipowner.

His most significant challenge arose when all four of his children entered college simultaneously. He vividly recalls the financial strain it brought.

"There were times when they all went to college at once, which was a considerable expense, and the budget was tight. While working onboard, I wanted to extend my contracts

because I had little money to bring home as I was still a low-ranking crew member. Then, during vacations, I wanted to return to work quickly. If not, I would end up with debt or, even worse, my children might have to stop their studies."

At the time, he believed the situation was not improving as much as he had hoped based on what he had heard from people back home.

“**But, by God's grace, I managed to overcome all of that. I had a healthy body, and my wife was skilled in handling finances. They all completed their desired courses.**”

Francis plans to continue working until his current working papers expire before retiring from his job.

"It would be a missed opportunity if I stopped working now. My wife and I are saving for our retirement and to invest in a small business."

He adds that their children have established themselves, with stable jobs and families of their own. 🌍

MAAP hosts 21st Asia Maritime and Fisheries University Forum

By: MIDN 3CL Ceddie Tadas

Photos screengrab from MAAP Productions FB



MARIVELES, BATAAN - The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific held Asia Maritime and Fisheries Universities Forum 2023 with its theme “Sustaining Friendships and Leadership for Excellence in Fisheries, Maritime Education and Training,” held in the Center for Advanced Maritime Studies building on November 8-10.

The forum was participated by nine foreign countries namely Georgia, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Taiwan, Vietnam, Korea, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar of various fisheries and maritime institutions and fifteen local universities and colleges from different regions across the country.

The participants were welcomed with an assembly photo at the IMMAJ Campus

followed by drinks and briefing about MAAP and technical tour around the state-of-the-art facilities of the Academy.

AMFUF 2023 President VADM Eduardo Ma R. Santos AFP (Ret) challenged the attendees in his welcome address to keep educating and preparing learners to be competent in the future and to utilize the forum for fruitful discussions and collaborations.

“I urge everyone to continue educating our learners to be competent in the future, may this forum be a welcome platform for everyone for lively discussions, fruitful ideas, insights and innovations for sustainable development in fisheries and maritime industry,” VADM Santos remarked.

Honorable Jose Enrique

Garcia III, Guest of Honor, gave his thanks and appreciation to the Academy for its remarkable contribution to the fisheries and maritime sector of the province in his congratulatory address.

“I would like to express my gratitude to VADM Eduardo Ma R. Santos and the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific for this rare opportunity to host this forum, this significantly affects the future of the fisheries and maritime industry of the Bataan province,” Gov. Garcia III said.

AMFUF is leading the way in research and development, technical collaboration, idea sharing, and the sharing of best practices between Asian countries in order to promote sustainable growth in fisheries and the maritime industry. 🇵🇭



The sea soldier who helped shape the Philippine maritime industry

Photo courtesy of MAAP Productions

Figures of varying prominence abound in the Philippine maritime industry with their expertise steering its sectors to progress and modernization.

Among those who shine the brightest is Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma Santos, president of the Bataan-based Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP).

The gentleman just turned 80 last October 16 and by the looks of it, still raring to work and serve.

He is arguably one of the most well-known and celebrated maritime leaders in the country whose wisdom is sought after by many. He walks into any room with the unmistakable command presence of a military man paired with the knowing eyes and gentle smile of a father.

But behind his accomplishments, accolades, and rank, who really is Vice Admiral Santos? What is his story?

His story

The man, known to friends as “Admiral Ed”, had a full spectrum of achievements under his sleeve even before he joined the merchant marine industry. He was the 23rd Flag Officer in Command (FOIC) of the Philippine Navy from 1996 to 1999 who was responsible for the initial modernization of the Philippine Fleet with the acquisition of three Peacock class patrol ships and production of locally manufactured Patrol Craft Fast (PCF).

He served as the Commander of the Fifth Coast Guard District from 1989 to 1990, covering the provinces of

Cavite, Bicol, and MIMAROPA. He also became the Vice Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Chief of Naval Intelligence of the Philippine Navy.

Of the three decades spent with the Navy, however, what lingered in Vice Admiral Santos’ memory were not the accolades and national posts he held. It was MV Doña Paz.

“I was then the commanding officer of a 180-foot patrol craft escort (PCE) and we were on our way back home to celebrate the New Year,” Vice Admiral Santos recalled. “We were already passing through the vicinity waters of Mindoro when I received an order to conduct retrieval operations for the casualties of the burned and sunken MV Doña Paz.

My men and I spent three days until New Year's Eve and New Year's Day plucking out cadavers from the sea, it was a heartbreaking sight; hundreds of burned bodies just floating there.

"When the Navy sent us some Media Noche by helicopter – lechon and pansit – we couldn't find the appetite to eat. We've spent days and nights handling charred bodies, then we were served with something roasted?" the admiral chuckled. "It was so tragic; it still haunts me until now."

From military to merchant marine

With his extensive military experience, Vice Admiral Santos was handpicked by the government in 1980 to manage the busiest port in the Philippines at the height of Martial Law. He protected the water corridors and coastal entry points of North and South Harbors, the International Container Terminal (ICT), and the Bataan and Romblon ports from possible smuggling and rebellion. It was during this stint when he first met one of the founders and leaders of the local maritime industry – Capt. Gregorio Oca, then the arrastre (person performing portside cargo handling operations) of ICT.

"ICT was still starting back then, and I remember Capt. Oca calls us whenever he's having problems at the port. 'Sira nanaman crane no!' he would say, referring to the two cranes owned by ICT that were both shaky,"

Vice Admiral Santos guffawed at the memory of his first banter with Capt. Oca. Their constant encounters at the ports grew into friendship, and eventually an unspoken brotherhood with a shared love for the sea.

The birth of MAAP

It was 1998. The global shipping industry's demand for highly competent and qualified seafarers is rising. Capt. Oca, after establishing the Associated Marine Officers and Seafarers Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) came up with the idea of taking hold of the global manning supremacy by putting up a world-class merchant marine academy. He took his friend Ed with him.

"He told me 'I'm putting up a school, do you like to head it?' and of course, I accepted. I used to dream of being the superintendent of my alma mater, the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), but I was instead, made FOIC. My passion for education will

finally come true, and so two days after my retirement from the Navy, it was a Friday, I took on the presidency of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP). There was literally no retirement for me."

With two bright minds coming together, MAAP was born with Vice Admiral Santos as the president. Operations started in September 1999 in Kamaya Point, Bataan. Its uniforms, Quality Standards System, the selection of imported simulators, and roster of faculty were jointly worked on by Capt. Oca and Vice Admiral Santos. They modeled the school's curriculum after the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA) in Kings Point, New York and it was governed by international maritime tripartite groups of employers, unions, and ship owners.

Through the years of operating a world-renowned maritime academy, Vice Admiral



From left: Capt. Gregorio S. Oca, Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno (Ret.), VADM Eduardo Ma R Santos



Photo courtesy of Embassy of Japan in the Philippines FB Page

Santos and Capt. Oca's friendship strengthened. "We had mutual respect. We shared our duties, he would handle the hardware and I, the software. He trusted my judgments and decisions especially when it comes to MET," he said.

With the passing of Capt. Oca 13 years ago, the baton of leadership was passed on to his son, Dr. Conrado Oca who continued working side by side with the admiral and relying on his wisdom.

"We all shared a love for the sea. I've been working for the country's oceans for 50 years now and one of the greatest lessons the sea has taught me is 'respect'. You have to respect the sea because out there, you are nothing. Do not fight nature, we have to conserve and protect the environment because, in the end, it will all return to us. That respect goes true for all else – respect your fellowmen, yourself, and your ship. Together, you are a team and when you are out at sea, teamwork is crucial."

With retirement still floating far on the horizon, a horizon that keeps moving for Vice Admiral Santos, he takes respite from the grind of the world by sitting back and admiring the vastness of the sea. "I bring my thoughts to sea, that is where I meditate and constantly reflect on life. It is where I realize that we are never nor will ever be perfect; that we are merely humans who make mistakes," Vice Admiral Santos contemplated, hinting that at the end of the day, he is more than a soldier or an educator. "I am a father to thousands of MAAP cadets," he said.

Today, Vice Admiral Santos remains the pillar of the industry with recognitions bestowed upon him by organizations. In 2019, he was accorded the LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD at Crew Connect, the Philippines' largest ship manning event, for lifelong contributions to the country's maritime and shipping Industry.

Last February 2022, he was

appointed as the new Maritime Goodwill Ambassador of the Philippines to the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Meanwhile, in November this year, he received Japan's Foreign Minister's Commendation Award at the residence of Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Koshikawa Kazuhiko. 🇯🇵



Photo courtesy of MAAP Productions



Photo courtesy of Embassy of Japan in the Philippines FB Page



MAAP Presents 11 Research Papers in 21st AMFUF

By: MIDN 4CL Vice Navarro
Photos courtesy of Kamaya Point

Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific presented a total of 11 research papers authored by select midshipmen and faculty members in the 21st Asia Maritime and Fisheries Universities Forum (AMFUF) held at the Center for Advanced Maritime Studies (CAMS) Auditorium on November 9, 2023.

Amongst the 11 research papers, four were authored by midshipmen from EQUESERION Class of 2024 who are currently onboard for shipboard training, and seven were written by faculty members from the Academic Research Unit (ARU)

With the informed consent of

the authors, 2CL Matthew Angelo Pantoja and 3CL Jenny Claire Suico presented the paper entitled "Impact Assessment of Simulator and Laboratory Exercises on Engine Cadets' Shipboard Training Experience," written by 1CL Rheson Jay Leliza, 1CL John Maverick Pama, 1CL Eulyses Ramos, and 1CL Jay Tumale.

1CL Mark Joseph Pisquel and 2CL Francine Bautista followed with the research paper written by 1CL Jezter James Ronquillo, 1CL Joshua Abe Medalla, 1CL Kenchen Catayra, and 1CL Rey Selwyn Manalang entitled, "Investigating the Impact of Integrated Simulator Training on the Practical Performance of the Maritime Students in MAAP."

Research paper of 1CL Shalom Abayon, 1CL Naelle Kyle Vincent Tabanao, and 1CL Niño Angelo Tayara with the name, "The Application of Marine Pollution courses to First-Class Midshipmen of MAAP in Sustaining the Environment Security of the Marine Environment," was demonstrated by 2CL Elijah Joseph Geronimo.

Meanwhile, research entitled, "Applicability of Kongsberg Simulator Exercise as Perceived by MAAP First Class Engine Cadet," authored by 1CL John Carlo Dayrit, 1CL Jhabrielle Mari De Leon, 1CL Mechizedeck Gonzaga, and 1CL Ariel Rhudy was presented by 1CL Cyrill Quillooy.

Furthermore, faculty members of Academic Research Unit (ARU) participated in the event as well where seven research papers were presented.

In the first session, Mr. Jes-ther Cruz preceded the MAAP delegate by

presenting his research “Impact of Extension Service Training for PN/PCG”.

2/E Vicente Juan Torio explained his research, “Use of 3D Printing to Boost the ASTC Maintenance Programs,” followed by the work of 2/M Herbert Angeles, “Developing Guidelines for Audiovisual Presentation: Inputs for Standardized MAAP LMS Multimedia Materials,” during the second session.

In the third session of the forum, Capt. Mauro Balomaga presented “Enhancing Competence in Tank Sounding among MAAP Deck Cadets through Instructional Innovation and Development,” which was immediately followed

by 3/E Kid Arthur Poncardas’ paper, “The Role of Engine Card Game as a Tool for Teaching Marine Diesel Engine Components.”

Mrs. Caroline concluded the presentation of the MAAP delegates in the third session with the paper entitled, “Evaluation of the MAAP Magnetic Compass Correction Trainer.”

Lastly, Dr. Leonora Dela Cruz laid-out her research of, “Assessing the Language Skill Improvement of MAAP Cadets through the Academic Ramp Program,” in the fourth session.

Through the support of MAAP President VADM Eduardo Ma R. Santos AFP 🇵🇭

(Ret), the Academy further strives and dedicates its excellence in maritime education and training by its evolving research led by the Academic Research Unit (ARU).





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2023 SAFETY4SEA Manila Forum

Top Priorities to Elevate Seafarer Welfare

The Philippines, a key player in the maritime world, hosted the 2nd SAFETY4SEA Forum on October 24, 2023, at Sofitel Philippine Plaza. The event delved into crucial strategies to enhance the working and living conditions of seafarers, the lifeblood of global trade.

When it was first announced, Organizers said that its main aim was to keep the local maritime community updated and competitive on the global landscape, bringing professionals, companies, and organizations from all over the globe back to the Philippines.

The forum charted a course for stronger maritime resilience, dissecting COVID-19 response strategies and outlining proactive measures to weather future disruptions. For the Philippines, home to 14% of global seafarers, these take-aways can safeguard the well-being of its maritime heroes.

The events team headed by Safety4Sea founder and Group Chief Executive Officer Apostolos Belokas said Filipino seafarers have a strong global presence and are renowned for their experience, expertise, skills, professionalism, adaptability, and cost-effectiveness. These qualities make them highly valuable to the Greek maritime industry and contribute significantly to its success and competitiveness.

"Given the increasing focus on sustainability in the maritime industry, our 2023 event in the Philippines will also emphasize the country's commitment to crew welfare, safety culture, and ESG in shipping," Belokas said.

During the event proper, Belokas provided findings from the most recent SEAFiT survey, the results of which the panelists and attendees enthusiastically embraced.

This survey included the participation of 1.6 thousand ships and 19 thousand seafarers. The survey findings revealed a notable neglect of physical well-being in comparison to other dimensions. Furthermore, the need for seafarers to have access to reliable internet of superior quality in order to maintain connections and interact with their loved ones on land has been expressed by an astonishing 91% of those surveyed.

Additionally, the survey highlighted some significant concerns that the sector has not prioritized in terms of seafarer welfare, including pay and communication with the shore.

One of the speakers, lawyer Iris Baguilat, chairman of the ALMA Maritime Group and president of Döhle Seafront Crewing (Manila), shared how information is a key element in rising above the changing and challenging landscape of the maritime industry.

"We have seen how crucial information and knowledge sharing was during the pandemic. It remains significant today, and with Safety4Sea, we are trying to achieve a multifaceted approach in relaying factual information and insights crucial to promoting safe and sustainable seafaring and shipping," Baguilat said.

Another speaker from Green Marine Engineering, Managing Director Donnie Bagang, approves of the sustainability agenda of the event.

"The Safety4Sea Manila Conference provides a platform for professionals to learn, network, and collaborate, ultimately contributing to safer and more sustainable maritime operations. The maritime industry is highly dynamic, with

technological advancement, regulations, and best practices. The conference offers opportunities for attendees to engage in continuous learning, training, and development to stay updated on the latest safety measures and industry trends," Bagang said.

The event was organized by SAFETY4SEA having SQE MARINE as lead sponsor. More sponsors of the event included the following organizations: Arcadia Shipmanagement Co. LTD, Blue Planet Shipping Ltd (BPS), Capital-Executive Ship Management Corp., Capital Gas Ship Management Corp., Capital Shipmanagement, Columbia Shipmanagement, Dorian LPG, Eastern Mediterranean Maritime Limited (EASTMED), EURONAV, Green-Jakobsen A/S,

I.M.A. Assessment & Training Center Inc., Inmarsat, Latsco Marine Management Inc., Magsaysay Maritime Corporation, INTERNATIONAL REGISTRIES INC., NAVTOR, Norwegian Training Center (NTC), OneLearn Global, RightShip, RISK4SEA, SEAFIT, V. Group.

Supporters of the event include Filipino Association for Mariner's Employment (FAME), the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology, the Philippine Association of Extension Program Implementers, Inc. (PAEPI), The Nautical Institute, International Windship Association (IWSA) and Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP). ■



Photo courtesy of SAFETY4SEA

UNCTAD joins call to decarbonize shipping, ensure just transition



Photo courtesy of AMOSUP

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has joined the call for the pressing need for cleaner fuels, along with digital solutions and an equitable transition to combat continued carbon emissions and regulatory uncertainty in the shipping industry.

In its Review of Maritime Transport 2023, UNCTAD called for a “just and equitable transition” to a decarbonized shipping industry, which emission it says is escalating by 20% in just a decade,

“Maritime transport needs to decarbonize as soon as possible, while ensuring economic growth. Balancing environmental sustainability, regulatory compliance and economic

demands is vital for a prosperous, equitable and resilient future for maritime transport,” said UNCTAD Secretary-General Rebeca Grynspan in a statement.

In advocating the need for cleaner fuels in shipping, UNCTAD is emphasizing “the need for an environmentally effective, procedurally fair, socially just, technologically inclusive and globally equitable transition strategy.” It underscores the importance of “system-wide collaboration, swift regulatory interventions, and robust investments in green technologies and fleets.”

While the transition to cleaner fuels is in its early stages, with nearly 99% of the global fleet still reliant on conventional fuels, the report cites promising

developments, including 21% of vessels on order designed for alternative fuels.

However, the transition comes with substantial costs. UNCTAD reports that an additional \$8bn to \$28bn will be required annually to decarbonize ships by 2050, and even more substantial investments, ranging from \$28bn to \$90bn annually, will be needed to develop infrastructure for 100% carbon-neutral fuels by 2050.

It said, “full decarbonization could elevate annual fuel expenses by 70% to 100%, potentially affecting small island developing states (SIDS) and least developed countries (LDCs) that heavily rely on maritime transport.”



Shamika N. Sirimanne
UNCTAD Division on Technology and
Logistics Director
Photo courtesy of UNCTAD

To ensure an equitable transition, UNCTAD calls for a universal regulatory framework applicable to all ships, irrespective of their flag registry, ownership or operational areas, thereby avoiding a two-speed decarbonization process and maintaining a level playing field.

Shamika N. Sirimanne, UNCTAD's director of technology and logistics, said "economic incentives, such as levies or contributions paid in relation to shipping

emissions may incentivize action, can promote the competitiveness of alternative fuels and narrow the cost gap with conventional heavy fuels. These funds could also facilitate investments in ports in SIDS and LDCs, focusing on climate change adaptation, trade and transport reforms, as well as digital connectivity."

UNCTAD further expresses concern over the aging global shipping fleet – at the start of 2023, commercial ships were on average 22 years old, two years older than a decade ago. More than half of the world's fleet is over 15 years old.

Sirimanne noted that ship-owners face the challenge of renewing the fleet without clarity regarding alternative fuels, green technology and

regulatory regimes to guide owners and ports, while ports face similar challenges in vital investment decisions.

In addition to cleaner fuels, UNCTAD underscores the role of digitalization in accelerating decarbonization efforts, citing the benefits in enhancing efficiency and reducing delays.

"Investing in digitalization and technology will improve predictability and reliability of shipping, and applying technologies such as AI, machine learning, blockchain and the internet of things will result in performance optimization for monitoring, routing, speed and predictive maintenance – which can all help accelerate decarbonization," Ms Sirimanne said. 🌐

Source:

<https://unctad.org/press-material/unctad-calls-bold-global-action-decarbonize-shipping-and-ensure-just-transition>
<https://unctad.org/publication/review-maritime-transport-2023>



Photo courtesy of AMOSUP

Full Steam Ahead: Philippines Secures Seat on IMO Council for 2024-2025

The Philippines secures a crucial position on the International Maritime Council (IMO), reaffirming its dedication to shaping the future of global maritime affairs. Category C membership grants a vital voice in crucial discussions on safety regulations, environmental standards, and seafarer rights.

During this historic 33rd IMO Assembly, Department of Transportation Secretary Jaime J. Bautista Secretary pledged the Philippines' dedication to shaping a prosperous and sustainable future for the maritime sector.

"We believe our re-election will allow us to continue contributing to the maritime industry, not just as a top provider of top-caliber seafarers, but also at promoting safe and secure shipping operations, geared towards growth, modernization, resiliency and

sustainability," Bautista said.

The IMO Council, responsible for overseeing the organization's work, categorizes member states into A, B, and C. The Philippines secured victory in Category C with 136 votes, elevating its rank from 16th in 2021 to 7th in 2023. Other Category C elected countries include Bahamas, Bangladesh, Chile, Cyprus, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Türkiye.

In his candidature statement, Ambassador Teodoro Locsin Jr. emphasized gender equality and the Philippines' commitment to promoting the empowerment and growing role of women in the maritime industry.

The Philippines, a Council member since 1997, sees

its re-election as proof of its integral role in IMO policy-formulation and decision-making. This privilege grants the country voting rights and a platform to advocate for Filipino seafarers, the Philippine ship registry, shipbuilding, and other maritime sectors on the global stage. This achievement aligns with the nation's goal of fostering a safe, sustainable, future-ready, environmentally sound, and green maritime industry.

The successful outcome was attributed to collaborative efforts from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Office of United Nations and International Organizations (UNIO), the Philippine Embassy in London, Department of Transportation, Maritime Industry Authority, Philippine Coast Guard, Philippine Ports Authority, PAMTCI/PTC, and other supporting entities. 🇵🇭



*“Girl on Fire”
Melody Bersalona
Photo by Christine Melliza*

Seafarer on award-winning photo “Girl on Fire” tells seafarers - “Show them that YOU CAN!”

People often call her a real-life superwoman, but Melody Bersalona prefers to call herself, **“Ulirang ina (a great mom).”** A mother of two, she spent four years at sea in an unconventional role for women seafarers - a fitter. She is the woman seafarer in one of the highly commended photos that made it to the top of ITF Seafarers’ Trust Still at Sea Photography Competition entitled “Girl on Fire.”

Melody started out as a repair woman. After two contracts, she was promoted to be a fitter. She said she decided to embark on this journey to save up for her family. “Unang unang dahilan – sweldo, malaking sweldo. Hindi naman natin maitatangi... Compare naman po natin dito sa Pilipinas, triple po ang sasarhurin mo pag nagbarko ka, kaya yun po ang nag-eng-anyo

sa akin na sumakay po. (First and foremost - the salary, big salary. We cannot deny that compared to jobs in Philippines, you can earn triple if you work onboard, so that was my motivation in pursuing this career.),” she revealed.

Prior to exploring a maritime career, Melody finished a welding course at the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and immediately worked as a welder for a construction company for eight straight years.

But to her, embarking on a career at sea was one of the best decisions she has ever made. “Ang masaya, nakapasyal ka ng libre sa iba’t ibang bansa ng wala kang inaalalang babayaran. (It is fun to be able to visit different countries without having to worry about the expenses.),” she said.

Although she admitted there are days when it gets lonely. “Ang pinakamalungkot po yung malayo ka po sa pamilya mo. Hindi mo maalagaan ang mga anak mo. Hindi mo maasikaso yung pag-aaral nila. Pag nangangailangan, hindi agad ma-provide sa kanila dahil nasa malayo ka (The hardest part is being far away from your family. You can’t take care of your children. You can’t help them with school. When they need something, you can’t provide it immediately because you are far away.),” she shared, emotionally.

But at the end of the day, Melody said she does not regret having chosen her path. After all, she did it for her family’s future. In fact, she would have continued to go onboard, if not for her injury during her last contract.

She said she is grateful to AMOSUP or all the assistance in her medical needs.

“Malaking tulong talaga ang AMOSUP. Pati yung mga kasama ko, ang mga asawa nila pag nanganganak, pag may sakit ang anak dito (sa AMOSUP) lahat ang takbuhang kaya maganda daw talaga pag member ka ng AMOSUP. Halimbawa may sakit ang (dependent), punta lang dito libre, lahat. (AMOSUP is a big help. Even my colleagues say when their wives are giving birth, when their kids are sick, they always run to AMOSUP. They say it's really good to be an AMOSUP member. For example, your dependent is sick, you can just go here and everything is free, ” she said.

Apart from the physical challenges, Melody said she did not escape experiences of discrimination from some male counterparts.

“Yung unang sakay ko po discrimination talaga. Kasi parang yung iba kasing lalaki sa barko feeling nila nasasapawan sila kapag babae, lalo pa't yung trabaho ng babae mas mahirap kaysa sa kanila. Kaso nga sabi ko nga sa kanila dati, nag umpisa rin kayo sa wala, nag umpisa rin kayo sa hindi rin kayo marunong, may nagturo lang din sa inyo kaya marunong na kayo ngayon.

Kaya wag niyo minamaliit or idi-discriminate yung mga babae saka yung mga bagong sakay kasi pare parehas lang tayo nagsimula. Kung saan ako ngayon, ganun din kayo dati. (On my first contract, there was really discrimination. Some of the men felt they were being threatened especially when my task is tougher than theirs. But I told them, 'you also started with nothing. When you started, you did not know everything and someone just taught you how to get things done. So don't belittle or discriminate women or the newbies because we all had the same starting point. Where I am right now, is also where you started,” she pointed out.

Melody shared that a lot of her superiors were very appreciative of her contributions to the team. “Yung ibang lahi natutuwa sila sa akin kasi nga babae daw ako pero pag nagtrabaho ako parang lalaki daw ako gumalaw. Daig ko pa raw yung mga lalaki na kasama ko kaya yung mga engineer ko natutuwa sila sa akin (My foreign colleagues were always impressed at how I work. They tell me I am a woman but I move like a man. They say I am even better than my male counterparts, so my engineers are always satisfied with my work.” she said.

As for her fellow women seafarers and those aspiring to explore maritime careers like her, she gave an

important advice: “Kung gusto po nila ang ginagawa nila, ipursue po nila. Wag po sila magpapa-down sa iba na kesyo babae ka, hindi mo kaya yan. Ipakita po nila na kaya nila, dahil kung kaya nga po ng lalaki, kakayanin din po ng babae. (If they really want it, pursue it. Don't let anyone bring you down. Some people will say that because you're a woman, you can't do it. But you have to show them that you can, because if men can do it, so can women,” she asserted.

Melody also said that women seafarers who are mothers should be given the option to go back onboard. “Yung mga nabuntis na babalik sa barko, kung kaya po at kung may mag-aalaga ng anak nila at kaya nilang iwanan, pwede po para sa future ng magiging anak nila. (Those who got pregnant, gave birth and are planning to go back onboard, they can always go back if they want - if there will be people to watch their kids and if they can afford to leave them once in a while, they can work onboard for the future of their children.)” she concluded. 🌟



Melody Bersalona
Photo courtesy of AMOSUP

CrewConnect Global 2023 highlights shipping digitalization, decarbonization

Photo courtesy of FAS Maritime FB page / Wilmar Almeria

CrewConnect Global, the world's biggest manning conference, returned to Manila this year with conferences highlighting the significance and changes brought about by shipping digitalization and decarbonization.

The three-day event kicked off last November 21, at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila gathering hundreds of local and international crewing experts and professionals to discuss key trends impacting the global manning industry.

It explored the latest trends impacting seafarers including their mental health and wellbeing, technology, recruitment and retention, training at sea, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG).

Nancy Karigithu, from the State Department for Shipping and Maritime, Kenya, opened the ceremony which was attended by hundreds of maritime stakeholders and experts.

"As the maritime sector goes

through a defining era of evolution, particularly on its journey towards net-zero and accelerated technology adoption, the crewing industry finds itself facing new and unexpected challenges," said Chris Morley, Group Director of Seatrade Maritime.

The conference at Seatrade Maritime CrewConnect Global has always provided the industry with the insight, expertise, and essential strategies needed to overcome the current and future challenges of seafaring.

"As the event marks its 24th edition, we're delighted to offer such a comprehensive and engaging program once again, which will be matched in quality by our soon-to-be-announced panel of speakers," continued Morley.

The conference's agenda also included CruiseConnect Summit bringing together a carefully curated selection of sessions, which will focus on the specifics of crewing, retention, and training

seafarers for cruise vessels.

"Demand for more cruise-focused content at CrewConnect Global has grown over recent years. Therefore, we are delighted to be able to provide focused sessions for those representing the crewing interests of this sector," said Morley.

Among the Filipino speakers for the said event is Maria Antonia Loyzaga, Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Gerardo Borromei, CEO and Vice President of the Philippine Transmarine Carriers (PTC) Group, Iris Baguilat, President of Döhle Seafront Crewing (Manila), Inc. and founding member and trustee of Association of Licensed Manning Agencies (ALMA) Maritime Group, Karen Avelino, Senior Vice President for Cruise Operations of PTC, Inc., Dr. Didoy Lubaton, Medical Director of the Nordic Medical Clinic, and Dan Tolentino, Training Manager of the International Maritime Employers Council (IMEC). 🇵🇭

MAAP Alumnus Maotze Bayotas Travelogue to WMU

By: *Maotze Bayotas*



Maotze Bayotas
Photo courtesy of *Maotze Bayotas*

It was just March 9, 2020, when I was climbing down the gangway of the vessel on which I just completed my contract as a junior engineer officer. More than three years later, I am now in the hallowed halls of the most premier maritime education institution in the world, the World Maritime University (WMU). In just three years' time, I never imagined myself to be a part of this roller coaster ride that took me to different realms, with a plethora of experiences, knowing different people. From being an engineer officer keeping the engine room in tip top condition, to an educator in one of the premiere maritime higher education institutions, to being a researcher and advocate of quality education and just transition, and finally to pursuing a

postgraduate degree specializing in Maritime Energy Management. This transition had presented me with endless opportunities that I can tap in the future as I continue to forge my path towards my maritime journey. Allow me to take you along on this wonderful adventure.

Having just completed my fifth contract as a seafarer, I went home just before the declaration of Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) on the whole archipelago of the Philippines. With too much uncertainty and commotion brought about by the pandemic, I decided to put my seafaring career on hold. I already worked on various sector of the maritime industry in between my contracts

onboard, as an instructor on various maritime higher education institution (MHEI), as a technical superintendent on a local shipping company, a content developer, and even a maritime writer while I continue my advocacy of giving free lectures and seminars to cadets and other seafarers aspiring to become officers someday. This time, I decided to return to my alma mater, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) so that I can lend a hand in developing and teaching the new wave of world class merchant marine officers. I became heavily involved in facilitating the Vessel Training Center to provide practical experiences to cadets, shifting to the development of course



Impact Leadership Project
Photo courtesy of *Kamaya Point*

syllabus ensuring that our cadets are being molded holistically and competently as operational level officers, and being an advocate of just transition for seafarers and “impactful leadership” amongst cadets.

Beyond the premises of the academy, I was also invested in activities that goes beyond the duty of my work. My mantra was to exhaust every opportunity presented to me which would contribute to the betterment of the maritime industry especially here in the Philippines. Hence, I took a part in initiating a project funded by the Asia-Pacific Center of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization which developed an elective course for Global Citizenship Education (GCED) for maritime students tackling issues in the maritime industry such as gender sensitivity, just and decent work in the context of just transition, equal opportunities for all, and climate action. With the aim of fostering the ideals of “impactful leadership, I also founded the Seafarers Youth United- Philippines (SeaYouPh). This one-of-a-kind organization of maritime youth leaders envisioned to connect students from various MHEIs fostering self-initiative in leading the way for solving the pressing issues hounding the maritime industry.

As my father always say, if you have good intentions towards the welfare of others,



good things naturally come to you. And good things came indeed. When MAAP opened the application for a scholarship for WMU, I applied with no hesitation as I thought that this would be a great opportunity towards self-development and broadening my perspective so that I can contribute more to this industry. Barring all challenges and going through the intensive selection process, I was awarded one of the scholarship grants being bestowed by Associated Marine Officers’ and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines AMOSUP through MAAP. After the announcement of the grant, VADM Eduardo Ma R Santos, the MAAP President, shared his vision of developing courses and capacity building mechanism to pace our cadets with the fast evolution of the maritime industry towards decarbonization.

This coincided with my sentiment and my advocacy of future-proofing our cadets

towards the challenges and impacts of decarbonization to the competency of seafarers. Hence, my path towards taking on the program of MSc in Maritime Affairs specializing on Maritime Energy Management (MEM). A vision towards initiating the modernization of the knowledge and skills of future seafarers to adopt with the pace of the International Maritime Organization towards Zero Carbon Emission by 2050, realizing just transition.

Prior to starting my post-graduate adventure, I took a side trip towards the realm of research and development. Being exposed to the environment in the academe and forged by my experience as a seafarer, I realized that in order for us to move forward, we must seek for ways towards continuous improvement. I became active in research works towards the upscaling of the maritime education and training (MET), especially in the context of the Philippines,

in order for our cadets to not only become a maritime professional, but a Global Maritime Professional (GMP). This leads me to have develop frameworks that will serve as a guide towards modifying our education curriculum towards the future demands of the industry. Hence, I was able to submit my research paper titled “Enhancing the Global-MET Training Record Book with the Infusion of the Book Knowledge” to the International Maritime Lecturers’ Association Conference (IMLA28) and was published in the *Pedagogika Journal of Human Resources*. Building on my research works towards this advocacy, I also submitted, presented, and published my paper titled “BoK-STCW-TRB Triumvirate Course Mapping for Learning Outcome Matrix of BS Marine Engineering Program” in the recently concluded 23rd IAMU Annual General Assembly in Finland. I had also ventured towards optimization in the engine room design to reduce waste and pollution being contributed by ships to the environment while upholding the safety of the crew and the ship with the paper titled “Spatial Analysis of Fire Hydrant Placement in the Engine Room using the Voronoi Diagram”.

This leads me to where I am now, retreating to the sanctuary of education with a goal and advocacy at hand. Starting my professional journey as a seafarer and now trudging a new path towards greater possibilities and greater opportunities to contribute to the industry.



ERASMUS Project for MET Cooperation in University of Split
Photo courtesy of Maotze Bayotas

Going through these fairy-tale-like whirlwind adventure was something that I will not forget in my lifetime. The opportunity and the support bestowed upon me by MAAP led by VADM Santos and AMOSUP led by Dr. Conrado Oca was once-in-a-lifetime and for that I am forever grateful. Without the support of my wife, my family, friends and colleagues, my journey towards the realization of my advocacy would never have begun in the first place. As I hurdle through my studies here in WMU, I will forever be in touch with my voyage starting as a humble

seafarer only containing myself in the day-to-day operation of the ship, growing towards a contributor to the future of the MET landscape in the Philippines. During breaks, as I wander through the Scandic landscape of Malmo, Sweden, I go back to the words that my father used to say, “As long as you have the betterment of not just yourself but others in mind, the world will move in a way to support you in the realization of your goals/advocacy, what you have to do is take the first initiative”. This mantra is really true indeed. 🌍



Photo courtesy of Maotze Bayotas



Aprendio CEO launches GSA pilot test in MAAP

*By: Midn 2CL Jabonete, Mark Angelo A.
Photo courtesy of Aprendio*

Mr. Mikkel Hansen, President and CEO of Aprendio, commenced the pilot test of the Green Skills Academy Platform via Aprendio to select students of Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering (BSMarE) at the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific IMMAJ Multipurpose Hall on December 7, 2023.

In collaboration with the Management, Information, and Instructional Technology Department (MIITD) Innovations Project Office headed by Engr. Gerardo Ramon Galang, 30 midshipmen from

sections Butane and Osaka were enrolled to the platform.

In response to the current trend towards Green Shipping and Just Transition, Hansen inferred that seafarers should be equipped with not just technical and practical skills, but with Green skills as well.

“When we talk about Green Skills, we’re not just talking about technical skills; it’s a mix of everything but with Green Skills, it equips us to move ahead and embrace some of these new technologies,” he said.

Aprendio was developed to teach students about technologies including but not limited to Offshore Wind Energy, Wave Energy, New Fuels, Carbon Capture and Storage, Power-to-X, as well as even Cybersecurity.

Similarly, the platform employs the same detailed format as the Academy’s Learning Management System (LMS), which includes articles, video presentations, and assessments to ensure academic retention, along with an issuance of a certificate of completion which can be used as credentials for future career. 🇵🇭



AMOSUP members and dependents
Photo courtesy of AMOSUP Bacolod

AMOSUP Bacolod celebrates 1st year Anniversary

By: Lara San Juan

AMOSUP's newest regional facility, AMOSUP Bacolod Extension Facility (ABEF) celebrated its first-year anniversary last October 21, 2023. The festivity commenced with a Holy Mass at ABEF chapel followed by the blessing of the 3rd and 4th floors of the ABEF facility.

It was a festive mood attended by AMOSUP members in Bacolod with dance performances from ABEF health professionals, consultants and ABEF employees.

ABEF Medical Director, Dr. Romeo Reyes led the program with a warm welcome to AMOSUP members and their dependents, ABEF

employees, Medical Directors and guests in his opening remarks

"ABEF is AMOSUP's fifth medical facility. This important endeavor is a concrete proof of the continuing legacy left by our founding father, Captain Gregorio Oca, whose ultimate vision was to provide a holistic and quality service to Filipino seafarers and their families," said Dr. Conrado F. Oca in his President's message.

Dr. Oca also expressed his gratitude and appreciation to ITF Seafarers' Trust for the grant that helped build the facility.

"Our goal is to continue

building more facilities for our seafarers and implement AMOSUP's programs that would uplift you and your families so that you can have a sense of relief and peace of mind while you work to excel in your maritime careers onboard. So we hope you can also maximize the union services we offer here in ABEF," Dr. Oca added.

The celebration concluded with a closing remark by ABEF Administrative Director, Ms. Macarena Oca followed by grace before meals led by ABEF Accountant Ms. Salome Delos Santos and concluded with the sumptuous dinner buffet served with a live-band for entertainment of all the seafarers and their dependents. 🎵

Crew's dependent is hopeful over breast cancer treatment at Seamen's Hospital

The journey towards extending the lives of cancer patients or even just alleviating their symptoms has always been a challenging one. In the realm of medical oncology, a field dedicated to the study, treatment, diagnosis and prevention of cancer, chemotherapy or "chemo" for short, plays a significant role by incorporating one or more anti-cancer drugs into its treatment regimen.

One patient receiving such treatment at the AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital Manila is Ms. Merzenel Capati, a dependent of a seafarer employed on a ship with collective agreements with AMOSUP. Since 2021, Merze has been undergoing chemotherapy to combat breast cancer, which has resulted in liver enlargement.

Merzy candidly admits that she had neglected her health until a noticeable deterioration in her physical condition jolted her into awareness. She recalls, "Naalerto na lang kami nang bumagsak ang katawan ko. At unti-unting napansin ang paglaki ng t'yan ko." (We've just been alarmed when my health condition had

deteriorated.) Her weight plummeted from 50kg to 38kg, primarily due to the enlargement of her liver, as explained by her doctor.

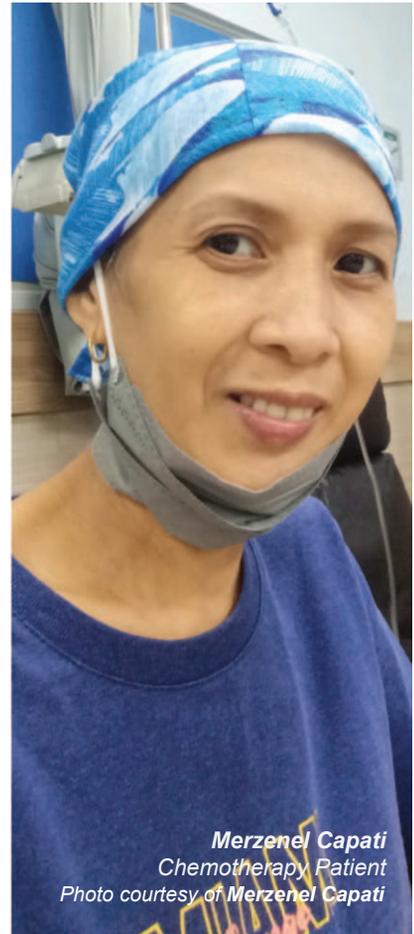
Despite her challenging circumstances, Merzy is profoundly grateful for the medical assistance provided by AMOSUP, which has made her treatment and hope for a longer life possible. She emphasizes,

"Ang laki ng pasasalamat ko sa AMOSUP. Kung wala sila, baka hindi namin kaya ang gamutan."

(I'm grateful to AMOSUP. Without them, we might not afford this medication.)

While Merzy doesn't disclose the exact cost of her medication, she reveals that the bill for each session, covered by state health insurance alone, amounts to PhP20,000. Such expenses would have been financially crippling if incurred weekly.

Since March 2021, Merzy has been faithfully visiting the Seamen's Hospital for her weekly chemotherapy sessions. However, her



Merzenel Capati
Chemotherapy Patient
Photo courtesy of Merzenel Capati

chemo dosage was reduced following her 22nd session due to severe "side effects." These effects manifested as immediate pain after the injection, necessitating extended monitoring at the hospital. She recalls,

"Nag react ako sa (I reacted from) chemo drug so they had to stop the session. Nang magreact ako sa gamot inaabot ako hanggang 8.30pm [sa hospital] kasi hindi puedeng ihinto

nang mabilisan dahil mino-monitor ang reaction ko sa gamot." (When I responded from the med's effect I would stay late in the hospital till 8:30pm since they couldn't just stop it as my reaction to the drugs had to be monitored.)

Her current regimen involves the injection of two intravenous drugs, including zpre-medication to manage pain. Fortunately, Merzy's patience and prayers have yielded substantial improvement in her condition this year. She notes,

"Since this year (2023) medyo nakakarecover na ako sa pain at nakakasabay na ako sa two to three hours sched nila. Ibig sabihin nagkakaroon ng malaking improvement." (...I've been recovering somewhat from pain and I can catch up with their two-to-three hours schedule. That means there is a great improvement.)

Her doctor has even referred to her case as miraculous, as her once pale skin has returned

to its normal complexion, and her distended abdomen has flattened. Merzy can now make her hospital visits independently, walking without assistance, a stark contrast to the earlier need for her sister's escorting during chemotherapy sessions.

Despite being well aware of the advanced stage of her breast cancer, Merzy remains undaunted. She reveals, **"Hindi ko iniisip ang sakit ko, kasi nai-stress ako.** (I don't think of my illness, I'm getting stressed.) Positive thinking na lang (...will just do) despite the accompanying depression that normally occurs. **Kapit lang kay** (Just stick with) **God and prayer."**

Merzy hopes that ongoing advancements in medical research and technology will enable more women with chronic illnesses like her to manage their conditions and live longer lives. Her husband, a bosun working onboard a vessel overseas, shares her concerns about her health. She also wishes that his partner's manning agent will line him up in his next contract promptly, allowing her to continue receiving chemotherapy without interruption.

As of October 31, 2023, Merzy has completed an impressive 44 chemotherapy sessions, and she has become familiar with nearly all the hospital staff, including the newcomers. Her determination and positivity are a testament to the power of hope and the support of dedicated medical professionals at Seamen's Hospital. 🌟



Merzenel Capati
Chemotherapy Patient
Photo courtesy of Merzenel Capati

Research from AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital Sheds Light on Seafarers' Mental Health at the 16th International Symposium on Maritime Health

By: Frances Israel

The maritime industry is often characterized by the allure of the open sea, adventure, and a close-knit community of seafarers and maritime workers. However, beneath the surface of this idyllic world, a silent storm has been brewing in the form of mental health challenges, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only intensified this issue.

Dr. Mayla Veronica Madrigal, a Consultant at the AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital in Manila, has taken a significant step in this direction by presenting her research at the 16th International Symposium on Maritime Health in Athens, Greece, held from October 5-8, 2023.

Dr. Madrigal's research, titled "Prevalence of Depression Among Seafarers and Maritime Workers during the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Meta-analysis," aimed to determine the extent of depression among seafarers and maritime workers during the pandemic. By conducting a random-effects meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies, she sought to provide a comprehensive view of the mental health challenges facing this

often-overlooked population.

The meta-analysis reveals a concerning 28% prevalence of depression among seafarers and maritime workers surveyed during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring a significant mental health challenge within the industry. This highlights the pervasive yet under-reported issue of depression among these workers, both before and during the pandemic, emphasizing the urgent need for policy and practice changes.

Dr. Madrigal's research outlines critical steps to enhance the mental health of seafarers and maritime workers. Foremost, the maritime industry should explore the implementation of screening programs to identify and assess depression and depressive symptoms, aiding in the identification of those in need of support and intervention.

Additionally, pre-employment medical examinations should be modified to include a focus

on the psychological health and well-being of prospective seafarers. This proactive approach can ensure that individuals with existing mental health concerns receive the necessary support and resources.

Furthermore, the provision of appropriate interventions, such as psychological health education, counseling, and referrals to mental health professionals, is essential to support those experiencing depression. It is critical to destigmatize seeking help for mental health issues and make resources readily available to those who need them.

Dr. Madrigal's research has illuminated the path forward, encouraging the maritime industry and its stakeholders to prioritize the mental well-being of those who brave the seas. By addressing this critical issue, we can ensure a brighter and healthier future for the unsung heroes of the maritime world. 🌊





CMEN and AMOSUP co-organize first NSV Forum for seafarers

Over eighty AMOSUP members gathered at the Dr. Mario S. Oca Hall of Seamen's Hospital Manila on 17 November 2023 to join the informative session about non-scalpel vasectomy in celebration of the World Vasectomy Day.

Thirty-eight-year-old crewing operations manager Jeicris Aguilar took the center stage to share about his experience when he finally decided to undergo the non-scalpel vasectomy.

According to Jeicris, it was his wife, Arlette, who asked him to consider having a vasectomy as it was getting more difficult for her to deal with the side effects of

contraceptive pills. After all, they already have two children aged eight and ten.

"Nabigla ako, pero hindi ko siya dinimiss kasi nakita ko naman yung sakripisyo niya nung pinanganak niya yung mga anak namin. (I was surprised, but I did not dismiss the idea because I've already seen her sacrifice when she gave birth to our kids.)" Jeicris remarked.

It did not take long for Jeicris to see the advantages of undergoing the procedure, especially considering their financial goals as a family.

"For me, it was all about the future of our children."

We want to give them the best life, of course, and I thought getting an NSV will help us reach our goals," he said.

After the procedure, Jeicris said he felt relieved and happy about his decision, "the outcome was positive. There were no complications,



From left; Arlette Aguilar, Jeicris Aguilar

and sex is still great!” Arlette on the other hand expressed her gratitude to her husband, “I appreciate him, and I love him more!” she remarked.

In his message, AMOSUP President, Dr. Conrado Oca explained that the Union’s cooperation with the Cooperative Movement for Encouraging NSV (CMEN), is part of AMOSUP’s efforts in equipping seafarer families with relevant information about family planning. “We are conducting this information and education campaign on vasectomy to shed light on this method that could possibly help you and your spouses in family planning for the overall wellbeing of your household,” he said.

Dr. Oca also warmly welcomed the event’s guest-of-honor, KABAYAN Partylist Representative and current Chairperson of the



Congressman Ron Salo
KABAYAN Partylist Representative and current Chairperson of the House of Representatives
Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs

House of Representatives Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs, Congressman Ron Salo. He was formally introduced by AMOSUP Vice President for Internal Affairs, Atty. Jesus “Jojo” Sale.

Cong. Salo is the sponsor of the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers and a staunch champion of seafarers’ rights in the lower house. He is also an advocate of CMEN’s family planning initiative. In his intervention, Cong. Salo applauded AMOSUP for its services to its members, especially the Seamen’s Hospitals. He underscored his commitment to working with various stakeholders like AMOSUP in the pursuit to a healthier society and to empowering Filipino families in making informed choices.

“There are 116 million Filipinos. We are the 13th most populous country in the world. Managing population growth is crucial to the achievement of the UN sustainable development goals,” he said.

The NSV forum was facilitated by Dr. Jondi Flavier, Chairperson of CMEN. “In non-scalpel vasectomy, the procedure is simpler compared to ligation... It will help the women who usually bear the burden in family planning. NSV can prevent high-risk pregnancies,” Dr. Flavier explained.

After the question and answer portion of the forum, resource person Jeicris left a message to his fellow men in the room, “I really urge you to consider NSV for your families. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail,” he concluded. 🇵🇭



Dr. Conrado Oca
AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF President

Towards An Affirmative Industry

By: R-Dee P. Diones

Photos Courtesy of R-Dee P. Diones

R-Dee P. Diones

In a world often governed by what is visible, we must not forget the battles grappled in silence. Each of us knows someone – could be a co-worker, a family member, or ourselves, – who has tussled with the intricacies of human mind. It is high time to dispel the stigma surrounding mental health issues and foster an environment where openness and understanding can prosper.

Along with my colleagues in MAAP, we started our advocacy under a mission to produce resilient and adaptable seafarers, who can overcome mental health challenges and rise against adversities brought by the working environment aboard vessels. We realized that developing special programs for the mental health education of seafarers is therefore crucial as seafaring continues to be a dangerous and socially challenging profession, and work-related accidents that are inevitable at times, posing potential mental health risks to seafarers according to studies.

For over a year, with the unwavering support from AMOSUP, ITF, MAAP, and other partner organizations,

we were able to equip 510 individuals (working in the maritime industry) with extensive knowledge on how to manage mental health issues using positive approaches, as well as how to use this knowledge in helping others. We are truly honored in making significant impact by enabling open discussions, facilitating workshops and frolic activities (as listed below) to tackle mental health issues. Through these sessions, we are able to provide the seafarers adequate venues to de-stress and supply them with knowledge on how to seek and provide social support even while onboard international vessels.

- **Beautiful Minds International** (June 2022)
- **Mental Re-Berth: Berthing in the Seas of Adversity** (June 2022)
- **Mental Health: A Discussion on Existential Crisis** (Sept 2022)
- **Breaking Barriers: Promoting Holistic Wellness through Social Connections** (May - August 2023)
- **Mindful Identities: Navigating Mental Health and Gender Together** (October 2023)

- **Seafarer's Personal and Social Development Orientation** (October 2023)

Supportive, hopeful, and encouraging - these are the cornerstones of an affirmative industry. By fostering a culture of compassion, we create an industry where mental health is prioritized, and a community that values the holistic well-being of its members.

As AMOSUP underscores, **“Mental health is a universal right”** – we will continue to enlighten the mind of seafarers that seeking help is not a sign of weakness; rather, it's a strength required to navigate the complexities of life.

In this advocacy, we must remember that our collective voices has the power to challenge the status quo surrounding mental health. Let us be the advocates who ignite transformational change, encourage kindness, and lay the foundations of an **“affirmative industry”** – where understanding and empathy can flourish. 🌍

JSU - AMOSUP

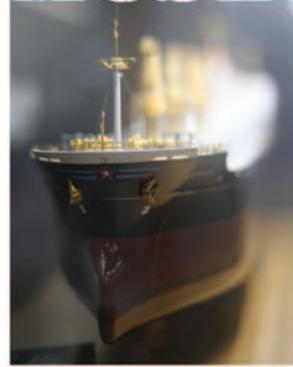
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“ Looking back..”

Sailing forward.”

- Dr. Conrado F. Oca

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