



## Maritime Security & Safety: **Focus on people at sea**

**Jon Whitlow,**

Secretary of the Seafarers', Fisheries  
and Inland Navigation Sections

International Transport Workers' Federation – ITF

United Nations Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and  
the Law of the Sea

9<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 23-27 June 2007

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

- Global union federation for transport workers
- 700 unions in 150 countries
- Seafarers, Fisheries, Inland Navigation, Road, Rail, Civil Aviation and Tourism Services
- 130 ITF maritime inspectors worldwide

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## Safety and security issues confronting seafarers

- Industrial Context
- Challenges facing seafarers and fishers
- Substandard operators
- Life at sea (SIRC report for ITF Seafarers' Trust)
- Regulation
- Concluding comments

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## Industrial Context

- Shipping: Motor of the global economy carrying 90% of world trade
- Shortage of suitably trained seafarers
- Importance of 'decent work'
- Shipping & Fisheries: particularly hazardous sectors, special categories of workers
- Fundamental rights under threat

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## Challenges facing seafarers

- Trend towards dehumanising the job
- Reduced manning levels
- Faster turnarounds in port
- Long terms of voyage
- Increased pressure (criminalisation)
- Problems with shore leave and access to facilities
- Risk of piracy and armed robbery

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## Substandard Operators

- Abandonment
- Non-payment of wages
- Recruitment fees
- Lack of employment contracts
- Unsafe vessels, poor maintenance
- Inadequate supply of provisions

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## SIRC report for ITF Seafarers' Trust

Findings on shore leave:

- 64% (N=2,160) of respondents to the survey had not had shore leave during the previous eight weeks
- 36% (N=1,353) who had had shore leave during the period said their leave lasted for 2 hours on average

<http://www.itfglobal.org/seafarerstrust/welfarerpt.cfm>

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## Life at Sea

Findings on communication:

Although all vessels had email facilities on board:

- Only 16% (N=555 of a total of 3,527) of seafarers had access to email
- Only 3% of ratings had access to email

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## Life at Sea

Seafarers descriptions of their life:

- 'being in prison'
- 'isolated'
- 'lonely'
- 'a sacrifice to provide better conditions for loved ones'

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## Regulation

- Importance of jurisdiction
- Inadequacy of cover for the 'human element'
- Critical but invisible work force
- Need to enforce fundamental human rights for people working at sea

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



## Concluding comments

It is vital to ensure:

- Decent work for seafarers & fishers
- Real and effective flag States
- Access to shore leave and port based welfare
- Access to communication facilities
- Respect for the people that underpin world trade

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF



[www.itfseafarers.org](http://www.itfseafarers.org)

[www.itfglobal.org](http://www.itfglobal.org)

International Transport Workers' Federation - ITF