UNICPO Abstract- Wednesday 25 June, 2008, 10:00- 13:00- Segment 4,
Discussion Panel “Focus on People at Sea”
International Labour Standards and Decent Work: Taking account of the “people
factor” in an integrated approach to improved maritime security and safety
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This presentation considers the recent International Labour Organization (ILO) initiatives
aimed at addressing the situation of “people at sea” and maritime safety and security
through decent work for seafarers and fishers. An effective international and national
system is highly dependent on the workers who have to implement it and they must be
the focus of concern. Decent working conditions on board ships and fishing vessels are
essential to ensuring maritime security and safe operation of ships and fishing vessels. It
is also an aspect of implementing State obligations under Article 94 of the 1982 United
Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. A number of key strategic areas, such as
improved flag State implementation and audits and expanded port State control have been
identified by General Assembly and other bodies for action to improve maritime security
and safety. The ILO has also taken specific steps to focus on these strategic areas and to
integrate and “mainstream” maritime labour concerns into the international ship safety
and security and environmental protection regime.

The ILO recently adopted three major Conventions and a Recommendation and a Code
of Practice that all interact, to some extent, with maritime security and safety issues
• the Seafarers Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003;
• the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006
• the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007
• 2004 IMO/ILO Code of Practice on Security in Ports

The presentation outlines the role of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, and the
Work in Fishing Convention, 2007, particularly in connection with help to ensure ship
safety. In connection with maritime security it stresses the importance of the revised
Seafarers’ Identity Documents Convention (No. 185), which was adopted to complement
the action being taken in the framework of the IMO (e.g., the ISPS Code). Convention
No. 185 provides security while facilitating the professional movement of seafarers and
enabling shore leave. It establishes an effective multilateral system of identification for
the purpose of ensuring both the welfare of seafarers and the smooth operation of the
shipping industry. Shipowners can encounter significant operating difficulties if seafarers
cannot travel to join or leave ships. Seafarers can suffer considerable hardship if they are
not permitted to go ashore after weeks or even months at sea. The new Seafarers’ Identity
Document allows port States to satisfy themselves that the holders of this document are
genuine seafarers through “positive verifiable identification” meeting contemporary
security concerns. The Convention also requires each ratifying country to put in place a
comprehensive security regime for ensuring that these documents are only issued to
genuine seafarers presenting no security risk. The ILO and IMO have also developed a