

DICASTERY FOR PROMOTING HUMAN INTEGRAL DEVELOPMENT

Message for Sea Sunday 2018

(8th July 2018)

As we celebrate Sea Sunday, we are invited to remember the 1.2 millions of seafarers from all nations, professing different faiths, forced to live for several months in the confined space of a vessel, away from their families and loved ones missing the most important and meaningful events in their families (birthdays', graduations, etc.) and failing to be present during times of trials and difficulties such as sickness and death.

Seafarers with their profession play a significant role in our global economy by transporting from one corner of the world to another, 90% of all the goods we use in our daily life. For this reason, today while we pray for all of them wherever they are, we would like also to express our gratitude for their tough work full of sacrifices.

Here are some of the challenges that the people of the sea face daily:

Denied shore leave and ship visiting

With the mechanization and automatization, the turnaround time in the ports is reduced to the minimal, leaving the crew with inadequate personal time to rest and relax. Furthermore, if the introduction of the International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS) might have improved maritime security at the same time it proved to be particularly challenging for seafarers. In numerous ports, crews are finding increasingly difficult to get permission to go ashore, either because of company policy or because restrictive and discriminatory regulations imposed by governments. However, that is not all. Many of our chaplains and ship visitors are denied entering into ports or prevented to go on board of vessels to provide material and spiritual welfare to seafarers who reach shore after weeks at sea.

We deplore these facts that are contradicting the spirit of the Regulation 4.4 of the Maritime Labor Convention (MLC)¹ entered into force on August 20th, 2013, aimed to improve wellbeing of the seafarers. Crews should not be denied the freedom of coming ashore likewise chaplains and ship visitors should not be denied the right to go on board of vessels.

Violence at sea and piracy

Though the situation is improved compared to the previous years, we would like to invite everyone to be more vigilant regarding violence at sea that generally is characterized by piracy. The root cause of piracy is always related to political instability and it is often linked to the fishing industry. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing has deprived many coastal states of their natural marine resources, which created a situation of extreme poverty on land, making it easy for unscrupulous individuals to transform desperate and unemployed fishers into pirates.

¹ Each Member shall ensure that shore-based welfare facilities, where they exist, are easily accessible. The Member shall also promote the development of welfare facilities, such as those listed in the Code, in designated ports to provide seafarers on ships that are in its ports with access to adequate welfare facilities and services.

We request governments and ship owners to put into place all the necessary mechanisms to protect the life of the people at sea and to minimize the economic cost.

Abandonment of vessels and crews

Abandonment of vessels and crews is not a new problem for the maritime industry. According to a newspaper report² from 2012 to 2017 more than 1,300 seafarers were abandoned for different reasons in foreign ports far away from home, often with unpaid salaries and without food and fuel provisions for the vessel. Once abandoned the seafarers are left themselves to struggle for food, salaries, immigration status and many more issues unless they are assisted by a welfare organization.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all Stella Maris chaplains and volunteers who, from Malta to South Africa, from United Kingdom to United States of America, for months and months have and are still providing material, spiritual, legal and psychological support to several crews of abandoned vessels.

We call for the full implementation of the amendments to the MLC 2006, requiring that a financial security system be put into place in order to ensure that ship owners provide compensation to seafarers and their families in the event of abandonment³.

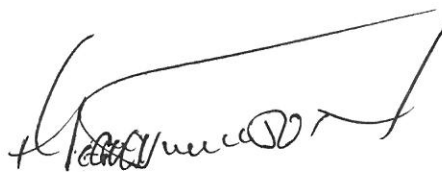
Environmental impact on the oceans

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says: "There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy" (no. 26).

Like all types of transportation that use fossil fuels, vessels produce carbon dioxide emissions that significantly contribute to global climate change and acidification. Besides carbon dioxide ships also release a handful of other pollutants that contribute to the problem.

We support the efforts made by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), to prevent and significantly reduce marine plastic pollution from the shipping sector and in curbing greenhouse gas emissions from ships, as it implements other regulations that will mandate cleaner-burning fuels at sea.

Finally, I invoke the Blessed Mother, *Star of the Sea*, to extend her maternal protection to the people of the sea and guide them from the dangers of the sea to a secure port.



Cardinal Peter A. Turkson
Prefect



² <https://worldmaritimeneews.com/archives/227230/interview-over-1300-seafarers-abandoned-in-five-years/>

³ Amendments to the Code Implementing Regulation 2.5 - Repatriation of MLC, 2006 (and appendices)