



International  
Labour  
Organization

**International Labour Office contribution to the report of the Secretary-General on Oceans and Law of the Sea pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly resolution 79/144 of 12 December 2024, entitled “Oceans and the law of the sea”**



June 2025

Contribution to Part II of the report regarding all other developments in the field of ocean affairs and the law of the sea within the scope of the activities of the Organization

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# 1. Ensuring decent work for seafarers and fishers to secure the sustainable use of oceans

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The ILO has worked for over 100 years to improve the conditions of seafarers and fishers, adapting to the everchanging challenges faced by those working in the sector. Through its unique tripartite structure, the ILO brings together governments, employers, and workers of 187 Member States to set labour standards, develop policies and programmes promoting decent work for all. This has included the adoption of Conventions and Recommendations specific to the shipping and fishing sectors. The widespread ratification and implementation of these sector-specific standards, and the realization of fundamental principles and rights at work for all working at sea is critical to ensuring that the three pillars of ocean sustainability - economic, environmental, and social sustainability - are respected.



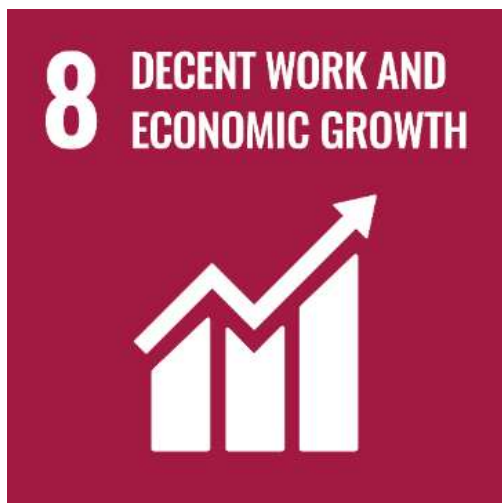
Figure I. Seafarers. (c) ILO News (2022)



Figure II. Fishers. (c) ILO

## 2. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

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Particularly relevant to the work of the ILO with respect to the ocean are SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all and SDG 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

The ILO has made commitments related to SDGs 8 and 14. These commitments relate to the implementation of the key ILO maritime instruments which are the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006); the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) and the Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003

(No. 185), as amended. The ILO has committed to promote the effective implementation of the MLC, 2006, in order to improve seafarers' living and working conditions and ensuring a level playing field for shipowners. The ILO has also made a commitment at the Our Ocean conference to address forced labour and trafficking at sea, in particular in the fishing sector. The human-centred, sectoral approach is key to attaining the SDGs during this Decade of Action to deliver the Global Goals. The active involvement of governments, employers' organizations and workers' organizations and stronger tripartite governance in the maritime sector are critical to realizing not only SDGs 8 and 14, but also to addressing the labour dimension in every other SDG.

Throughout this paper, the realization of the SDGs is demonstrated through various means: promoting the ratification and the effective implementation of international labour standards; the development of guidelines, reports, and other tools; promoting social dialogue amongst sectoral constituents; and the implementation of action programmes and development cooperation projects, as well as the provision of technical assistance, capacity-building, and training of inspectors.



### 3. Links to UNCLOS

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A number of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) are relevant to addressing the issues faced by seafarers and fishers.

This includes, first and foremost, **Article 94**, concerning Duties of the flag states which, provides that:

*“Every State shall effectively exercise its jurisdiction and control in administrative, technical and social matters over ships flying its flag”. Article 94 (3) stipulates that such measures shall include those necessary to ensure: (b) each ship is in the charge of a master and officers who possess appropriate qualifications, in particular in seamanship, navigation, communications and marine engineering, and that the crew is appropriate in qualification and numbers for the type, size, machinery and equipment of the ship; (c) the master, officers and, to the extent appropriate, the crew are fully conversant with and required to observe the applicable international regulations concerning the safety of life at sea, the prevention of collisions, the prevention, reduction and control of marine pollution, and the maintenance of communications by radio.*

Examples of other relevant articles include:

**Article 73** which provides, in the context of the Coastal State’s exercise of its sovereign rights to explore, exploit, conserve and manage the living resources in the exclusive economic zone, that *“Arrested vessels and their crews shall be promptly released upon the posting of reasonable bond or other security”,* and that *“Coastal State penalties for violations of fisheries laws and regulations in the exclusive economic zone may not include imprisonment, in the absence of agreements to the contrary by the States concerned, or any other form of corporal punishment”;*

**Article 99**, which prohibits the transport of slaves; and

**Article 292** concerning noncompliance with the duty of prompt release of vessels and crews upon posting of financial security, which is also often cited with regard to unlawful arrest.



## 4. ILO and the Blue Economy

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Blue Economy is a broad concept that connects economy, human, and nature. The UN defined the Blue Economy as [“an economy that comprises a range of economic sectors and related policies that together determine whether the use of ocean resources is sustainable.”](#) The World Bank defines the Blue Economy as [“the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, and ocean ecosystem health.”](#) The Blue Economy as a matter of policy is applicable to all States but remains particularly interesting for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Coastal Least Developed States (CLDS) which have been at the vanguard of discussions on the topic.

The ILO has been an active participant in the discussion leading to the growing recognition of the ocean as a workplace: At the [United Nations Ocean Conference](#) (UNOC) in 2017, the ILO has intervened to stress the sectoral approach to the Blue Economy and the fact that 350 million peoples' livelihoods depended on the oceans, with shipping, fishing and coastal tourism providing working opportunities for many.

*“Humanity, including millions of workers & enterprises, depend on the ocean. We must do all we can to protect it and the biodiversity it hosts and supports. This includes sustainable business practice and decent work for whom the ocean is a workplace.”*

-- Gilbert F. Houngbo, the ILO Director-General

At the [Third United Nations Ocean Conference \(UNOC3\)](#), the International Labour Organization, in collaboration with the Governments of France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, officially launched a new multi-partner campaign to promote the ratification and effective implementation of Convention No. 188 from 2025 through 2027. Co-led with the Governments of France and the United Kingdom, and supported by the European Commission, the campaign aims to turn commitment into action by raising awareness among governments and social partners about the benefits of C188; providing technical support, including legal and institutional guidance, and inspector training; and amplifying fishers' voices, ensuring their organizations are part of decision-making processes. It also issues an open call for governments, regional bodies, and other partners to join the initiative and contribute to its objectives.

### *ILO and Just Transition*

In the context of climate change, the decarbonization of shipping has created significant implications for seafarers' working conditions and well-being. The transition to a decarbonized shipping industry will require additional training for [hundreds of thousands of seafarers up to 2050](#).<sup>1</sup> The absence of certainty about future fuel options for shipping is having a knock-on effect on seafarer training, making it imperative to start establishing the necessary training infrastructure immediately.

Just Transition is a people-centred response to address climate emergency, and it means greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible, creating decent work opportunities. ILO strives for a human-centred approach to achieving green shipping, stressing the principles set out in the ILO Guidelines for a Just Transition and respecting the provisions of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended, particularly as concerns occupational safety and health of seafarers in the context of new technologies and fuels.

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<sup>1</sup> Maritime Just Transition Task Force. (2022). *Mapping a Maritime Just Transition for Seafarers*. <https://www.ics-shipping.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Position-Paper-Mapping-a-Maritime-Just-Transition-for-Seafarers-%E2%80%93-Maritime-Just-Transition-Task-Force-2022-OFFICIAL.pdf>

The ILO works together with the ICS, the ITF, the UNGC, and the IMO under the “Maritime Just Transition Task Force” launched at the 26th session of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26), to ensure shipping’s response to the climate emergency puts seafarers at the heart of the solution, supported by globally established Just Transition principles. The Task Force coordinates efforts with governments, industry, workers and their representatives. Research and learnings will be developed around the green training and upskilling needs for the maritime industry’s transition and the green job potential of new fuels. A core driver will be how the maritime industry can achieve an equitable transition creating opportunities for local communities and ensuring that green infrastructure, technology investments and opportunities for job creation are open to all.

At [COP27](#) in November 2022, the ILO hosted the first ever Just Transition Pavilion, a convening space for events, meetings and knowledge sharing around just transition and climate action in cooperation with the UNFCCC, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and International Organisation of Employers (IOE). The Just Transition Pavilion held a side event organized by the “Just Transition Maritime Task Force”, which convened Ministers, union heads, the UN and Industry, to mark the launch of a “10-Point Action Plan” by the task force.

During the [COP28](#) in December 2023, the ILO helped to promote climate action that incorporates decent work and a just transition for all. The ILO and the European Commission hosted the Just Transition Pavilion together with IOE, ITUC and UNFCCC. The pavilion provided a space for ILO tripartite constituents and institutional partners to convene events, engage in informal exchanges and develop partnerships to advance climate action from the perspectives of ILO’s mandate. Key initiatives also included a high-level dialogue focusing on delivering a gender-responsive just transition for all, the launch of the ILO-IsDB Youth Green Skills Accelerator Challenge Call 2023, and the unveiling of the ILO-IsDB report on Green Jobs in the MENA region.

The ILO has also established an informal group known as “Friends of just transition”, which aims to advance the objectives of decent work and social justice within the UNFCCC processes.

*“The ILO Just Transition Pavilion contributed to the effort of ‘a labour-focused just transition with social dialogue, social protection and labour rights at its heart’ through its ‘many activities and high visibility’”*

-- Sharan Burrow, the ITUC’s General Secretary

## 5. ILO & the Maritime Sector: Shipping, Ports, Fishing

Ships carry more than 80 per cent of world trade, whether in containers or through the bulk transport of raw materials, including food. There is increased awareness of the vital role of ships and seafarers in global supply chains. Shipping is one of the most international of sectors, requiring global solutions to labour issues to ensure its economic, social and environmental sustainability.

According to Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in 2022, an estimated 61.8 million<sup>2</sup> people were employed in the primary production sector, mostly in small-scale operations. Of these, 33.6 million were employed in fisheries<sup>3</sup> and about 22.1 million people were employed in aquaculture<sup>4</sup>. The sector faces pressures, such as decent work challenges, climate change, over-fishing, and Illegal Unregulated and Unreported (IUU) fishing. Forced labour, trafficking, child labour and high injury and fatality rates also remain a matter of great concern.

Ports are a critical component of supply chains and a point of exchange between the different transport modes (sea, road, railways, and inland waterways). They provide key infrastructure in support of international trade and the global economy.

The graphic below (Figure I) gives a brief overview of the international labour standards related to the shipping, fishing, and ports sectors. The focus of ILO's maritime work is the promotion of the ratification and implementation, and the effective enforcement of these standards using all the ILO's means of action, including advocacy, technical assistance, capacity-building and the dissemination of codes of practice, guidelines, reports and other tools addressing labour issues and fostering decent work in these sectors.



<sup>2</sup> FAO. 2024. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024*. Rome. p. xviii. Available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/06690fd0-d133-424c-9673-1849e414543d>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>4</sup> Idem.



## 5.1 Shipping

### 5.1.1 Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006)

Adopted by the ILO's Member States in February 2006, the MLC, 2006 brought together existing industry labour standards that no longer reflected contemporary working and living conditions, had low ratification levels, or inadequate enforcement and compliance systems. Combining these, often very detailed, instruments into one Convention, makes it easier for countries to regulate and enforce consistent industry norms and standards, worldwide.

The MLC, 2006 sets out seafarers' rights to decent conditions of work and helps to create conditions of fair competition for shipowners. It is intended to be globally applicable, easily understandable, readily updatable and uniformly enforced. The MLC, 2006 addresses all aspects of work such as minimum age, medical fitness and training; and conditions of work including hours of rest, wages, leave, repatriation, medical care, accommodation, occupational safety and health, and social security.

The MLC, 2006 has been designed to become a global legal instrument that will be the "fourth pillar" of the international regulatory regime for quality shipping, complementing the key Conventions of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), such as the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974, as amended (SOLAS), the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping, 1978, as amended (STCW), and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 73/78 (MARPOL).

There are several novel features in the MLC, 2006 as far as the ILO is concerned. It is organized into three main parts: the Articles, placed at the beginning, set out the broad principles and obligations. They are followed by the more detailed Regulations and the Code of the MLC, 2006 which has two parts: Part A (mandatory Standards) and Part B (non-mandatory Guidelines). The Regulations and the Code are organized in five Titles, which cover specific subject matters.

The Code of the MLC, 2006 was amended in [2014](#), [2016](#), [2018](#), [2022](#), and [2025](#). The latest amendments to the MLC, 2006, adopted in 2025, strengthen the protection of seafarers in several key areas. They call for the recognition of seafarers as key workers and reinforce protections against violence and harassment on board, including sexual harassment and assault, in line with ILO Convention No. 190. The amendments enhance seafarers' rights to shore leave to support their health and wellbeing and facilitate their movement for the purposes of repatriation and crew changes. They also require States to cooperate and take due account of the IMO/ILO Guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident and the newly adopted guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers detained in connection with alleged crimes. Finally, they recommend that ships carry up-to-date medical information and guidance for use by those responsible for medical care on board. It is recalled that the 2022 amendments to the Code of the MLC, 2006 adopted by the Fourth Meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 - Part II (STC 4, Part II), have entered into force on 24 December 2024.

As of 10 June 2025, the MLC, 2006 has been ratified by 110 States (96.6%GT), the latest being Ecuador, Guinea-Bissau and Pakistan. The ILO regularly provides technical assistance to member States and other relevant parties to ensure universal ratification and effective implementation of the MLC, 2006. In addition to promoting its Conventions, the ILO also supervises the application of international labour standards such as the MLC, 2006. This is done in accordance with the ILO Constitution through the work of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. All, or nearly all, regional port State control agreements have included MLC, 2006 in their lists of "relevant instruments" for port State control.

#### 5.1.1.1 Knowledge Development: ILO tools for implementing the MLC

- I. [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) about the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended \(MLC, 2006\)](#): The FAQ are intended to help persons engaged in the study or application of the MLC, 2006 to find answers to questions they have about this innovative ILO Convention.

- II. [Guidelines for flag State inspections under the MLC, 2006, as amended](#): The Guidelines for flag State inspections under the MLC, 2006, contained in this book are an important resource for implementing flag State responsibilities under the MLC, 2006. The Guidelines were updated by the ILO in 2020, together with the Guidelines for port State control officers carrying out inspections under the MLC, 2006 as amended, in order to reflect the 2014, 2016 and 2018 amendments to the Code of the MLC, 2006.
- III. [Guidelines for port State control officers carrying out inspections under the MLC, 2006, as amended](#): The Guidelines provide practical advice to port State control officers (PSCOs) verifying compliance of foreign ships with the requirements of the MLC, 2006. The main inspection tool is provided by Chapter 4, indicating the basic requirements to be complied with, sources of information for checking compliance and examples of deficiencies, in the 16 areas of working and living conditions that are mainly concerned.
- IV. [Guidelines for implementing the occupational safety and health provisions of the MLC, 2006](#): The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist States to implement the occupational safety and health provisions of MLC, 2006. They provide supplementary practical information to flag States to be reflected in their national laws and other measures to implement Regulation 4.3 and the related Code of MLC, 2006, as well as other relevant provisions under Regulations 3.1 and 1.1.
- V. [Handbook: Guidance on implementing the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 - Model National Provisions](#): This Handbook contains a model for legal provisions that implement the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006). It is intended as an aid, in whole or in part, for national legislators and legislative counsel in drafting the necessary legal texts for implementation.
- VI. [Guidelines on the training of ships' cooks](#): The Guidelines are intended to provide supplementary practical information and guidance to flag States that can be reflected in their national laws and other measures to implement Regulation 3.2 and the Code of the MLC, 2006. The Guidelines may also be useful to labour-supplying States that have specialized training schools for ships' cooks.
- VII. [Handbook: Guidance on implementing the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 and Social Security for Seafarers](#): This Handbook is intended to assist countries in implementing their responsibilities under MLC, 2006 regarding social security for seafarers. It is intended to provide the necessary background on the subject as well as practical information and guidance to government administrations concerned with implementing the MLC, 2006 in their country and to social partners when assisting in doing so.
- VIII. [Guidelines on the medical examinations of seafarers](#): These Guidelines, jointly developed by ILO and IMO, assist medical practitioners, shipowners, seafarers' representatives, seafarers and other relevant persons with the conduct of medical fitness examinations of serving seafarers and seafarer candidates.
- IX. [Guidelines on how to deal with seafarer abandonment cases](#): These Guidelines, jointly developed by ILO and IMO, are addressed to all States, primarily port States, flag States and States of which seafarers are nationals or resident or otherwise domiciled in their territory. They are intended to be a reference tool of principles that can be reflected in the design and implementation of policies, strategies, programmes, legislation, administrative measures and social dialogue mechanisms on the resolution of cases of abandonment of seafarers.
- 5.1.1.2 [Guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers detained in connection with alleged crimes: These](#) Guidelines clarify the responsibilities of port or coastal States under MLC Guideline B4.4.6(2), stressing the need to: (i) adequate measures are taken to preserve the human rights of seafarers and they are treated in a manner that preserves their dignity at all times; (ii) adequate provisions are in place to provide for the subsistence of each detained seafarer such as suitable accommodation and food, drinking water, clothes and medical care; (iii) there is timely information of and communication with the flag State, the seafarer's country of nationality, the shipowner, and the seafarers' representatives; and (iv) all detained seafarers can communicate with consular officers of the flag State and their country of nationality, residence or domicile; their partner, next of kin and family members; welfare organizations; the shipowner; seafarers' representatives; etc.

- 5.1.1.3 [ILO online training courses](#): The ILO's Maritime Labour Academy at the International Training Centre in Turin, Italy continues to train inspectors, lawyers as well as governments, seafarers', and shipowners' organizations for a harmonious application of the MLC, 2006. The ILO's International Training Centre in Turin, Italy, together with the ILO's Sectoral Policies Department, is organizing several training events in 2025. The ["Reporting on the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006"](#) course took place online from 07 April to 30 May 2025, and provided participants with the knowledge and skills to improve national reporting on the application of the MLC, 2006 in law and practice. The ["Training of Trainers and Maritime Inspectors on the Application of the MLC, 2006"](#) was held from 7 April to 9 May 2025, strengthening national and regional enforcement capacities by training inspectors and trainers on MLC compliance and inspection techniques. [The "Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 and Case Law Symposium" will](#) take place on 24–25 June 2025, offering a platform for legal experts and maritime professionals to analyse developments in comparative case law and share best practices related to the implementation of the Convention. Later in the year, from 10 to 28 November 2025, the ["National Legal Implementation of the MLC, 2006"](#) course will be offered. It will provide in-depth training on how to incorporate the Convention into national legal systems, including ratification, legal frameworks, and supervisory mechanisms. Applications for upcoming events can be submitted through the [ITCILO website](#).
- 5.1.1.4 Furthermore, a multi-year ILO-ITCILO project (2025-27) co-funded and supported by ITF TRUST FUND aims to enhance effective and uniform implementation of the MLC, 2006. The project leverages on three pillars: (i) enhancing the MLC, 2006 compliance and enforcement systems at regional level; (ii) strengthening the institutional capacity of competent national authorities and social dialogue for a proper transposition of the MLC, 2006 in national laws and regulations; (iii) capacity-building to assist countries facing issues in the process of ratification of the MLC, 2006 (e.g. coordination among relevant authorities). The initiative includes both a regional and a national component. The regional approach will cover three regions over the period of three years, starting with the MED MoU and two other regional memoranda, possibly Indian Ocean MoU and Viña del Mar Agreement. The national approach will focus on one country from a list developed by ILO in consultation with ITF ST. Next steps include an international workshop with the participation of the nine regional MoUs during the IMO III Sub-Committee in July; and the development of a common MLC, 2006 check list.

### 5.1.1.5 Consensus building

#### I. Special Tripartite Committee of the MLC, 2006

Article XIII of the MLC, 2006 provides for the establishment of a Special Tripartite Committee (STC) by the ILO's Governing Body. The mandate of this Committee is to keep the working of the MLC, 2006 under continuous review. If difficulties are identified in the working of the Convention, or if the Convention needs to be updated, the Special Tripartite Committee, in accordance with Article XV of the Convention, has the power to adopt amendments to the Code of the MLC, 2006. The Committee also plays an important consultative role under Article VII for countries that do not have shipowners' or seafarers' organizations to consult when implementing the MLC, 2006.

In 2022, the Fourth Meeting of the STC adopted [eight amendments](#) to the Code of the MLC, 2006, drawing from lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim of improving the living and working conditions of the world's seafarers. The amendments were approved during the 110th Session, June 2022 of the International Labour Conference. They entered into force on 23 December 2024. The amendments ensure that:

- ✓ Seafarers have appropriately sized personal protective equipment, in particular to suit the increasing number of women seafarers;
- ✓ Good quality drinking water is available free of charge for seafarers;
- ✓ States further facilitate the prompt repatriation of abandoned seafarers;

- ✓ States provide medical care for seafarers in need of immediate assistance and facilitate the repatriation of the remains of seafarers who have died on board;
- ✓ Seafarers are provided with appropriate social connectivity by shipowners and States provide internet access in their ports;
- ✓ Seafarers are informed of their rights relating to the obligation of recruitment and placement services to compensate seafarers for monetary losses; and
- ✓ All deaths of seafarers are recorded and reported annually to the ILO and the relevant data is published.

In addition, the 2022 STC adopted four resolutions:

(i) [The Resolution on Harassment and Bullying, including Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment, in the Maritime Sector](#) called on the Governing Body to take note of the request of the IMO Maritime Safety Committee, and to include the topic of harassment and bullying, including sexual assault and sexual harassment in the maritime sector as an item to be considered, at the earliest opportunity, by the Joint ILO-IMO Tripartite Working Group to Identify and Address Seafarers' Issues and the Human Element, with the objective of ensuring a safe and inclusive workplace for seafarers; (ii) [The Resolution on contractual redress for seafarers](#) calls upon States to ensure that all seafarers have adequate means of contractual redress against the shipowner and calls upon Flag States to ensure that shipowners are in compliance with Standard A2.1 of the MLC, 2006 before issuing to their ships a Maritime Labour Certificate, and in any intermediate inspections; (iii) [The Resolution on financial security](#) calls for the establishment of a working group of the STC, based on past practice, to discuss the financial security system required under Standard A2.5.2 of the MLC, 2006 and make recommendations to the STC on potential improvements that would make the system more effective and sustainable and ensure a greater degree of protection and assistance for abandoned seafarers. In 2025, the International Labour Office received sixteen proposals to amend the Code of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), in accordance with Article XV. These proposals were submitted for discussion at the fifth meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee (STC5) and addressed a range of critical issues, , including violence and harassment, the recognition of seafarers as key workers, shore leave, repatriation, the fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident or when detained in connection with alleged crimes, and medical training.

Following deliberations, seven amendments were adopted and subsequently approved during the 113th Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2025. These amendments are scheduled to enter into force in December 2027. They will ensure that:

- ✓ Seafarers are protected against violence and harassment on board;
- ✓ Seafarers are designated and recognized as key workers;
- ✓ The rights of seafarers are strengthened with respect to shore leave, for the benefit of their health and wellbeing;
- ✓ The movement of seafarers is facilitated for the purpose of repatriation;
- ✓ States cooperate and take due account of the IMO/ILO Guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers in the event of a maritime accident and the recently adopted IMO/ILO Guidelines on the fair treatment of seafarers detained in connection with alleged crimes;
- ✓ Ships carry the most up-to-date medical information and guidance on board, to be available for the person responsible for medical care on board.

The amendments in relation to the maximum period of service on board and hours of rest have not achieved consensus.

In addition, the 2025 STC adopted four resolutions: (i) [a resolution extending the mandate of the Joint ILO/IMO Tripartite Working Group \(JTWG\)](#) to allow for further technical review, particularly in connection with the final report of the IMO Task Force on the Joint Database on Abandonment of Seafarers. The resolution also allows the Officers of the STC to respond to requests from IMO bodies between sessions and to propose additional JTWG meetings where appropriate (ii) [a resolution calling for the JTWG to examine the adequacy of current provisions on hours of work and rest](#), including a review of relevant standards under the MLC, 2006, and the STCW Convention. The resolution also calls for the development of practical guidance on implementing and monitoring compliance with these regulations, with a view to submitting recommendations to the ILO Governing Body and the IMO Maritime Safety Committee. (iii) [a](#)

[resolution urging early implementation of the new guideline recognizing seafarers as key workers](#). It urged States to take appropriate measures to facilitate the safe movement of seafarers in connection with their employment, including access to shore leave, repatriation, crew changes, and shore-based medical care. and (iv) [a resolution recommending that the IMO consider aligning Convention on the Facilitation of International Marine Traffic, 1965, as amended, \(FAL Convention\) with the new MLC,2006 provisions on shore leave](#).

The next STC meeting will take place from 3-7 April 2028.

## **II. Subcommittee on Wages of Seafarers of the Joint Maritime Commission**

In 2025, the [JMC Subcommittee agreed to raise the minimum basic wage for an able seafarer](#) to US\$690 as of 1 January 2026, US\$704 as of 1 January 2027, and US\$715 as of 1 January 2028. The Subcommittee also agreed that the figure of US\$707 as of 1 January 2025 should be used as the basis for recalculation purposes and for discussion at the next meeting of the Subcommittee. The next meeting is expected to take place 10-11 April 2028.

## **III. The Joint ILO-IMO Tripartite Working Group**

The [First meeting of the Joint ILO-IMO Tripartite Working Group to Identify and Address Seafarers' Issues and the Human Element \(JTWG\)](#) took place at the ILO in December 2022, which discussed and adopted [Guidelines on how to deal with seafarer abandonment cases](#).

The [Second Meeting of the JTWG](#) was held at the IMO Headquarters in London, United Kingdom, from 27 to 29 February 2024, and was prompted by the resolution adopted by the Fourth Meeting of the STC in 2022. The meeting resulted in several key [Recommendations](#), aimed at protecting seafarers from violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault. These include the call for submission of proposals for amendments to the ILO Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006), in line with the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), new IMO mandatory training for seafarers in this regard, additional IMO guidance for shipowners, and the launching a joint international awareness campaign to combat violence and harassment.

[The third meeting of the JTWG](#) took place in Geneva from 26 to 28 November 2024 and resulted in the adoption of [Guidelines on fair treatment of seafarers detained in connection with alleged crimes](#). The Guidelines outline, inter alia, the responsibilities of the port or coastal State in which a seafarer is detained, and further elaborate upon Guideline B4.4.6, paragraph 2, of the MLC, 2006. The Guidelines recommend in particular that the port or coastal State should ensure that: (i) adequate measures are taken to preserve the human rights of seafarers and they are treated in a manner that preserves their dignity at all times; (ii) adequate provisions are in place to provide for the subsistence of each detained seafarer such as suitable accommodation and food, drinking water, clothes and medical care; (iii) there is timely information of and communication with the flag State, the seafarer's country of nationality, the shipowner, and the seafarers' representatives; and (iv) all detained seafarers can communicate with consular officers of the flag State and their country of nationality, residence or domicile; their partner, next of kin and family members; welfare organizations; the shipowner; seafarers' representatives; etc.

### ***ILO-IMO Database on reported incidents of abandonment of seafarers***

The abandoned seafarers' database was established as a result of the meeting of the 2002 Joint IMO/ILO Ad Hoc Expert Working Group on Liability and Compensation regarding Claims for Death, Personal Injury and Abandonment of Seafarers, which expressed the need for a joint database. This database contains a regularly updated list of vessels that have been reported to the ILO as abandoned in various ports of the world by Governments or appropriate seafarers' and shipowners' organizations. The purpose of the database is to monitor the problem of abandoned seafarers in a transparent and informative manner.

The database includes all reported cases from 1 January 2004. In recent years, there has been a relative increase in the number of reported cases, although the number of resolved cases remains comparatively low. From 2011 to 2016, the number of cases per year ranged from 12 to 19. However, since 2017, the cases reported has increased drastically. The numbers for the years 2017, 2018, and 2019 were 55, 44, and 40



respectively. Although a direct linkage is unclear, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic there was another, alarming spike in cases.

In 2020, the total number of reported cases was 85. In 2021, the total number of reported cases increased to 95. In 2022, the number of new reported cases rose to 119. In 2023, there were 132 new reported cases. In 2024, 312 cases. In 2025, as of June 10, the total number of new reported cases has reached 159.

The ILO-IMO JTWG discussed the database at its first meeting in December 2022 and [proposed](#) the review of the joint ILO/IMO database of abandonment of seafarers. The IMO Legal Committee, at its 111th session in March 2024, discussed the establishment of a new task force to update the ILO/IMO database on seafarer abandonment. It was acknowledged that the current database requires modernization to improve efficiency, accuracy, and case management. Proposed tasks for the new task force included reviewing and updating operational procedures, ensuring accurate case recording, developing a more advanced electronic system, and creating a framework for standardized annual reports.

The inaugural meeting of the Task Force was held virtually on 21 February 2025 and included presentations by the IMO and ILO Secretariats on the database's background and recent technical upgrades, such as migration to an Oracle-based system, improved usability, automated processes, and enhanced data security. Members discussed concerns and suggestions related to data accuracy, insurer tracking, the definition of abandonment, and funding. A revised workplan was agreed upon, outlining multiple rounds of contributions and reviews between February and December 2025, with the final Task Force report scheduled for submission to the IMO by 19 December 2025 for consideration at LEG 113.

The IMO Council, at its 132nd session, approved the extension of the Joint ILO/IMO Tripartite Working Group (JTWG) and endorsed the Legal Committee's request to convene a JTWG meeting for final review and consideration of the Task Force's report. This matter was considered at the fifth meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee in April 2025, which adopted a resolution recommending the extension of the JTWG's mandate, inviting coordination with the IMO to convene the necessary meetings, and proposing amendments to the JTWG's Terms of Reference to allow for additional meetings and enhanced cooperation between the ILO and IMO. This matter will be considered by ILO Governing Body.

*The database can be found at:* <https://wwwex.ilo.org/dyn/r/abandonment/seafarers/home>. The 3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) in Nice (June 9 to 13, 2025) was hosted by France and Costa Rica as a pivotal global forum to advance SDG 14, fostering stronger multilateral cooperation, financing, and science for ocean sustainability, and ensuring fair, safe, and sustainable labour and environmental practices across the ocean economy. In shipping, the ILO promoted wider ratification and better implementation of the MLC, 2006 and drew attention to the importance of seafarers' human rights and a just transition in the context of decarbonization and digitalization.

### **5.1.2 Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003, as amended (No. 185)**

The Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003, as amended (No. 185) guarantees the rights of seafarers to temporarily enter a country for the purpose of shore leave, transfer or transit. The Convention was adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2003 and amended by the same body in 2016. The latest amendments entered into force on 8 June 2017 and are aimed at aligning the technical requirements of the Convention with the latest standards adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) regarding the technology for seafarers' identity documents. It is expected that the issuance of the new seafarers' identity document, with technology similar to the one currently in use in electronic passports, will strongly contribute to facilitating seafarers' access to shore leave, transfer and transit, whilst enhancing security in ports through the use of an internationally recognized document.

## 5.2 Fishing

### 5.2.1 Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) and Work in Fishing Recommendation, 2007 (No. 199)

The fisheries sector makes vital contributions to global food security and supports the livelihoods of millions of people worldwide. Seafood is a primary source of protein globally, especially in developing countries. Global fisheries are a limited and shared resource, the increasing global demand on these resources threatens sustainability and global food security. There is a need to promote sustainable fisheries to tackle over exploitation of precious resources and fighting IUU fishing.

In 2022, an estimated 61.8 million<sup>5</sup> people were employed in the primary production sector, mostly in small-scale operations. Of these, 33.6,<sup>6</sup>million are employed in fisheries and about 22.1<sup>7</sup> million people



were employed in aquaculture, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Additionally, sex-disaggregated data indicate that 24 percent of fishers and fish farmers were women compared with 62 percent in the post-harvest sector<sup>8</sup>. However, gender inequalities remain, including, difference in wages, insufficient recognition of women's contribution to the sector and gender-based violence.

The Convention No. 188, adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2007 revises and updates several earlier ILO fishing Conventions. <sup>9</sup>Video I. [Decent Work for Fishers](#) (c) ILO

The objective of Convention No. 188 is to ensure that fishers have decent conditions of work on board fishing vessels with regard to minimum requirements for work on board, conditions of service, accommodation and food, occupational safety and health, medical care and social security. It sets out binding requirements to address the main issues concerning work on board fishing vessels, including occupational safety and health and medical care at sea and ashore, rest periods, written work agreements, and social security protection at the same level as shore workers. It provides for regulation that will help prevent unacceptable forms of work and open effective enforcement mechanisms upholding the ILO's commitment to ensuring decent working conditions for all fishers in the sector.

The widespread ratification and enforcement of Convention No 188 is key to ensuring that there is effective protection for all the people who working the sector. It is also key to addressing global concerns such as forced labour, human trafficking, and the exploitation of migrant fishers. States that ratify and give effect to the Convention commit to exercising control over fishing vessels, through inspection, reporting, monitoring, complaint procedures, penalties, and corrective measures, and may then also inspect foreign fishing vessels visiting their ports and take appropriate action.

Convention No. 188 came into force on 16 November 2017. As of 13 June 2025, 24 countries have ratified the Convention, with Belgium and Côte d'Ivoire being the most recent countries ratifying it. The non-binding [Work in Fishing Recommendation, 2007 \(No. 199\)](#) provides guidance on how to implement the Convention.

<sup>5</sup> FAO. 2024. *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2024*. Rome. p. xviii. Available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/06690fd0-d133-424c-9673-1849e414543d>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>7</sup> Idem.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.xviii.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. xxii.

Work on possible ratification and effective implementation of C.188 is underway in: Ecuador, Iceland, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Maldives, Mozambique, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

The ILO has progressed in knowledge development, consensus building, and development cooperation related to the Convention No. 188 and Recommendation No. 199. With a view to promote the ratification and implementation of the Convention, the ILO has been working directly with ILO member States, as well as through ILO projects, to assist countries to undertake gap analyses and validation workshops on Convention No. 188.

### 5.2.1.1 Knowledge Development

- I. [Guidelines on flag State inspection of working and living conditions on board fishing vessels:](#) The Guidelines aim to assist States in effectively exercising their jurisdiction and control over vessels that fly their flag by establishing a system for ensuring compliance with national laws, regulations and other measures through which Convention No. 188 is implemented. Convention No. 188 requires States to have, as appropriate, inspections, reporting, monitoring, complaint procedures, appropriate penalties and corrective measures, in accordance with national laws or regulations. The Guidelines are intended to provide flag States with supplementary practical information and guidance that can be adapted to reflect national laws and other measures through which Convention No. 188 is implemented. They may be used by any government that finds them helpful.
- II. [Guidelines for port State control officers carrying out inspections under the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 \(No. 188\):](#) The Guidelines are intended to provide supplementary practical information and guidance to port State administrations that can be adapted to reflect national practices and policies and other applicable international arrangements in force governing port State control inspections of fishing vessels. The Guidelines should be regarded as complementary to the national measures taken by administrations of flag States in their countries and abroad. They are intended to provide assistance to port State administrations in securing compliance with Convention No. 188.
- III. [Frequently Asked Questions: Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 \(No. 188\):](#) The FAQ were developed as part of the Action Plan (2011-2016) to improve the living and working conditions of fishers through the widespread ratification and effective implementation of Convention No. 188. This tool is designed to promote a greater understanding of the Convention amongst ILO constituents, particularly those from the fishing sector. The topics addressed include the scope of its application, the flexibility mechanisms for its implementation, and explanations about the advantages of the Convention for fishers, fishing vessels owners, and ILO member States.
- IV. [Guideline to undertake a comparative analysis of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 \(No. 188\) and national laws, regulations, or other measures:](#) These guidelines propose an approach a government may take to determine the extent to which its laws and regulations would need to be adjusted or complemented to meet the requirements of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188). Undertaking a comparative or “gap” analysis is the first step towards the ratification of the Convention. The analysis involves a detailed legal analysis of national laws, regulations or other measures which are intended to give effect to the provisions of the Convention, and careful examination to determine where changes are needed to amend or otherwise adjust national laws or regulations.
- V. [The flexibility clauses of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 \(No. 188\):](#) This sectoral working paper discusses the various types of flexibility clauses found in the Work in Fishing convention, 2007 (No. 188), with a view to assisting those considering making use of these clauses when ratifying and implementing the Convention, to adapt the application of C188 to national circumstances.
- VI. [Handbook for improving living conditions on board fishing vessels:](#) The objective of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) is to ensure that fishers have decent working and living conditions on board fishing vessels. The Handbook has been developed to assist competent

authorities and the representative organizations of employers and workers in the fishing sector gain a better understanding of Convention No. 188 and Recommendation No. 199. The stimulation of national tripartite discussion will encourage States to take concrete steps towards the implementation and ratification of the Convention.

- VII. [ILO training package on inspection of labour conditions on board fishing vessels](#): The training package responds to the needs for training material while being consistent with the requirements of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), to the “Guidelines on flag State inspection of working and living conditions on board fishing vessels” and to the “Guidelines for port State control officers carrying out inspections under the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188)”. It further draws upon the wealth of practical experiences on labour inspection in the fishing sector gained in recent years from ILO’s constituents and projects. In particular, it seeks to promote cooperation and coordination among the many authorities that may have a role in the inspection of living and working conditions on fishing vessels, with the aim of ensuring decent work for all fishers.
- VIII. [Towards freedom at sea: Handbook for the detection of forced labour in commercial fishing](#): The Handbook is aimed at both State authorities with oversight over different aspects of the commercial fishing industry and at non-state actors directly engaged with fishers or otherwise concerned with labour and human rights in fishing. Although parts of the Handbook are of relevance to artisanal fishing, its principal focus is on the detection of forced labour in the context of industrial fishing activities, including distant water fishing.
- IX. [ILO/IMO Guidelines on the medical examination of fishers](#): The Guidelines, jointly developed by ILO and IMO, identify the main features of a framework for medical examinations and the issue of medical certificates to fishers, provide information to competent authorities to assist with the framing of national regulations that will be compatible with Convention No. 188 and the 1995 STCW-F Convention, and provide information to medical practitioners carrying out fishers’ medical examinations. The Guidelines may be used directly or may form the basis for national guidelines.
- X. [ILO online training courses](#): The ILO’s International Training Centre in Turin, Italy, together with the ILO’s Sectoral Policies Department, is organizing two online training courses in 2025. The ["Training of Inspectors of Labour Conditions on Board Fishing Vessels"](#) will be held online from 23 June to 11 July 2025 and will equip inspectors with the knowledge and tools to promote and ensure decent working conditions on board fishing vessels. The ["Development and Management of Inspection Systems of Labour Conditions on Board Fishing Vessels"](#) course will take place from 13 October to 14 November 2025, aiming to strengthen the capacity of all parties involved in the sector to promote decent working conditions through effective and coordinated inspection systems. Additionally, the ["Detecting Forced Labour in Commercial Fishing"](#) course, a free Massive Open Online Course (MOOC), that started on 3 March 2025 and provides guidance and tools to detect forced labour situations in industrial fishing activities, including distant water fishing.

### 5.2.1.2 Consensus Building

#### ***I. The Joint FAO/ILO/IMO Ad Hoc Working Group on Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing and Related Matters***

Since 2019, the ILO is a full member of the Joint FAO/ILO/IMO Ad Hoc Working Group on IUU Fishing and Related Matters (JWG)

The Fifth Session of the [FAO/ILO/IMO Joint Working Group on IUU Fishing and other related matters](#) (JWG 5) was held from 8 to 12 January 2024 in Geneva. Representatives from the ILO, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) gathered to discuss and address key issues in the global fishing industry.

The JWG5 adopted [Recommendations](#) which, inter alia included: urging members to accede to conventions such as the PSMA, CTA, STCW-F, MARPOL, and Convention No. 188 to promote safe, sustainable fisheries and decent working conditions. Enhanced coordination and joint activities among FAO, ILO, and IMO were also emphasized, along with the development of guidance documents to improve information exchange and implementation of international instruments. The importance of enhancing Port State Control (PSC) of fishing vessels was also highlighted. The JWG 5 recommended FAO, ILO and IMO to promote, facilitate and support the initiatives relating to PSC regimes' plan to initiate or strengthen inspection for fishing vessels and the adoption of a policy for the inspection of fishing vessels, in particular through relevant technical support and capacity building projects. The group recommended a study on transshipment risks and measures to mitigate labour, environmental, and safety risks. Members were encouraged to ratify the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies and promote interagency cooperation to align national legal frameworks with international standards. Addressing forced and child labour in fishing and developing a global strategy for abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear (ALDFG) were also recommended. The meeting called for ongoing cooperation among FAO, ILO, and IMO members to strengthen frameworks, promote sustainable practices, and ensure the welfare and safety of fishers globally. As a follow-up to the JWG5 recommendations, a study will be undertaken on fishing vessel tracking systems including their potential to address forced labour; and four expert meetings will take place concerning beneficial ownership, casualties' related data involving fishing vessels, fisheries observers, and guidance for national fisheries agencies to contribute to implementing relevant ILO and IMO instruments.

## **II. *Joint ILO-IMO meeting to adopt Guidelines for the Medical Examination of Fishers/Fishing Vessel Personnel***

The [Joint ILO-IMO meeting to adopt Guidelines for the Medical Examination of Fishers/Fishing Vessel Personnel](#) was held in Geneva from 12 to 16 February 2024 and adopted [Guidelines on the medical examination of fishers](#).

## **III. *Fair Labour Market Services for Migrant Fishers in the Fishing Sector (Including Data and Statistics)***

In response to the persistent decent work deficits affecting migrant fishers, including human trafficking and forced labour, a [Meeting of experts to adopt guidelines for fair labour market services for migrant fishers in the fishing sector](#) is scheduled to take place from 27 to 31 October 2025 in Geneva. The draft guidelines may include guidance for all relevant stakeholders in terms of recruitment processes, work agreements, complaint procedures, enforcement measures and other essential aspects aimed at ensuring fair treatment, safeguarding the rights of migrant fishers and supporting employers to recruit and retain a suitable skilled workforce.

### **5.1.1.1. Development Cooperation & Regional Coordination**

The ILO is collaborating with other organizations to improve working conditions on fishing vessels in the Western Pacific. There is increased interest by Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (RFMOs) and Regional Fisheries Advisory Bodies (RFABs) in labour conditions, and the ILO is engaging with several of these organizations, including FCWC, ICCAT, and WCPFC

The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) adopted on 3 December 2024 a binding Conservation and Management Measure for Crew Labour Standards (CMM 2024-04), which draws on many provisions of C188.

The Eighth IMO Workshop for PSC MoU/Agreement Secretaries, Database Managers and Chairpersons in 2023 recommended PSC regimes to adopt a policy for inspection of fishing vessels as early as possible and in their preparation of inspection for fishing to define applicable conventions/instruments for the inspection of fishing vessels, including the ILO Work in Fishing Convention, 2007; and (ii) those PSC regimes, which had started their plan to initiate inspection for fishing vessels, to share their experience on methodologies, roadmap, development of pilot PSCO training schemes and establishment of the inspection database in support of the development of a global approach for inspection of fishing vessels.



The ILO continued to provide technical support to the IOTC-Indian Ocean MOU collaboration programme endorsed by JWG 4. This programme seeks to explore synergies between the distinct inspection regimes (Port State Control and Port State Measures) and aims to improve coordination and efficiency in implementing respective fishing vessel inspection instruments (including PSMA, CTA, and C.188), facilitating efforts by FAO, ILO, and IMO. JWG 5 recommended that FAO, ILO, and IMO promote and facilitate the development of similar initiatives in other regions, akin to the pilot project involving the IOMoU and IOTC.

The outcomes of Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3) are key for the fishing sector, where enhanced governance, Port State Control (PSC), and more effective measures against Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing are urgently needed to protect both marine resources and fishers' labour rights. The ILO actively advocated for the wider ratification and implementation of the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), which establishes minimum universal standards to improve working and living conditions for fishers worldwide. Ensuring compliance with C188 is essential to preventing and detecting forced labour and human trafficking as well as tackling exploitative working conditions in the fishing sector. At UNOC3, the ILO, in collaboration with the Governments of France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, officially launched a new multi-partner campaign to promote the ratification and effective implementation of Convention No. 188 from 2025 through 2027. Co-led with the Governments of France and the United Kingdom, and supported by the European Commission, the campaign aims to turn commitment into action by raising awareness among governments and social partners about the benefits of C188; providing technical support, including legal and institutional guidance, and inspector training; and amplifying fishers' voices, ensuring their organizations are part of decision-making processes. It also issues an open call for governments, regional bodies, and other partners to join the initiative and contribute to its objectives.

Several ILO projects continued to gain experience in fishing vessel inspection, owing to projects in Namibia; Southeast Asia; Ghana & Indonesia & South Africa; and Peru & Ecuador, in particular:

#### **I. Ship to Shore Rights Project South East Asia**



The new EU-financed project entitled "Ship to Shore Rights South-East Asia: Safe migration for decent work in the blue economy" (Duration: 1 January 2025 - 31 December 2028) aims to promote safe labour migration and decent work for a sustainable fish and seafood supply chain, including primary production (capture fishers and aquaculture) and post-harvest processing in South-East Asia.

The blue economy is an important source of employment in South-East Asia. In 2020, Asia was home to more than 19 million fish farmers and 30 million fishers and accounted for 84% of all people employed in the fisheries and aquaculture sector worldwide.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities, and in some cases, led to regression in working conditions in the blue economy. Fisheries and aquaculture production relying on export markets were particularly impacted. Domestic fresh fish and seafood supply was also severely impacted by the closure of the food service sector. The negative impacts of the pandemic were significantly worsened for migrant fishers due to substantial gaps in their realization of fundamental principles and rights at work and access to social protection. In the post-pandemic period, new contextual challenges and opportunities have emerged, highlighting the need for sustained intervention and support on labour standards and migration governance in the blue economy.

The project builds on the achievements of the Ship to Shore Rights Thailand (2016-2020); the South East Asia regional programme on labour migration on the fishing sector (Ship to Shore Rights South East Asia), and



the extensive experience of ILO, IOM and FAO in the region. The new programme will consolidate and further advance positive achievements by deepening engagement with Cambodia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand on sectoral issues; include aquaculture to ensure a comprehensive coverage of fish and seafood production in the blue economy; and expand to Malaysia, a top marine capture fisheries producer country and a country of destination for migrant workers. Collaboration with ASEAN will also contribute in

broader terms to strengthening labour migration governance in South-East Asia.

Programme objectives:

- To increase ASEAN and sub-regional connectivity and cooperation on safe labour migration and decent work in the fish and seafood supply chain.
- To support national authorities to design, implement and enforce stronger legal and policy frameworks on labour migration, labour protection, and sustainable fisheries.
- To promote a culture of accountability, sustainable corporate practices, due diligence, and responsible fishing practices among employers and enterprises, including promoting promising practices and exchanging knowledge.
- To promote social dialogue, increase freedom of association and collective bargaining, and empower migrant workers, their families and communities to protect and assert their human and labour rights.

Implementing countries are Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Thailand.

## II. [The 8.7 Accelerator Lab programme](#)

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab was an initiative of the ILO Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work Branch (FUNDAMENTALS). It was created to accelerate progress towards the eradication of forced labour and the elimination of child labour by optimizing the effectiveness of development cooperation interventions by embracing six acceleration factors that address root causes, prioritize vulnerable populations, secure political support and sustainable funding, and leverage innovation and knowledge creation and exchange. Implementation and scaling up of successful interventions are done at the national, regional and global levels, with an emphasis on empowering governments, workers, employers and civil society to take actions that prevent and address forced labour and child labour issues.

## 8.7 Accelerator Lab

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab has targeted interventions at the national, regional, and global levels, leveraging the use of strategic entry points through an integrated and sectoral approach.

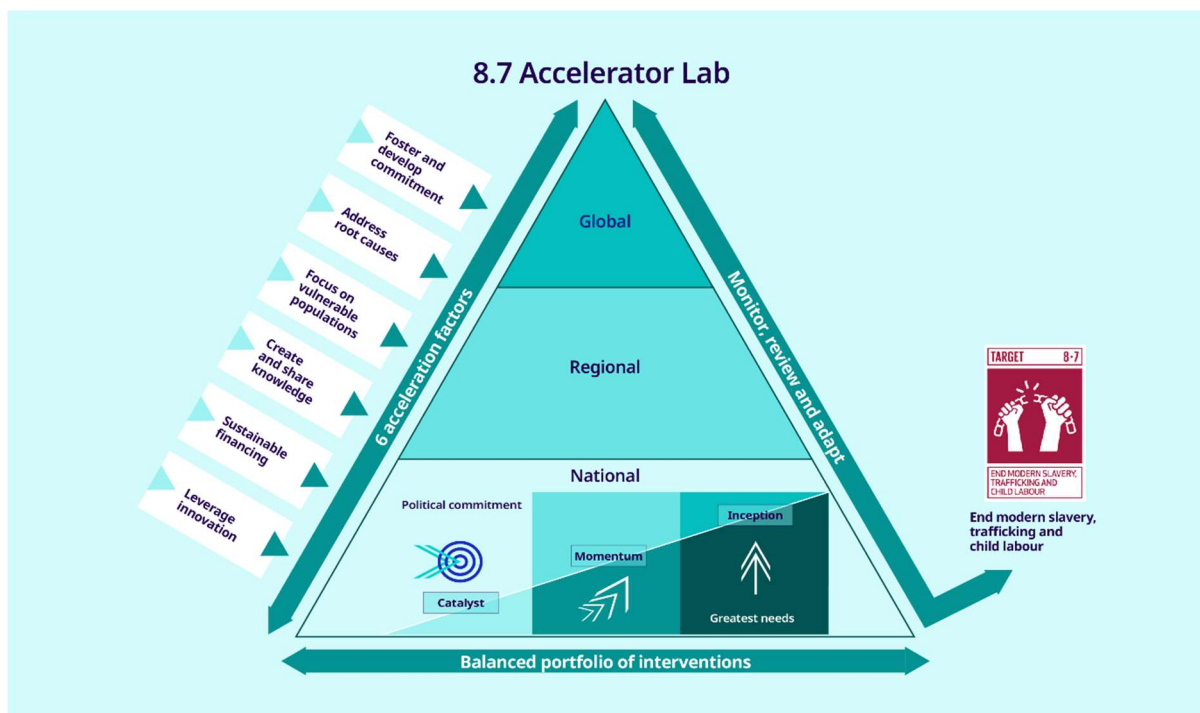


Figure X. 8.7 Accelerator Lab Strategy. (c) ILO

The 8.7 Accelerator Lab has implemented an innovative approach to promote decent work in the fishing sector in Ghana, Indonesia, and South Africa, as well as at regional and global levels as follows.

**At the national level, among other things, the ILO has:**

- Supported improvements of the legal and regulatory frameworks to develop appropriate labour standards for fishing vessels by:
- Supported the ratification and implementation of the ILO Work in Fishing Convention and other fundamental Conventions;
- Established Tripartite Committees for the improvement of living and working conditions in the fishing sector;
- Developed National Coordination Mechanisms between labour, maritime and fisheries inspectors to improve enforcement of labour standards on board fishing vessels; and
- Built the capacity of fisheries, maritime and labour inspectors to detect forced labour in fishing.
- Strengthened the role of social partners and civil society in the eradication of forced labour in the fishing sector by:
- Established Trade Union Networks to harmonize and improve protection efforts to organize fishers, protect their freedom of association and promote collective bargaining in the sector;
- Established Employers' Labs that bring together owners, recruiters, and buyers to facilitate improving working conditions at the national level; and
- Initiated / strengthen the capacity of constituents and partners in the provision of quality services such as pre-departure trainings and advice and complaints desk for workers such as through Migrant Resource Centres and Fishers' Welfare Centres.

*“We’re optimistic about the progress we can make with the support of the ILO to improve working conditions along the fisheries value chain.”*

-- Mr Séraphin Dedi, Secretary-General of the FCWC

**At the regional level, the ILO has:**

- Supported the incorporation of labour rights into the agendas and mandates of several Regional Fishery Bodies and Regional Fisheries Management Organizations;
- Supported the development of legally binding and non-binding instruments such as protocols and resolutions on labour standards for regional fisheries organizations; and
- Supported the development of a policy statement to advance the promotion of decent work and the elimination of forced labour in the fisheries sector in a regional development community.

**At the global level, the ILO has:**

- Initiated exchange between sending countries of migrant workers and key Port States;
- Incorporated labour rights into global fora on ocean governance such as the UN Ocean Decade Conference, the Our Oceans Conference;
- Supported the development of a handbook on the detection of forced labour in fishing;
- Developed tools for journalists to report on forced labour in fishing;
- Bridged the gap between digital technology actors and ILO constituents; and
- Integrated forced labour issues on fishing into business education.



Video IV. [Cape Town: Training and Pilot Inspection on the Detection of Forced Labour in Fishing](#). (c) ILO

For more information on the work of the ILO in Fisheries in general, see: [Fisheries \(ilo.org\)](https://www.ilo.org/fisheries)

## 5.2.2 Aquaculture

Aquaculture, defined as the cultivation of aquatic organisms in controlled aquatic environments involving interventions in the rearing process to enhance production, is an important source of income and livelihoods for many rural communities, both coastal and inland. The sector has grown dramatically over the past five decades and now accounts for half of the world’s fish food supply.

The aquaculture sector provides an important source of employment, income and livelihoods, especially in rural communities, both coastal and inland, for developing countries. Globally, aquaculture today provides direct work for an estimated 22 million people, accounting for approximately one third of all workers engaged in fisheries and aquaculture. Women constitute a significant proportion of the aquaculture workforce, especially in processing. While no up-to-date data on indirect employment generated through aquaculture-related activities is available, it is estimated that for each person employed in primary production in aquaculture and capture fisheries, about three to four related jobs may be involved in secondary activities, including the processing, marketing and service industries.<sup>10</sup>

Despite its growing contribution to employment, rural livelihoods, economic development, food security and nutrition in many countries, aquaculture faces significant decent work deficits, alongside other important social and environmental challenges. These may include: the prevalence of informality and discrimination; the presence of child and forced labour, primarily in the informal economy; a lack of organization and social dialogue; low and insecure wages and incomes; low levels of skills; low productivity; poor working conditions and occupational safety and health (OSH) practices; limited social protection; and lack of stable and formal contracts.<sup>11</sup> Harnessing aquaculture's potential to effectively contribute to feeding the world's growing population in the decades to come will require concerted efforts to promote sustainable enterprises and decent work for its workforce.

As a follow up to the [Conclusions](#) adopted by the [Technical meeting on the future of work in aquaculture in the context of the rural economy](#) held in Geneva in December 2021, the International Labour Office has been conducting research on existing and emerging occupational safety and health (OSH) risks in the sector with a view to elaborating a Code of Practice on the subject. A meeting of experts to discuss and adopt an ILO Code of Practice on Safety and Health in Aquaculture will be held in December 2025. The ILO organized and participated in expert panels on employment and labour issues in the aquaculture sector at two international conferences. An expert panel on social justice and decent work for all in the aquaculture sector was convened at the International Fishing Industry Safety and Health Conference, co-organized by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Northeast Center for Occupational Health and Safety: Agriculture Forestry and Fishing (NEC) and held at FAO headquarters in January 2024. The ILO shared the results of and future plans for its work on the promotion of decent work in the aquaculture sector with the participants of an International Experts Meeting on Human Rights and Fisheries organized by the Danish Institute for Human Rights in November 2023. The ILO and FAO have been conducting research to update their joint Guidance on addressing child labour in fisheries and aquaculture, first published in 2013, in order to improve the understanding of the nature, scope, causes, contributing factors and consequences of child labour in aquaculture. As part of the revision process, a two-day expert workshop was held in FAO HQ in September 2024. The meeting brought together representatives from governments, employer and worker organizations, NGOs and academia from several countries who shared their experience and good practices in the fight against child labour. The updated guidance is planned to be published in October 2025. Several development cooperation programmes are being implemented in the sector in different regions. One of them is a project aimed at enhancing supply chain resilience and sustainability in the Philippine's shrimp industry, funded by the Government of Japan. In the Latin America and the Caribbean region, ILO tools on starting up a cooperative – Think.Coop and Start.Coop – were adapted to the aquaculture sector and the regional context, in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). A regional Training of Trainers workshop was held, with participants from more than 10 countries. As a follow up to the workshop, the ILO has been working with tripartite constituents and sectoral stakeholders in Chile and Peru to institutionalize the tools and roll out their implementation.

## 5.3 Ports

As the transport sector has become increasingly competitive and global, many developments have taken place in the organization of work in ports which have affected labour and social conditions in the industry.

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<sup>10</sup> FAO *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* report, 2024.

<sup>11</sup> ILO, [The future of work in aquaculture in the context of the rural economy](#), Geneva, 2021; FAO, Scoping study on decent work and employment in fisheries and aquaculture ...; FAO, *The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture* 2024; and ILO studies conducted as part of the EU-ILO-OECD Responsible Supply Chains in Asia programme, report forthcoming.



There are 856 international ports,<sup>12</sup> and over 2,000 ports in total in the world.<sup>13</sup> Port facilities have historically played a pivotal role in seafarer well-being through the provision of welfare services and facilities. These can range from port-based welfare services, including contacts with welfare workers, the use of seafarer canters and port-based facilities, communication with family and friends, shore leave and the provision of spiritual services. The international labour standards in the ports sector are [the Dock Work Convention, 1973 \(No. 137\)](#) and [Dock Work Recommendation, 1973 \(No. 145\)](#) and the [Occupational Safety and Health \(Dock Work\) Convention, 1979 \(No. 152\)](#).

### **Development Cooperation: The [Portworker Development Program](#)**

The ILO is the primary agency responsible within the UN system for the protection of port workers' interests, health and safety. The ILO has accumulated expertise and experience in establishing various international institutional frameworks and labour standards through a series of conventions and tools relevant to the port sector. For this reason, the ILO is uniquely positioned to develop and provide the required training materials for ports, with a proven capability of improving working conditions and productivity of container and bulk port terminals.

The ILO's Portworker Development Programme in Container Terminals (PDP I) has successfully contributed to the goal of creating greater opportunities for port workers to obtain decent work and to ensure their safety, health and welfare. Since its launch in 1989, it has been adopted by more than 70 organizations and major terminals and translated into 9 additional languages. ILO has organized several Training of Trainers (TOT) workshops for supporting the implementation of PDP I in the countries, including two interregional programmes held in ITC/Turin in 2012 and 2013.

Based on the success of PDP I, the ILO launched the Portworker Development Program in Bulk Terminals (PDP II) in 2014. Its main objective was to enable governments and port authorities of developing countries to establish effective and systematic portworker training schemes for port workers in bulk terminals. PDP II covered five major bulk cargoes, namely iron ore, coal, fertilizer, grain and bauxite/alumina. The materials were tested in selected ports in Asia and the first training course was subsequently held in the Republic of Korea. To maximize the effectiveness of the PDP II training programme and ensure its sustainability in the medium and long term, substantial activities to promote the use of PDP II materials need to be put forward by the ILO and interested partners at the global level.

In this context, it is important to organize regular Training of Trainers (TOT) workshops to train PDP II chief instructors and terminal managers from all over the world. In light of the unprecedented pandemic and the resulting strict travel restrictions adopted by almost all countries, two TOT online workshop were conducted in 2021 and 2022, through which 27 trainers successfully completed PDP II. Between 2023 and 2024, a total of 13 trainers from four countries successfully completed the PDP II TOT courses held in Busan, Republic of Korea.

To further consolidate these achievements, and expand their impact, the ILO has scheduled two additional TOT workshops to be held in 2025 and 2026. The 2025 workshop will be delivered online via the ITCILO's E-Campus platform, from 27 October to 28 November. Further details are available at: <https://www.itcilo.org/courses/ilo-portworker-development-programme-pdp-2>.

***PDP I and PDP II materials are available at the ILO webpage upon registration on the site.***



Figure XI. Crane Workers in the harbour of Dar Es Salaam. (c) ILO

<sup>12</sup> World Bank. Data Catalog – International Ports, updated 16 June 2020.

<sup>13</sup> ILO (2002). Dock Work. General Survey of the reports concerning the Dock Work Convention (No. 137) and Recommendation (No. 145), 1973, Report III (Part 1B), International Labour Conference, 90th Session, p. 14; and Sestini, G., Jetic, L. and D. Milliman (1989). Implications of expected climate changes in the Mediterranean region: An overview, United Nations Environmental Programme Regional Seas Reports and Studies No. 103, 1989, p. 13.

## 5.4 Developments Affecting the Shipping, Fishing and Port Sectors

The ILO continues to assure a human-centred and job-rich recovery from the pandemic. Various global shocks and risks are holding back labour market recovery, especially in low- and middle-income countries. There is an unequal jobs gap globally, especially for women. The pandemic has negatively affected the safety and well-being of seafarers and fishers, their ability to join their vessels and return home, and the future of their jobs. In some parts of the world, suppliers had been prevented from boarding ships to give masks, overalls and other personal protective equipment to crews. Seafarers were confined to vessels for months because of restrictions on international travel and measures to contain the virus with ports refusing vessels that had previously docked in areas affected by COVID-19, to dock, impeding on a crew change, preventing such vessels from obtaining essential supplies and denying medical care ashore. Whilst there were huge shifts in the day-to-day life of the world, the need for food supplies, medicine and everyday good remained. With maritime trade shipping over 90 per cent of all goods, it is imperative to have measures in place that ensure the safe and efficient movement of ships and the health of the seafarers who operate them.

### ► Joint Action Group to review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world's transport workers and the global supply chain (JAG-TSC)

The [JAG-TSC](#) was established at a meeting of the Director-Generals of the ILO and the World Health Organization (WHO) with the heads of international transport organizations on 6 December 2021. It held three technical meetings where it discussed ways to minimize adverse impacts on transport workers, their families, global trade and supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time ensuring that public health needs are fully safeguarded, and local communities are protected.

On 24 January 2023, the Principals of the organizations concerned adopted [Recommendations](#), which include actions to be taken by all JAG-TSC Members, by the UN system as a whole, specifically by the UN agencies concerned, through UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams, and by the international transport sector organizations themselves. They also call on Governments to take concrete actions to protect the rights of transport workers during future public health emergencies of international concern (PHEICs), as well as with continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. A [video](#) was prepared to sensitize UNRCs and UNCTs of the importance of maritime shipping and seafarers and obligations of ratifying States under MLC, and to prepare them for future crisis, stressing the importance of an inter-Ministerial approach, including all Ministries and Authorities concerned with the response to PHEICs.

*“...Valuing key workers means ensuring that they receive adequate pay and work in good conditions. Decent work is an objective for all workers but it is particularly critical for key workers, who provide vital necessities and services both in good times and bad.”*

### ► UN Ad hoc inter-agency Task Force on the impact of COVID-19 on seafarers

Based on the 2021 Resolution concerning the implementation and practical application of the MLC, 2006 during the COVID-19 pandemic emanating from the Fourth Meeting (Part I) of the Special Tripartite Committee, the UN Ad hoc inter-agency Task Force on the impact of COVID-19 on seafarers was convened to examine the implementation and practical application of the MLC, 2006 during the pandemic, including its impact on seafarers' fundamental rights and on the shipping industry. The Task Force was comprised of several UN agencies and entities and was co-chaired by ILO and IMO. It has met three times in 2022 and submitted a report to the UN Secretary-General's Deputies and Executive Committee in July 2023, which issued a decision on actions to be advanced. Accordingly, ILO and IMO will work together towards the harmonious implementation of the MLC; efforts will be made to ensure that seafarers are trained on their rights under MLC, training of Port State Control Officers on MLC inspection is improved, and appropriate text is included in the new WHO pandemic instrument to ensure that the situation of seafarers is taken into account during PHEICs; and existing platforms will be used to assist UN Resident Coordinators and UN Country Teams to assist States to raise awareness of obligations of States that are members of the MLC, 2006, including in the context of PHEICs.