

**Input of the International Labour Organization for the background note for the High-Level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of SDG 14, Lisbon 2 – 6 June 2020**

**Introduction: Role of the ILO with respect to seafarers and fishers**

As the only tripartite

commitment to address issues regarding migrant fishers, combatting unacceptable forms of work and human trafficking in the fishing and seafood industry.

### *Status and trends*

The ILO is a member of UN-Oceans, where it has sought to raise awareness of labour issues in the maritime sector, and has developed tools that address these matters across the UN system. This included a proposal, with respect to indicator 14.c.1, to include key international labour standards for seafarers and fishers on the list of instruments in which States would have to report on with regard to their ratification or accession and implementation through legal frameworks. 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 are respected.

### *Challenges and opportunities*

The fishing (or fisheries) sector is facing pressures including climate change; overfishing; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and the growing scale of marine pollution in the form of litter and debris. As requested by the [Conclusions](#) on the promotion of decent work for migrant fishers adopted at the 2017 [Tripartite Meeting on issues relating to Migrant Fishers](#), a promotional campaign for the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) has been launched. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the Convention to encourage more ratifications and effective implementation. Activities include raising awareness of the Convention and its supplementing Recommendation; building capacity of constituents through development cooperation; the development and dissemination of tools and training materials; providing technical assistance to member States; and supporting the follow up to the resolution and conclusions of the Tripartite meeting.

A number of ILO member States have taken regulations and other measures in order to discern where changes are needed to bring them in line with the minimum standards set out in Convention No. 188. A gap analysis has been conducted on Thai national laws, regulations and other measures concerning conditions of work on board fishing vessels. This was prepared by an inter-disciplinary team of the ILO, including staff from the European Union-funded [Ship to Shore Rights Project](#) following extensive consultations conducted by the ILO in partnership with the Ministry of Labour. The

by-section analysis of the gaps between Thai law and the definitions, scope, general principles, and provisions of Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188). This gap analysis contributed to a commitment by the Thai Government and social partners to ensure that workers in the fishing industry have acceptable working and living conditions. This commitment culminated in Thailand ratifying Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188), becoming the first Asian country to do so.

A working paper on bilateral, regional or multilateral agreements concerning migrant fishers is being produced in keeping with the Conclusions adopted by the Tripartite Meeting on Issues tgrv lpi "vq"O ki tcpv"Hkuj gtu"lp"Ugr vgo dgt"4239."ceeqtf lpi "vq"y j lej "vj g"KNQ"uj qwf "öcf xkug" States engaged in bilateral, regional and multilateral agreements concerning migrant fishers, with a view to ensure that such agreements are based on social dialogue and are consistent with tgrgxcpvKNQ"lucpf ctf u'c'pf 'hw'pf co gpvnl' t'p'ek' ngu'c'pf 'tki j w'cv'y qtnö0'Vj g'r cr gt<\*&f' guetldgu" the phenomenon of migration in the fishing sector providing an overview of the relevant regulatory framework; (ii) takes stock of the types of agreements with a bearing on migrant fishers and existing relevant agreements; (iii) highlights certain parameters and trends currently shaping the fishing sector; and (iv) provides topical policy advice on the possible contents of agreements, or provisions therein, aimed at migrant fishers

SDG target 8.7 calls for immediate and effective measures to be taken to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour amongst others. The ILO's [SEA Fisheries Project](#) (Strengthened Coordination to Combat Trafficking in Fisheries in South East Asia) aims to reduce human trafficking in the fishing sector by strengthening coordination and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of existing national and regional level anti-trafficking efforts in South East Asia. On 29 November 2018, representatives from eight countries from Southeast Asia resolved to establish the Southeast Asian Forum to End Trafficking in Persons and Forced Labour in Fisheries (SEA Forum for Fishers) at the Southeast Asian Conference on Regional Coordination and Action concerning Fishers.

[The Global Action Programme against forced labour and trafficking of fishers at sea](#) (GAPfish) is a cross-cutting global programme that will have regional and national impacts to promote

and multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSI). The primary beneficiaries of the project are migrant fishers in small-scale and industrial fisheries, and, indirectly, their dependents and local communities.

In 2019, the various activities surrounding the maritime sector were guided by the overarching theme of gender (notably the 2019 World Maritime Day and 2019 UN World Oceans Day). The ILO's Women at Work Initiative aims to identify and understand why delivering on decent work for women has been slow and what needs to be done towards securing a better future for women at work. The 2019 [Tripartite sectoral meeting on the recruitment and retention of seafarers and the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers](#) addressed, among other things, the specific issues that women face, as an under-represented group among seafarers. Indeed, women account for only two percent of the global seafarer workforce. The meeting adopted conclusions regarding the promotion of equal opportunity and treatment of women seafarers and combatting harassment, bullying and discrimination issues that women seafarers may face prior, during and upon completion of their employment aboard vessels. This meeting is in line with another Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 5: achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation. The outcomes of the Meeting called on the various stakeholders to continue to advance decent working conditions for women seafarers. The outcomes and conclusions of these meeting also call on the ILO to continue and further its work in the promotion of opportunities for women seafarers, through means such as conducting research on women seafarers in the industry, partnering with other organizations, the promotion of its Conventions and further promote diversity and inclusion in the industry.

The third meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee established by the Governing Body in accordance with Article XIII of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006) took place at the ILO in Geneva from 23 to 27 April 2018. The amendments adopted by the third meeting of the STC were approved, on 5th June 2018, by an overwhelming majority of the delegates to the 107th session of the International Labour Conference. The 2018 amendments held captive on or off a ship as a result of acts of piracy or armed robbery against ships. They are expected to enter into force on 26 December 2020. These amendments are the result of amendments to the MLC, 2006, which are aimed at strengthening the protection of seafarers against ships at sea.

Marine pollution in the form of litter and plastics is becoming a matter of global concern with important social and employment implications. UN Environment estimated that such pollution is increasing by 8 million metric tons annually. At such a pace, it is quite likely that the goal of a significant reduction in marine pollution by the year 2025, as reflected in Sustainable Development Goal target 14.1, will not be achieved.

In addressing the problem of marine pollution from litter and plastics, it is important to consider upstream solutions to prevent marine litter as well as working with private sector to reorient production processes based on the circular economy approach, but also downstream solutions through effective waste management and recycling.

In all these areas, the ILO has role to play through its normative body of conventions and recommendations and the engagement of governments and social partners to formulate appropriate responses. In this regard, the ILO participates actively in the UN Environment

will contribute to future coordinated work by the three agencies and lead to greater attention on addressing working conditions, including combatting forced labour, on fishing vessels, in the context of efforts to address IUU fishing.

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ILO, 31 October 2019