



Key Issues

ILO Labour Standards

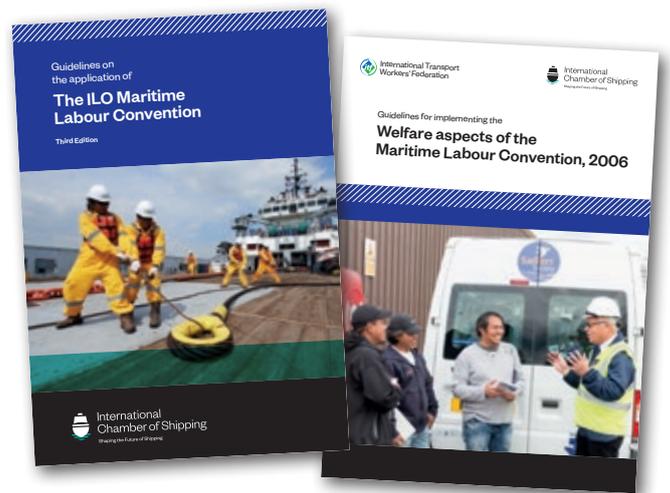
The International Labour Organization (ILO) is celebrating its 100th anniversary during 2019. ICS and its member national shipowner associations have been proud to be associated with its work on seafarers' employment standards from the very beginning, the first special Maritime Labour Conference being held in 1920 and attended by ICS (under the banner of the International Shipping Federation, which fully merged with ICS in 2011).

Shipping is the only industry to enjoy a comprehensive global framework of sector specific employment standards – the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), developed by the ILO via its tripartite process involving governments, trade unions and employers' representatives. More than five years have passed since the MLC's entry into force, and it is now strictly enforced on a global basis and subject to Port State Control inspection. As the representative of maritime employers, ICS was responsible for negotiating the MLC text with governments and seafarers' unions and has a direct interest in ensuring that its provisions are properly implemented, in order to maintain a level playing field for decent working conditions on board merchant ships worldwide.

In May 2019, ICS published a new edition of its Guidelines on the Application of the MLC. This is widely regarded as the comprehensive and definitive guide to MLC compliance for anyone involved with the employment of seafarers, including shipping companies, ship managers and crewing agents.

The revised edition addresses the wide range of MLC provisions including seafarers' contractual arrangements, manning agencies, working hours, health and safety, crew accommodation, catering standards, and seafarers' welfare. It also contains detailed advice on the MLC requirement for ships to maintain a Declaration of Maritime Labour Compliance (DMLC), including linkages to the IMO International Safety Management (ISM) Code, and takes account of the inspection processes and procedures used by PSC authorities since the Convention's entry into force in 2013.

Most importantly the revised edition covers the very latest MLC amendments and ILO guidance adopted since 2013, which ICS again helped to negotiate on behalf of employers, with respect *inter alia* to financial security and repatriation to assist seafarers in potential situations of abandonment, changes to employment agreements to address piracy, training of ships' cooks, implementation of occupational health and safety provisions, and measures to prevent harassment and bullying.



Meanwhile, ICS continues to co-operate with its social partner, the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), to ensure that the MLC is properly implemented. In October 2018, ICS and ITF jointly published Guidelines for Implementing the Welfare Aspects of the MLC. Seafarers can be separated from their families and communities for long periods of time, and often remain on board ships with limited time ashore. They therefore require adequate services at sea and in port where different national and cultural requirements can create challenges. While a number of countries enjoy advanced arrangements for providing seafarers with welfare services and facilities ashore, others have not yet developed welfare organisations to provide such services, either at home or abroad. This joint ICS/ITF publication is therefore intended to assist governments and welfare agencies to draft their own guidelines for implementing the welfare provisions of the MLC. While some countries may already have their own laws and policies in place, they may nevertheless wish to adapt these new Guidelines to complement current practices. ICS and ITF have previously co-operated to produce Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying which can also be accessed from the ICS website.

Meanwhile, routine representational work at ILO continues. In February 2019, ICS co-ordinated its member associations, alongside government and union representatives, at a Sectoral Meeting on Recruitment and Retention of Seafarers and Opportunities for Women. Ms Kathy Metcalf (United States) served as the Shipowner Spokesperson at the meeting.