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MARITIME
ORGANIZATION



IMLI



IMLI Course on Seafarers' Rights

3 to 18 February 2026

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Synopsis

Labour at sea is deemed unique owing to its specific features and the environment in which it takes place. Seafarers, by the nature of their employment, are an isolated international occupational group of workers who face prolonged absence from their homes, resulting in important social and economic issues which more often than not have legal consequences. Unfortunately, since the development of the maritime industry, seafarers' fundamental rights have not always been considered a priority, thereby often not respected by shipowners.

Therefore, it was deemed necessary to adopt international rules to make special provisions for the protection of seafarers' rights and to ensure their effective implementation through the cooperation of the international community. The latest of these efforts is the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 (MLC), as amended. The Convention aims to ensure comprehensive worldwide protection of the rights of seafarers and establish a level playing field for countries and shipowners committed to providing decent working and living conditions for seafarers, protecting them from unfair competition on the part of substandard ships.

The COVID-19 pandemic, alas, contributed to put this group of persons in a more perilous condition. The outbreak caused countries throughout the world to enact partial or entire lockdowns to restrict and or minimize the spread of the virus. Such practices had dire impacts on seafarers. The IMO, joining forces with other concerned organizations like the ILO, the ITF and the ICS, has worked and still working relentlessly to address the humanitarian crisis.

Additionally, with the global development of technology, which has also overtaken the maritime industry, seafarers will be affected by emerging issues such as MASS, digitalization and automation.

Moreover, to tackle pressing environmental challenges like climate change, pollution and plummeting biodiversity, nations and businesses need to transition towards greener, resilient and climate-neutral economies and societies. The IMO Secretariat, along with the ICS, the ITF, the United Nations Global Compact and the ILO came together to launch the Maritime Just Transition Task Force at COP 26 in 2021, which is looking at the maritime skills needed for a just green transition. It is early yet to say conclusively what would be the full impact of these developments on seafarers' wellbeing and sustainability, but there is certainty that seafarers will be impacted.

IMLI has been in the vanguard in raising awareness on the importance of maritime labour law standards. Indeed, the IMLI Course on Seafarers' Rights reiterates the Institute's commitment to the protection of seafarers in line with the international efforts spearheaded by IMO and ILO.

The Course will address many aspects of maritime labour law, including the characteristics of international maritime labour law, the functions of the ILO, IMO, ITF, and other organizations committed to the protection of seafarers' rights, the different international instruments dealing with seafarers, their rights and duties, with particular emphasis on the MLC. The Course will also guide participants to the practical application of the MLC, including its amendments, and the efforts made to ensure that the impact of instability in regions or other global issues on seafarers are curbed. In addition, the Course will include an analysis of the emerging issues in respect of technological developments on seafarers.

Speakers

INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS

Professor Norman A. Martínez Gutiérrez (Director, IMLI)

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

Ms. Beatriz Vacotto (Head of the Maritime Unit, International Labour Standards Department, ILO)

- International Maritime Labour Law (Historical Aspects, Sources of Human Rights Law, Understanding the MLC)

Ms. Ramat Jalloh (Lecturer, IMLI)

Ms. Nour Nohra (ITF Seafarers' Trust Research Associate on Seafarers' Rights, IMLI)

- Seafarers' Rights under the MLC

Mr. Douglas Stevenson (Former Director, Center for Seafarers' Rights at Seamen's Church Institute of New York and New Jersey)

- Fraudulent Ship Registration and its Impact on Seafarers

Ms. Ramat Jalloh (Lecturer, IMLI)

- ITF's Work in Support of Seafarers

Mr. Jonathan Warring (Head of Legal Department, ITF)

- Crew Abandonment- A Stark Reality

Mr. Paul Falzon (ITF Contact General Workers Union - Malta)

- Seafarers and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)

- Challenges for multi-flagged fleets in ensuring regulatory compliance with MLC: The role of maritime administrations

Dr. Iliana Christodoulou-Varotsi (Professor, International Maritime Law)

- Maritime Labour Standards: Challenges for Port States

Professor Laura Carballo Piñeiro (Professor, Dean of the Faculty of International Relations, University of Vigo)

- Seafarers' Work: Challenges and Opportunities in an Era of Emerging Technologies and Green Shipping

Professor Khanssa Lagdami (ITF Seafarers' Trust Associate Professor of Maritime Labour Law & Policy and Lead Member of the Future of Work Program at World Maritime University [WMU])

- Mass and the Human Element

Dr. Murat Sümer (The Nippon Foundation Lecturer in International Maritime Law, IMLI)

- MLC in Practice: Effective Implementation and the Role of the ILO Committee of Experts

Ms. Federica Ninni (Lawyer, International Labour Organization)

TARGET AUDIENCE

The Course is addressed to persons directly involved with maritime labour law issues. It will be particularly beneficial to policy makers and legal drafters, as well as maritime administrations' and port authorities' officers. The Course will also be of benefit to private practitioners who handle seafarers' rights infringements and any other person who advocates for the upholding of seafarers' rights.

The Course will be delivered in a hybrid mode, thus external participants may attend either online or in situ.

Candidates who attend at least 80 per cent of the lectures will be eligible for a Certificate of Attendance.

COMMENCEMENT and Tuition fee

€ 1,000

The Course will commence on 3 February 2026.

To apply, please contact by not later than 30 January 2026, admissions@imli.org

Bearing in mind that eminent personalities from all over the world deliver lectures in the Institute's courses, candidates applying to a course shall be flexible as the dates of delivery may be subject to change. The Institute reserves the right to make changes to the programme.

For more information on the Institute and its programmes and courses visit
<https://imli.org/>

