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## 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)

### Introduction

The transport sector plays a vital, and often insufficiently recognized, role in ensuring the movement of people and goods during public health emergencies of international concern (PHEIC), including through the efficient operation of both domestic and global supply chains.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented these sectors, in particular their mobile workers – seafarers, truckers, railway workers, air crew – with considerable and, at times, unbearable challenges, threatening the sectors' sustainability, as well as the lives and livelihoods of its workers.

Governments were compelled to implement public health and social measures, including international travel-related measures, often in a precautionary manner and in the context of scientific uncertainty, to control and reduce the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the sustained performance of health systems' functions. Some of the most stringent measures implemented by national authorities led to the override of international obligations by States to protect the rights of transport workers, including those concerning their fundamental principles and rights at work and, in particular for seafarers, the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006).

United Nations (UN) bodies and agencies have issued a large range of recommendations, including key legal, policy and technical guidance, as well as joint statements and declarations (listed in the Annex) to address the challenges posed by the pandemic to the transport industry, and have highlighted that additional, country-level concrete means of action are needed to tackle them.

The 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) was established at a meeting of the Director-Generals of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) with the heads of international transport organizations and federations on 6 December 2021. The JAG-TSC discussed serious and urgent challenges faced by transport workers resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, with a view to minimize adverse impacts on transport workers,

their families, global trade and supply chains, while at the same time ensuring that public health needs are fully safeguarded, and local communities are protected.

Additionally, the UN Secretary General's Executive Committee has established a UN inter-agency Task Force on the impact of COVID-19 on seafarers, that has been requested to take into account, as appropriate, the outcomes of the JAG-TSC, and, inter alia, has requested the ILO and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to advise the UN Development Cooperation Office (DCO) and UN Resident Coordinators (UNRCs) on potential targeted and coordinated outreach efforts to better inform national decisionmakers and the general public on the challenges posed by health emergencies to seafarers, including gender-specific threats, shipping and supply chains.

In this regard, the pivotal role of the UNRCs, among others, to ensure interagency coordination and foster whole-of-government and whole-of-society engagement and decision-making at the country level supports of the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goals 3 (good health and wellbeing), 8 (decent work and economic growth) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

There is a need to improve the means by which the UN bodies and agencies and transport sector organizations can quickly and efficiently share information and coordinate actions to address the impact, or potential impact, of recommendations during PHEICs and related measures on transport sectors and their workers, and to encourage improved coordination at the national level with effected countries.

Therefore, the JAG-TSC resolves to make the following recommendations to provide more effective means of action to the ongoing issues affecting the transportation sector during the COVID-19 pandemic and in similar future PHEICs:

## Recommendations to JAG-TSC Members

*All JAG-TSC members should:*

1. set up a rapid-response group for immediate activation in the event of WHO-declared PHEIC. Its terms of reference should include standing arrangements to support crisis resilience, an annual (virtual) meeting and its membership should consist of senior representatives of all JAG-TSC members. Regional government representatives should also be invited, as appropriate; and
2. establish focal points with a view to facilitate inter-agency communication, collaboration and coordination during PHEICs, with respect to the needs and concerns of the international transport organizations.

*The JAG-TSC member agencies of the United Nations should:*

3. recognize, take into consideration and ensure policy coherence within the UN system collaborations already in place that were established to deal with PHEICs or that will ensure in the future improved pandemic preparedness; and
4. submit to their appropriate governance structures the present recommendations to obtain a mandate to ensure action.

*The WHO in particular should:*

5. engage relevant stakeholders from the transport sectors in the development of policy documents, technical guidance and tools, related to international travel-related

measures during PHEIC, including pandemics, in line with WHO rules of engagement in order to take into account relevant operational considerations,

6. communicate and share relevant information on PHEICs, including pandemics, that affect cross-border transport workers, with transport authorities, the transportation industry and relevant UN agencies as appropriate (i.e. through sector-specific technical briefings and webinars, and other existing communication platforms), and
7. continue to update, through appropriate channels, other UN agencies, the transport industry, including employers' and workers' organizations, and civil society, on the process of developing a future WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, and inform them of the modalities of engagement for relevant stakeholders in the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body, as well as on the process of making potential amendments to the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005).

*The ICAO, the ILO and IMO in particular should:*

8. use opportunities provided to them to contribute to WHO guidance to mainstream the rights, needs and challenges of workers and employers in the transport sectors during PHEICs;
9. disseminate to their constituents WHO information and guidance through appropriate channels and help ensure that it reaches transport organizations, including employers and workers organizations, at the international and national level;
10. voice and mainstream workers' and industry's needs and challenges by engaging in the development of a future WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as to potential amendments to the IHR (2005) in line with the modalities of engagement for relevant stakeholders
11. voice and address transport workers' needs and challenges during PHEICs in UN Country Teams (UNCTs) and with UNRCs to ensure the highest level of coordinated UN involvement within the country and seek multisectoral solutions in consultation with the national level emergency response commanding body and other relevant national authorities.

*The JAG-TSC member international transport organizations, including both international employers and workers organizations, should:*

12. use the modalities provided to engage in the ongoing intergovernmental processes at WHO in relation to a future WHO Convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, as well as for potential amendments to the IHR (2005),
13. identify contact points for coordination and rapid action with respect to COVID-19 and future PHEICs and the related work of the UN agencies;
14. protect and promote the health of workers, including by encouraging their members at the national level to voice their concerns and needs, through the appropriate national mechanisms, on matters related to PHEICs and actions to address them; and
15. engage in effective social dialogue with global, regional and national transport employers and workers and their organizations in recognition that social dialogue is an effective means to improve the living and working conditions of mobile and cross-border transport workers and transport facilitation across international borders.

## Recommendations to the United Nations system

The United Nations system should:

16. convene a tripartite, international and inter-ministerial meeting to discuss transport, health and the common concerns and interests of the transport sector in order to identify the different approaches required to safeguard and respect the rights of workers and employers during PHEICs;
17. through the UNDCO, (and with the support of the UN system specialized agencies):
  - a. involve more systematically and proactively UNRCs and UNCTs to address the challenges of the transport sectors and their workers with respect to issues specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as future PHEICs;
  - b. encourage enhanced coordination among national ministries to respond expeditiously and efficiently to the challenges faced by these sectors, including through consultations with employers' and workers' organizations; and
  - c. share good practices of countries with respect to actions taken during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as future PHEICs.

## Recommendations to Governments

Governments, with the support of the UNRCs and UNCTs, and in their pursuit of reaching the goals of the relevant SDGs, should take immediate, effective and sustainable action to ensure that all relevant ministries, agencies and other government institutions:

18. recognize the key role played by transport workers during PHEICs, in particular mobile and cross-border transport workers that serve the sustainment of essential supply chains, and, if not having already done so, designate them as "key workers";
19. fully understand and continue to comply with the obligations of their governments with respect to international instruments to which they are parties, including those concerning public health and social measures, and following recommendations issued by WHO during PHEICs, including any with respect to sunseting and relaxation of restrictions.
20. follow legal, policy and technical guidance developed by UN agencies which is risk-based and aligned with the public health evidence at the time, keeping in mind the systematic review commissioned by WHO, which suggests that there has not been not enough evidence to support the effectiveness of syndromic screening at land borders and international rivers in preventing the transmission of SARS-CoV-2;
21. establish or enhance mechanisms to ensure coordination and collaboration among labour, health, transport, migration, police, and other relevant authorities, including with those of other countries, as necessary, and within the highest level of government with a view to promoting harmonization and transparency of measures;
22. engage in effective social dialogue with transport employers and workers and their organizations in recognition that social dialogue is an effective means to improve the living and working conditions of mobile and cross-border transport workers and transport facilitation across international borders; and
23. draw upon good practices of other countries in the above matters.

## Annex

### Non-exhaustive list of key resolutions, guidelines, statements and other guidance related to COVID-19 and transport workers

#### ICAO

- [Council Aviation Recovery Task Force \(CART\) recommendations](#)
- [High-level Conference on COVID-19 \(HLCC 2021\) Ministerial Declaration](#)
- [ICAO Visible Digital Seal for Non-Constrained Environments \(VDS-NC\) – Guidance and Technical Report](#)
- [The ICAO Master List and ICAO Health Master List](#)

#### ILO

- [Information note on maritime labour issues and coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - 3 February 2021, Revised version 3.0](#)
- [General observation on matters arising from the application of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended \(MLC, 2006\) during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Extracts from the General report of the 2022 Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations \(92nd session, Nov-Dec 2021\)](#)
- [Statement of the Officers of the Special Tripartite Committee: the continuing negative impact of the pandemic on seafarers' rights – 11 February 2022](#)
- Fourth Meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006) Part I (Online, 19–23 April 2021)
  - [Resolution concerning the implementation and practical application of the MLC, 2006 during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
  - [Resolution concerning COVID-19 vaccination for seafarers](#)
- ILO sectoral briefs concerning civil aviation, road transport and shipping:
  - [COVID-19 and maritime shipping & fishing](#)
  - [COVID-19 and road transport](#)
  - [COVID-19 and civil aviation](#)
  - [COVID-19 and ports](#)
- [Resolution concerning maritime labour issues and the COVID-19 pandemic](#) (adopted on 8 December 2020 by the ILO Governing Body)

#### IMO

- [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) Pandemic](#) (main IMO COVID website)
- [Advice via Circular Letter for IMO Member States, seafarers and shipping](#)
- [Frequently asked questions about how COVID-19 is impacting seafarers](#)
- [Industry recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#)
- [Assembly resolution A.1160\(32\) on Comprehensive action required to address seafarers' challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#) (December 2021)
  - [IMO Maritime Safety Committee resolution MSC.490\(103\) on Recommended actions to prioritize seafarers in national COVID-19 vaccination programmes.](#) (May 2021)

- [IMO Maritime Safety Committee resolution MSC.473\(ES.2\) on Recommended action to facilitate ship crew change, access to medical care and seafarer travel during the COVID-19 pandemic. \(September 2020\)](#)

## WHO

- [International Health Regulations \(IHR\) Emergency Committee on COVID-19: https://www.who.int/groups/covid-19-ihr-emergency-committee](https://www.who.int/groups/covid-19-ihr-emergency-committee)
- [Policy and technical considerations for implementing a risk-based approach to international travel in the context of COVID-19: interim guidance, 2 July 2021: https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/policy-and-technical-considerations-for-implementing-a-risk-based-approach-to-international-travel-in-the-context-of-covid-19](https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/policy-and-technical-considerations-for-implementing-a-risk-based-approach-to-international-travel-in-the-context-of-covid-19)
- [WHO advice for international traffic in relation to the SARS-CoV-2 Omicron variant \(B.1.1.529\)](#)
- [Interim position paper: considerations regarding proof of COVID-19 vaccination for international travellers](#)
- [Emergency use listing \(EUL\)/Covid-19 Vaccines](#)
- [An implementation guide for the management of COVID-19 on board cargo ships and fishing vessels - 23 December 2021](#)
- [International travel-related control measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic: a rapid review](#)
- [Border closure and travel restrictions to control the spread of COVID-19: an update to a Cochrane review](#)
- [Evidence review – Public health measures in the aviation sector in the context of COVID-19: quarantine and isolation - 21 May 2021](#)
- [Evidence to recommendations: methods used for assessing health equity and human rights considerations in COVID-19 and aviation: interim guidance, 23 December 2020](#)
- [Evidence to recommendations: COVID-19 mitigation in the aviation sector](#)

## Joint United Nations agencies

- [A Joint Statement on medical certificates of seafarers, ship sanitation certificates and medical care of seafarers in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic– 22 April 2020](#)
- [Joint Statement on prioritization of COVID-19 vaccination for seafarers and aircrew – 25 March 2021](#)
- [Joint IMO/ILO statement on upholding medical assistance obligations to seafarers and accelerating seafarer vaccination programmes](#)
- [UNWTO and WHO: Travel measures should be based on risk assessment – 24 February 2022](#)
- [Joint statement urging continued collaboration to address the crew change crisis, safeguard seafarer health and safety, and avoid supply chain disruptions during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic – 28 February 2022](#)
- [Digital documentation of COVID-19 certificates: vaccination status: technical specifications and implementation guidance, 27 August 2021](#)
- [Joint Statement by the UN Human Rights Office \(OHCHR\), the UN Global Compact, and the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights](#)

## United Nations General Assembly

- [Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 1 December on International cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to support global supply chains](#)

- [UN General Assembly Resolution \(A/75/L.37\) on International cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to support global supply chains](#) (December 2020)

#### **International Air Transport Association**

- [COVID-19 Info Hub](#)

#### **International Chamber of Shipping**

- [COVID-19](#)

#### **International Road Transport Union**

- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information hub](#)

#### **International Transport Workers' Federation**

- [Covid-19](#)