



L. 688/03
SF 4.900

27/10/2003

Dear Commissioner,

ILO SEAFARERS' IDENTITY DOCUMENTS CONVENTION (REVISED)

As part of the review of maritime security following 9/11 the ILO approved at the June 2003 International Labour Conference, on a without precedent expedited basis, a new Convention to revise the existing ILO Convention relating to seafarers identity documents (ILO Convention No. 108). When implemented, this new Convention will address many of the concerns about maritime security while creating obligations to facilitate the entry of seafarers into their territory for the purpose of shore leave or crew transits.

The new Convention 185 was the product of tripartite negotiations involving employers (coordinated by ISF), seafarers (coordinated by ITF) and participating Governments from some 100 countries. The resulting text of the Convention was not only fully supported by the social partners but also by the vast majority of the Governments who attended, including those from all EU and EU Accession countries as well as the United States.

While there is clearly a widespread consensus for early implementation of the new Convention, an obstacle has arisen in the EU context in that it would appear that a provision of the Convention potentially conflicts with Schengen, thereby putting at risk the implementation of the instrument by EU Member States. The provision in question relates to Article 6.6 of the Convention that says that for the purposes of shore leave seafarers are not required to hold a visa; as we understand it, such a provision may raise problems in relation to the exclusive competence of Member States to deal with visa issues. However, the provisions of Article 6.6 reflect the standard established by the IMO Convention on the Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic, which has been ratified by the majority of EU States, who have not entered a reservation with regard to the relevant section.

The issue was a central agenda item at a Sectoral Social Dialogue meeting on 20th October. At this meeting, the social partners very much welcomed the Commission's recognition that a solution needed to be found to this potential conflict as a matter of urgency, thereby paving the way for early ratification and implementation of the Convention by Member States.

In this context, we understand that the subject will be for discussion at a meeting between Member States and the Commission on 30th October. As the organisations representing both sides of the European and global shipping industry, we would like to stress the importance we attach to implementation of the Convention and would urge Governments and the Commission to do all possible to enable this to happen. We are writing in similar terms to the Council Presidency.

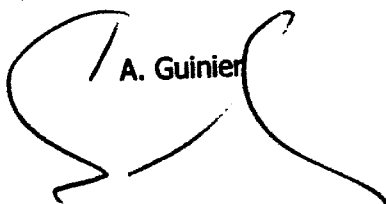
Yours sincerely,

ECSA
European Community
Shipowners' Associations

ETF
European Transport
Workers' Federation

ISF
International
Shipping
Federation

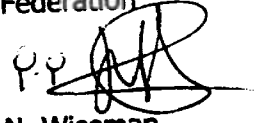
ITF
International
Transport Workers'
Federation



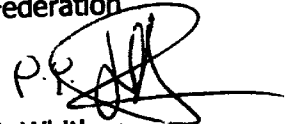
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