

ETFⁱ AND ECSCAⁱⁱ JOINT DECLARATION

ON THE RISKS OF THE EBOLA VIRUS AND GUIDANCE TO STAY SAFE FOR CREWS ONBOARD SHIPS CALLING IN AFFECTED COUNTRIES

INTRODUCTION

Following the meeting of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for Maritime Transport in October 2014, the Social Partners for Maritime Transport ECSCA and ETF acknowledged the need to draw shipping companies' and seafarers' attention to the risks from the Ebola virus. At the same time they underlined the need to provide crew members onboard ships calling at ports in affected countries with relevant guidance. This joint declaration aims at fulfilling these two conditions.

JOINT DECLARATION

1. In the light of the outbreak of the Ebola virus, in particular Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Senegal, ETF and ECSCA wish to underline the need to adopt and observe appropriate measures to limit the adverse consequences of Ebola, to minimise the risk of the virus spreading further and to ensure that the welfare and well-being of seafarers are not put at risk.
2. ETF and ECSCA welcome and fully endorse the International Guidelines provided to shipping companies and seafarers by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC), and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) on the risks posed to ships' crews calling in countries affected by the Ebola virus and the related precautionary measures that should be adopted.
For ease of reference, these guidelines are attached to this Joint Declaration, together with an illustrated version – produced jointly by the IMO and the WHO – with some basic facts about the virus.
3. ETF and ECSCA stress that all relevant maritime stakeholders, notably (Member) States, International Organisations, shipowners and crew members, must take their share of responsibility in taking precautionary measures so as to ensure that seafarers' health and safety is sufficiently protected. Shipmasters must be given the necessary information and resources in order to be able to properly comply with the attached Guidelines and to avoid placing crews in danger of infection.
4. ETF and ECSCA acknowledge the right for individual (Member) States to adopt their own national measures to prevent the import of the Ebola virus onto their territories, while reminding them of their obligations as port States with regard to the provision of free pratique and in ensuring immediate medical support and advice and, if necessary, evacuation of seafarers. The Social Partners would like to recall that free pratique is a World Health Organisation entitlement.
5. Since a ship does not have the facilities to isolate potentially infected seafarers, ETF and ECSCA take the view that any infected person should be treated at a shore based

facility. Therefore, they strongly recommend individual States not to close their borders or to refuse the entry of ships in their ports when confronted with a possible Ebola case, as any person on board who shows signs of Ebola infection will need urgent medical attention. Failing to allow such a person to disembark would also place others on board at a continuing risk of infection. In addition, it is important not to deter seafarers from going into the ports of the affected States, as this would adversely impact on the transport of essentials such as food and medical equipment.

6. It should not be overlooked that trade is of great importance for the affected countries and thus any precautionary measures must reflect this.
7. It should be borne in mind that – from a medical point of view – seafarers are considered as “low risk”, whilst high risk only applies to persons having been exposed to body fluids from infected persons.
8. ETF and ECSA refer to, welcome and encourage the adoption of initiatives at national and/or company level in the fight against the Ebola virus. In this respect, reference can be made to the creation of dedicated working groups of shipowners and trade unions with the aim of sharing information and exchanging views on best practices.
9. ETF and ECSA call upon their respective membership to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the attached Guidelines and invite EU Member States to support the work that is being carried out with an aim at eradicating and/or combating Ebola in the infected areas.
10. More information on the Ebola disease can be found on the following websites:
 - World Health Organisation: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/>
 - ICS: <http://www.ics-shipping.org/ebola-information>

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ⁱ ETF is a pan-European trade union organisation which embraces transport trade unions from the European Union, the European Economic Area and Central and Eastern European countries.

ⁱⁱ ECSA is the organisation representing the interests of the national shipowners’ associations of EU Member States and Norway. ECSA works through a permanent secretariat in Brussels and a Board of Directors, as well as a number of specialised committees. Its aim is to promote the interests of European shipping so that the industry can best serve European and international trade and commerce in a competitive free enterprise environment to the benefit of shippers and consumers.