**HTW7 15-19 February 2021**

**Sub-Committee on human element, training and watchkeeping**

The 7th session of the IMO’s Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW) was held remotely from 15 to 19 February.

The session addressed the human side of shipping, including challenges related to the issuance and maintenance of seafarer certificates during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, and of the facilitation of seafarers’ electronic certificates and documents.

***Role of the human element – the Covid-19 pandemic***

The human element is a key factor both for safety and environmental protection, and HTW7 has recognized the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the human element.

In particular, the pandemic has led to challenges related to the issuance and maintenance of seafarer certificates.

The STCW Code requires seafarers to meet the requirements of medical fitness to obtain a certificate of competency (CoC).

Obtaining a medical certificate during the Covid-19 pandemic has been more cumbersome and time-consuming and has required pragmatic solutions by flag states.

HTW7 invited flag states to submit proposals that reconsider the process for the issuance of certificates.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created serious problems in renewal of various documents, such as CoP (Cerificate of Proficiency), health certificates e.t.c., and the seafarers are having difficulties in maintaining their certificates because necessary courses are not available. The second problem is now becoming acute.

HTW7 agreed to establish a correspondence group to identify in detail certification and training issues related to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a view to develop guidance for harmonizing, to the extent possible, measures and solutions, as well as consider the possible of adverse effects of these measures when normality returns.

***Implementation of the STCW Convention***

The STCW Convention requires flag states to demonstrate that they have given full effect to the provisions of the STCW Convention and to send subsequent report to IMO for review.

HTW7 agreed to establish a correspondence group on the implementation of the STCW Convention to enhance the communication of information to the IMO as a basis for publishing the “white list” (MSC.1/Circ.1163).

***Review of the 1995 STCW-F Convention***

With the global fishing industry still showing a poor safety record, HTW7 continued with its comprehensive review of the STCW-F Convention to ensure that it is updated with relevant training, that it supports other relevant international instruments and facilitates practical implementation.

It was also agreed to include sustainable fisheries training with special emphasis on marine plastic litter and reduction of CO2 emissions.

The work will continue in a correspondence group until HTW8 in 2022.

***Electronic certificates and documents for seafarers***

Seafarers’ certificates and documents are, to an increasing extent, available electronically.

HTW7 considered amendments to the STCW Convention to accommodate the use of electronic certificates and documents for seafarers, in addition to the development of an accommodating guideline on the use of electronic certificates.

Further consideration and work will be done in a correspondence group until HTW8 in 2022.

***Non-SOLAS ships in polar waters***

Incidents in polar waters pose risks to human life, to the polar environment and to search and rescue operations.

Accordingly, the IMO has initiated a phase 2 of the Polar Code to also address safety measures for non-SOLAS ships operating in polar waters.

***Guidelines for fishing vessels***

HTW7 reviewed and suggested minor modifications to the training provisions in the draft guidelines for fishing vessels of at least 24 metres in length and operating in polar waters.