

Milestone ratifications of seafarers' labour rights charter



The ILO's Maritime Labour Convention has now been ratified by 30 countries, meaning it will go into effect in a year's time. The charter sets out the labour rights of the world's 1.2 million seafarers.

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GENEVA (ILO News) – The ILO has received the 30th ratification of the **Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006)** fulfilling the last condition for the first global standard that spans continents and oceans to go into effect in a year's time.

“This is great news for the world's more than 1.2 million seafarers,” said ILO Director General Juan Somavia. “It was a dream of the ILO as early as 1920, and I pay tribute to the international maritime community for having made it a reality.”

The MLC, 2006 was adopted unanimously in 2006 but there were two requirements still to be met before it could come into force. The ratification by Russia and the Philippines fulfills the requirement that at least 30 ILO member countries ratify the Convention. The other requirement - that ratifying countries represent 33 percent of the world's gross shipping tonnage - was met in 2009.

The 30 countries represent nearly 60 percent of the shipping tonnage. This means that seafarers working on more than 50 per cent of the world's international shipping will be covered by the new Convention. “This is a remarkable achievement,” Somavia said. “Not only are these first 30 ratifications drawn from almost every region of the world, but the tonnage level is nearly double the required amount.”

The MLC, 2006 establishes minimum requirements for almost all aspects of working conditions for seafarers including conditions of

Under the MLC, 2006 every seafarer has the right to:
• A safe and secure workplace that complies with safety standards • Fair terms of employment • decent working and living conditions on board ship • Health protection, medical care, welfare measures and other forms of social protection

employment, hours of work and rest, accommodation, recreational facilities, food and catering, health protection, medical care, welfare and social security protection.

“Each State is tasked not only with ensuring that ships flying its flag meet the ‘decent work’ requirements set out in the Convention, but also with certifying that those ships comply with the requirements relating to labour conditions.” said Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry, Director of the ILO’s International Labour Standards Department.

This certification will also facilitate inspections of ships. The Convention places great reliance on the system allowing for inspections to be carried out by other countries, known as port State control. There is also a mechanism which records seafarers’ complaints, as well as a reporting mechanism which spots failures no matter where a ship travels.

“The maritime labour inspection and certification system is a big step forward by the ILO in taking concrete and specific action to address the very serious problems that arise because of international ownership of ships and the inability of some countries to ensure that their ships meet international standards for quality shipping,” Doumbia-Henry said. She added that the industry has been active in implementing the MLC ever since it was adopted and often well ahead of the legal process for national ratification.

The following countries have ratified MLC, 2006
Liberia, Marshall Islands, Bahamas, Panama, Norway, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Spain, Croatia, Bulgaria, Canada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Switzerland, Benin, Singapore, Denmark, Antigua and Barbuda, Latvia, Luxembourg, Kiribati, Netherlands, Australia, St Kitts and Nevis, Tuvalu , Togo, Poland, Palau, Sweden, Cyprus, Russian Federation, Philippines.

When it comes into effect, the MLC, 2006 will replace 37 existing ILO maritime Conventions and related Recommendations adopted since 1920.

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