**African leaders urged to harness seafarer green skills momentum**

*To take advantage of the social and economic benefits of shipping’s green transition, African maritime leaders are being encouraged to implement infrastructure to train and upskill seafarers.*

**Mombasa, Kenya, 5 May, 2023:** As the maritime industry transitions to a low and zero-carbon future, African policymakers are being advised to implement training infrastructure as quickly as possible to maximize ‘high-quality’ employment opportunities for African workers and facilitate the continent’s green transition. Speakers at today’s ‘Unlocking Green Maritime Jobs’ panel-discussion outlined the growing demand for seafarers able to handle low and zero-carbon fuels (such as hydrogen and ammonia) and new technologies that will be needed in order to progress towards a decarbonized maritime shipping sector by 2050.

Negotiations are underway amongst International Maritime Organization Member States this July to consider a target for net zero emissions for shipping by 2050 in line with the 1.5°C goal of the Paris Agreement. Were this to be adopted, seafarer supply countries that take early action are likely to reap significant socio-economic benefits. Research commissioned by the Maritime Just Transition Task Force found [up to 800,000 seafarers could require additional training by the mid-2030s to use these low- to zero-carbon fuels](https://www.ics-shipping.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Position-Paper-Mapping-a-Maritime-Just-Transition-for-Seafarers-%E2%80%93-Maritime-Just-Transition-Task-Force-2022-OFFICIAL.pdf) under the possible net zero target.

**African initiatives**

Africa is well positioned to be a green seafarer hub, explains South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA) Occupational Health & Safety and Maritime Welfare Manager, Sibusiso Rantsoabe. “There is currently unprecedented demand for African seafarers and the urgent need to decarbonize creates further opportunities for our workers, who have already demonstrated their excellence in a global setting. Becoming a supply hub of the seafarers of the future is a win-win situation that will not only benefit African countries through the creation of good quality jobs, but the entire world by lowering the environmental impact of human actions. This presents an opportunity for Africa to ensure that we are not left behind but also cement our place as a potential new crewing frontier for shipping,” he says.

There are some noteworthy initiatives already in place. The [National Seafarer Development Programme (NSDP)](https://saimi.co.za/article/national-seafarer-development-programme/), run by the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI), is a regional effort that is empowering the deck, engine room and fishing crew of the future and creating good jobs for workers. SAIMI and the International Maritime Employers Council (IMEC) are also due to launch an [IMEC South African cadet training programme](https://www.saimi.co.za/news/saimi-news/imec-is-coming-to-sa/) this year, with the first group of 50 cadets starting this month.

IMEC CEO Francesco Gargiulo, explains, “As an organization that represents over 260 maritime employers around the globe and works to negotiate fair and sustainable seafarers’ wages and conditions of employment on their behalf, it is clear to us that shipping’s decarbonization journey will be powered by human beings. The industry is already experiencing a need for sufficient skilled workers to operate modern vessels and this will only continue to grow over the coming years. As a potential major seafarer supply continent, developing the talent of African seafarers offers us a pathway to delivering a greener future for shipping and the wider maritime world.”

**Rewarding efforts**

As one of the world’s biggest growth markets with 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of $3.5 trillion dollars, Africa could reap some of the rewards of shipping’s green transition. International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) Africa Regional Secretary, Mohammed Dauda Safiyanu, says: “Transitioning away from fossil fuels requires additional skill sets that must be properly developed, and while this is definitely a challenge, it is also an opportunity for African countries to develop their own highly skilled seafaring workforces. As part of a Just Transition, these jobs must be decent, which includes meeting the highest health and safety standards. They should also be fairly-paid, bringing economic benefits to the region and thereby improving parity between the global north and the global south. The sooner that we begin investing in green skills, the more likely it is that we can crew the low emission vessels of tomorrow. The future of green shipping in the region must involve high skill, high quality jobs for African seafarers.”

Another advantage of setting up green seafarer training initiatives as early as possible is to minimize risk and human error when transitioning to new fuels and technologies, explained ICS Senior Manager Policy and Employment Affairs, Helio Vicente, ahead of the meeting. “Given the mix of low and zero carbon fuels set to power ships in the future, training and upskilling seafarers has never been more urgent. Technology must evolve in step with seafarer skills so that the shift to a greener future is done as safely and efficiently as possible, minimizing risk along the supply chain. African maritime leaders must act now to ensure that their workforces are primed for shipping’s green transition,” he states.

**Support for inclusive approach**

Given the international scale and urgency of the action needed to decarbonize shipping in line with the Paris Agreement, coordinated action by stakeholders is vital. The Maritime Just Transition Task Force, which is primarily funded by Lloyd’s Register Foundation, believes that by working together, governments, policy makers, ship owners and operators, seafarers’ unions, and other stakeholders, will maximize the likelihood of a Just Transition. Sturla Henriksen, Special Advisor, Ocean, UN Global Compact, says: “Shipping’s green transition brings with it opportunities for thousands of high-quality, green jobs. Our Maritime Just Transition Task Force works to ensure that shipping’s transition to a zero-emission industry is as inclusive as possible. We now need governments to come to the International Maritime Organization this summer and align to the 1.5ºC of the Paris Agreement. This will create the market certainty to unlock the investments in seafarer training and skills today to support high-quality, decent green maritime jobs of the future – including in Africa.”

The Task Force, which recently highlighted opportunities for African seafarers at [an event in Ghana](https://www.itfglobal.org/en/news/africa-could-be-green-jobs-leader-shipping-undergoes-low-carbon-revolution), has also published a 10 point action plan to achieve a Just Transition for seafarers in its ‘[Mapping a Maritime Just Transition for Seafarers](https://unglobalcompact.org/library/6100)’ position paper.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Notes to Editors**

**About the Panel Discussion in Mombasa**

The  ‘Unlocking Green Maritime Jobs’ panel discussion was part of the [IMO Conference on Low Carbon Shipping](https://www.imo.org/en/About/Events/Pages/IMO-Conference-on-Low-Carbon-Shipping-in-Africa-.aspx) that was held on the sidelines of the [6th Association of African Maritime Administrations Conference and General Assembly](https://africanmarads.com/announcements/) (3-5th May 2023).

**About the Maritime Just Transition Task Force**

The Maritime Just Transition Task Force was established during COP26 in November 2021, by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), the United Nations Global Compact, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The Task Force aims to support a just and human-centred decarbonization of the shipping industry. The Task Force is grateful to its primary funder, Lloyd’s Register Foundation, and to its programme partner, the [Singapore Maritime Foundation](https://www.smf.com.sg/). More information on the Maritime Just Transition Task Force can be found on the websites of the UN Global Compact, the International Chamber of Shipping and the International Transport Workers’ Federation.

**About the Partners**

[**United Nations Global Compact**](https://unglobalcompact.org/)

As a special initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General, the UN Global Compact is a call to companies worldwide to align their operations and strategies with Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption. Our ambition is to accelerate and scale the global collective impact of business by upholding the Ten Principles and delivering the Sustainable Development Goals through accountable companies and ecosystems that enable change. With more than 18,000 companies and 3,800 non-business signatories based in over 101 countries, and 65 Local Networks, the UN Global Compact is the world’s largest corporate sustainability initiative — one Global Compact uniting business for a better world.
[**International Chamber of Shipping**](https://www.ics-shipping.org/)
The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) is the principal international trade association for merchant shipowners and operators, representing all sectors and trades and over 80% of the world merchant fleet.

[**International Transport Workers’ Federation**](https://www.itfglobal.org/en)

The International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) is a democratic, affiliate-led federation of transport workers’ unions recognised as the world’s leading transport authority. We fight passionately to improve working lives; connecting trade unions and workers’ networks from 147 countries to secure rights, equality and justice for their members. We are the voice of the almost 20 million women and men who move the world, including over a million seafarers working in domestic trade and international shipping.

**About the Primary Funder**

[**Lloyd’s Register Foundation**](https://www.lrfoundation.org.uk/)

Lloyd’s Register Foundation is an independent global charity with a unique structure and an important mission: engineering a safer world. We reduce risk and enhance the safety of the critical infrastructure that modern society relies upon in areas such as energy, transport and food. We do this by supporting high quality research, accelerating technology to application and through education and public outreach. Our unique structure comes from the fact that we own a significant trading company, Lloyd’s Register (LR). We share the same mission and work together to make the world a safer place.

**About the Programme Partner**

[The Singapore Maritime Foundation](https://www.smf.com.sg/)

Established in 2004, the Singapore Maritime Foundation (SMF) is a conduit between the public and private sectors to accomplish the twin mission of developing and promoting Singapore as an International Maritime Centre (IMC); and to attract, engage and grow a talent pipeline to position Maritime Singapore for continued growth.