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European Maritime Social Partners call for EU to coordinate talks on a swift and solidary solution for the rescued persons on board the Maersk Etienne

The European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) wrote to EU Vice President Margaritis Schinas and Commissioner Ylva Johansson, voicing their grave concern about the humanitarian crisis on board the oil tanker Maersk Etienne. The vessel rescued 27 people more than a month ago and remains in the Mediterranean awaiting a decision by governments on which port will allow their disembarkation.

The 27 rescued people include a child and a pregnant woman and have been on board for more than a month, living on the vessel's deck in very difficult conditions. The crew has provided them with water, food and blankets and other support wherever possible. However, food and medical supplies are running out, and the crew is not trained to provide the medical treatment needed nor to manage the prolonged situation with vulnerable people on board. Merchant vessels and their crews are not equipped or trained to provide the necessary care that these distressed persons need.

"It is unacceptable that after having rendered assistance by rescuing the persons, the Maersk Etienne has been left entangled in legal and diplomatic disputes between States awaiting a designation of a port for disembarkation. This has caused a humanitarian crisis on board which imperils both the crew and the rescued persons. All governments involved need to take on their responsibilities here and work towards an immediate solution" commented Martin Dorsman, ECSA Secretary General.

"We urgently call on the European Commission to show political leadership by engaging with and coordinating talks between all governments involved for a resolution of this situation. A pragmatic, swift and solidary solution is needed to ensure the rescued persons are treated with humanity and dignity and that their rights are fully respected. The safety of the distressed persons and the crew is a higher principle that should serve to ensure that the disembarkation

takes place immediately in a place of safety,” concluded Estelle Brentnall, ETF Head of Maritime.

For more information, please contact Martin Dorsman, martin.dorsman@ecsa.eu
