**PRESS RELEASE**

**For immediate release**

**25 August 2020**

**ITF Seafarers’ Trust launches “Still At Sea” seafarer photography competition.**

The ITFST has today launched the Still At Sea photography competition for seafarers. Open to currently serving seafarers and with a 1st prize of £1000, the competition invites seafarers to submit digital photos of their lives at sea during the pandemic.

With around 90% of global trade transported by ships, seafarers have continued working throughout the pandemic. However, the impact of travel restrictions, quarantine requirements and the lack of flights have trapped some 300,000 seafarers aboard ship, with many not having been ashore for months on end, let alone going home.

The competition aims to give a voice to these forgotten keyworkers, and show the world the realities of their lives aboard ship as they supply the world with the raw materials and consumer goods that keep hospitals running, power stations pumping and shipping essential consumer goods.

Dave Heindel, ITF Seafarers’ Trust Chair of Trustees said “As Covid-19 has ravaged nations, seafarers have continued working uninterrupted. Many of them have not been ashore for months on end, some for well over a year. A photograph needs no translation to share its story and the Still At Sea competition is a platform for seafarers to show the wider world the realities of life stuck onboard.”

Katie Higginbottom, Head of the ITF Seafarers’ Trust said “At the beginning of the pandemic seafarers were relatively safe at sea but worried for their families. However, months have passed and hundreds of thousands of seafarers are still stuck at sea, their contracts extended well beyond terms that can be considered humane. Still At Sea is a chance for seafarers, hidden but vital global keyworkers, to share a glimpse of their lives to the people who unknowingly rely on them.”

Seafarers are invited to submit their photographs on the competition’s website between now and 30 September 2020. The winning photographs will be announced on the Trust’s Facebook page on 30 October 2020 and digital and physical exhibitions of submissions are planned to follow.

END

More information visit the competition website: <https://www.itfseafarers.org/en/photo-competition>

For further queries please contact:

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**Note to editors**

The Seafarers Trust is a UK charity established in 1981, which funds programmes that advance the wellbeing of maritime workers, seafarers and their families. We are funded by the Trust’s own capital funds, and by the investment income of the Welfare Fund at the International Transport Workers Federation, a global federation of transport workers’ unions with nearly 20 million worker members.

Website: [www.seafarerstrust.org/](http://www.seafarerstrust.org/)

Facebook: @ITFtrust

Twitter: @Seafarers\_Trust

**Background**

In spite of the Covid-19 pandemic global trade by sea has continued beyond the public gaze of most countries. Whilst seafarers have continued to work, governments have taken different measures to protect their citizens and their economies. Some industries have virtually ground to a halt, including airlines. Infections rates have peaked, troughed, stabilised, and jumped up again, but the virus has remained unchecked.

At the beginning of the pandemic seafarers were relatively safe at sea but worried for their families. With countries in lockdown it became apparent that seafarers would have difficulty getting home. The maritime unions and the shipping industry worked together with the International Maritime Organisation to develop protocols to facilitate repatriation and crew changes. The IMO framework of protocols were issued on 05 May 2020, shortly after the ITF launched its ‘Enough is Enough’ campaign, but despite this, the response from governments has been indifferent and hundreds of thousands of seafarers are still at sea. Instead of recognising seafarers as key workers and getting them home, their contracts have been extended well beyond terms that can be considered humane.

In some senses the shipping industry is simple. There are customers with goods that need to be shipped from one port to another and shipowners with ships that will provide this service for a fee. However in reality shipping is perhaps the foremost example of the complexity of economic globalisation. Ships are crewed by seafarers from one side of the world and owned by banks and businesses on the opposite side. They are likely registered in a third country such as Panama or Liberia, financed in China, insured from London, managed out of Hong Kong or Singapore, and trading all over the world. Although there is international regulation, the diffusion of responsibility makes seafarers uniquely vulnerable when it comes to asserting and defending their rights.

At no point has this been more evident than during the unfolding crew change crisis that has seen seafarers stranded at sea for many months beyond the terms of their contracts. Whilst their resilience has been tested to the limits, their ability to take a firm stand has been brutally undermined by the fear of future unemployment.

**Seafarers are the hidden key workers – transporting the raw materials and consumer goods that keep hospitals running, power stations pumping and shipping essential consumer goods.**