

Draft Outline

Secretary-General's background note for the preparatory meeting of the 2025 United Nations Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14

I. Introduction

- Background of the Conference.
- Mandate for the background note as per General Assembly resolutions 78/128 and 77/242.
- Structure of the background note, including aim of the note, taking into consideration the overarching theme of the Conference “Accelerating action and mobilizing all actors to conserve and sustainably use the ocean”.

II. Status and Trends

1. Status and trends including key milestones.

Contributions are sought on the status of progress and trends in the implementation of SDG 14, since the United Nations Ocean Conference held in Lisbon in 2022. Entities are requested also to provide updates on the key milestones achieved of relevance to SDG14 in their respective areas since 2022.

As explained under III. below, ensuring decent work for seafarers and fishers is essential to conserve and sustainably use the world's oceans, seas and marine resources in line with SDG 14. The key milestones of ILO work linked to the achievement of targets 14.c and 14.4, relate to the following:

1. Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006) and related matters

The MLC, 2006 sets out seafarers' rights to decent conditions of work and helps to create conditions of fair competition for shipowners. It is intended to be globally applicable, easily understandable, readily updatable and uniformly enforced. As of 13 March 2024, the MLC, 2006 has been ratified by 105 States.

The Fourth Meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee of the MLC, 2006 - Part II (Geneva, 5-13 May 2022) adopted eight amendments to the Code of the MLC, 2006, drawing from lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim of improving the living and working conditions of the world's seafarers. The amendments they agreed will ensure: (i) Appropriately sized personal protective equipment, in particular to suit the increasing number of women seafarers; (ii) Good quality drinking water is available free of charge for seafarers; (iii) Facilitation of prompt repatriation of abandoned seafarers; (iv) Medical care for seafarers in need of immediate assistance and facilitation of repatriation of remains; (v) Social connectivity on board and internet access in ports; (vi) Information on right to be



compensated by recruitment and placement services for monetary loss; and (vii) Annual recording and reporting of all deaths of seafarers to the ILO and publication of the data. The amendments will enter into force on 23 December 2024.

The ILO regularly provides technical assistance to member States and other relevant parties to ensure universal ratification and effective implementation of the MLC, 2006. In addition to promoting its Conventions, the ILO also supervises the application of international labour standards such as the MLC, 2006. This is done in accordance with the ILO's Constitution through the work of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR). The ILO's Maritime Labour Academy at the International Training Centre in Turin, Italy continues to train inspectors, lawyers as well as governments, seafarers', and shipowners' organizations for a harmonious application of the MLC, 2006.

The Subcommittee on Wages of Seafarers of the Joint Maritime Commission, the only international sectoral minimum wage-setting mechanism, met in Geneva from 16 to 17 May 2022. It adopted the Resolution concerning the ILO minimum monthly basic pay or wage for able seafarers, according to which it agrees to raise the ILO minimum basic wage for an able seafarer to US\$658 as of 1 January 2023. The rate will be increased to US\$666 as of 1 January 2024 and to US\$673 as of 1 January 2025.

The First Meeting of the ILO–IMO Joint Tripartite Working Group to identify and address seafarers' issues and the human element (JTWG) took place in Geneva from 13 to 15 December 2022 and adopted Guidelines on how to deal with seafarer abandonment cases. The Guidelines seek to address the significant rise in cases of abandonment of crews reported to the ILO, and to improve coordination among countries, including flag States, port States, States in which seafarers are national or resident, and States in which recruitment and placement services operate, in order to resolve abandonment cases more quickly, including getting seafarers paid and repatriated home to their families.

The Joint Action Group to review the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the world's transport workers and the global supply chain (JAG-TSC) was established at a meeting in December 2021 of the Directors General of the ILO and the World Health Organization (WHO) with the heads of international transport organizations. The JAG-TSC discussed serious and urgent challenges faced by transport workers resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic with a view to minimizing adverse impacts on transport workers, their families, global trade and supply chains, while at the same time ensuring that public health needs are fully safeguarded and local communities are protected. In January 2023, the Principals of the organizations concerned adopted the JAG-TSC recommendations, which include actions to be taken by all members of the Group, by the UN system as a whole, specifically by the UN agencies concerned, through UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams, and by the international transport sector organizations themselves. They also call on Governments to take concrete actions to protect the rights of transport workers during future public health



emergencies of international concern (PHEIC), as well as mitigate the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Ad hoc UN inter-agency Task Force on the impact of COVID-19 on seafarers was established by the UN Secretary-General's Executive Committee on 14 January 2022, with the aim to examine the implementation and practical application of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 during the pandemic, including its impact on seafarers' fundamental rights and on the shipping industry. The Task Force, comprised of several UN agencies and entities, met several times in 2022 and integrated into its work the outcome of the work of the JAG-TSC. The report of the Task Force was submitted to the Executive Committee, which adopted Decision 2023/37 providing inter alia that ILO, IMO and WHO will expand their work with UN Country Teams to raise awareness of all Governments, including all Ministries and Authorities concerned with the response to PHEIC, of the importance of maritime shipping and seafarers, and the related obligations of ratifying States under the MLC, 2006.

The Second Meeting of the ILO–IMO Joint Tripartite Working Group to identify and address seafarers' issues and the human element (London, 27-29 February 2024) has adopted a list of comprehensive and coordinated Recommendations aimed at protecting seafarers from violence and harassment, including sexual harassment, bullying and sexual assault. These include amendments to the ILO MLC, 2006, in line with the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190), new IMO mandatory training for seafarers, additional IMO guidance for shipowners and the launch of an international ILO-IMO campaign to raise awareness in the need to tackle violence and harassment at sea.

2. Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) and related matters

Convention No. 188 not only constitutes a bill of rights for fishers and establishes a level-playing field for fishing vessel owners, but also contains many provisions with a preventative effect on forced labour and child labour, for example requirements relating to fishers' work agreements, crew list, fair recruitment, minimum age and payment of fishers. As of 13 March 2024, the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) has been ratified by 21 Member States.

The ILO has been working directly with ILO Member States, including through ILO projects, to assist Member States in their endeavours to promote or better implement the Convention. The path towards ratification of Convention No. 188 usually includes information and sensitization workshops, elaboration of a gap analysis of national legislation vis-à-vis the Convention, and tripartite validation workshops. The CEACR, the ILO's supervisory mechanism, has examined the application of Convention No.188 by 18 Member States so far. The ILO also holds annual on-line training courses on inspection of fishing vessels concerning "Training of inspectors of labour conditions on board fishing vessels" (17 June to 5 July 2024) and "Development and management of inspection systems of labour conditions on board fishing vessels" (14 October to 15 November 2024). These courses draw on the ILO training package on inspection of labour conditions on board fishing vessels, and on experiences of ILO's tripartite constituents, ILO projects and other experiences.



Furthermore, the ILO has redoubled its efforts to tackle the scourge of forced labour in fishing. Most notably, the ILO has issued “Towards freedom at sea: Handbook for the detection of forced labour in commercial fishing”, which presents key indicators or “warnings signs” of forced labour in fishing and provides guidance, tools, and protocols for the integration of these indicators into the broader work of agencies with regulatory authority over different aspects of the commercial fishing industry, as well as the work of other actors outside government in contact with fishers and involved in protecting and promoting their rights. At the national level, the [ILO 8.7 Accelerator Lab initiative](#) has been supporting joint labour inspection pilots by maritime safety, labour or fisheries departments to improve the detection of forced labour and protection for fishers, as well as joint-inspection mechanisms consolidated in MoUs or other arrangements. Collaboration is being fostered between ILO’s constituents and digital technology actors to improve the detection of forced labour through satellite data and other means. In line with the provisions of C.188, the ILO has been actively engaging in empowering migrant fishers through its efforts in recruitment and placement, technical assistance, social dialogue, capacity building activities for labour inspectors, and other activities, for example through the [Ship to Shore Southeast Asia project](#).

Up until recently, Regional Fishery Bodies (RFBs) were focusing their efforts on the management of fisheries resources and the fight against IUU fishing. An emerging trend has seen several regional fisheries organizations wishing to address the social dimension in their work. At their request, the ILO has been engaging actively with RFBs to promote decent work and the prevention of forced labour in fisheries. This includes embedding labour rights of fishers and the elimination of forced labour in agendas, action plans and mandates that have traditionally focused on the environmental sustainability of fishing.

The [Fifth Session of the FAO/ILO/IMO Joint Ad hoc Working Group meeting on IUU Fishing and other Related Matters](#) took place in Geneva from 8 to 12 January 2012 and has adopted a set of solid and comprehensive recommendations, which provide a workplan for reinforced collaboration and joint action by the three agencies for the years to come, with a view to combating IUU fishing and at the same time promoting decent work and safety at sea.

III. Leveraging interlinkages between SDG 14 and other SDGs towards ocean action: Challenges and opportunities:

Contributions are sought on the interlinkages between the 10 targets of SDG 14 and other SDGs in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to address:

- Challenges to the conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources (e.g., areas where gaps and challenges exist, where more action is needed);
- Opportunities for conservation and sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources, in particular considering interlinkages with other relevant SDGs.



The 2022 Lisbon Ocean Conference adopted a Political Declaration, which recognized that the ocean provides a range of ecosystem services, supplies us with oxygen to breathe, contributes to food security, nutrition and decent jobs and livelihoods. Indeed, the ocean is a workplace. The ILO has worked for over 100 years to improve the labour conditions of seafarers and fishers, adapting to the everchanging challenges faced by those working at sea. Through its unique tripartite structure, the ILO brings together governments, employers, and workers of 187 Member States to set labour standards, develop policies and programmes promoting decent work for all. This has included the adoption of Conventions and Recommendations specific to the shipping and fishing sectors. The widespread ratification and implementation of these sector-specific standards, and the realization of the fundamental principles and rights at work for all working at sea, is critical to ensuring that the three pillars of ocean sustainability-economic, environmental, and social are respected.

Particularly relevant to the work of the ILO with respect to the ocean are SDG 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all and SDG 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. ILO work is linked in particular to the following targets of SDG 14:

- (i) Target 14.c Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides the legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources, as recalled in paragraph 158 of The Future We Want” – achieving implementation of the intent of UNCLOS (e.g. Article 94 on the role of flag States including with respect to social matters), implies ratification and implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended (MLC, 2006); the Work in Fishing Convention, 2007 (No. 188) and the Seafarers’ Identity Documents Convention (Revised), 2003 (No. 185), as amended;
- (ii) Target 14.4 By 2020, effectively regulate harvesting and end overfishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans, in order to restore fish stocks in the shortest time feasible, at least to levels that can produce maximum sustainable yield as determined by their biological characteristics – given that industrial IUU fishing is often associated with labour abuse, forced labour and human trafficking, in particular of migrant fishers, ILO became a full member of the FAO/ILO/IMO Joint Ad hoc Working Group meeting on IUU Fishing and other Related Matters in 2019. Be it at national, regional or international level, stakeholders engaged in combating IUU fishing are keen to work on also addressing the labour dimension of this scourge.

A human-centred, sectoral approach and the active involvement of governments, employers’ organizations and workers’ organizations and stronger tripartite governance in the maritime sector are critical to realizing not only SDGs 8 and 14, but also to addressing the labour dimension in every other SDG.



IV. Mobilizing all actors to accelerating ocean action:

Contributions are sought on ways to promote collaboration, cooperation and partnerships to accelerate implementation of SDG 14. The following issues will be highlighted:

1. Investing in SDG 14

This section will focus on ways and means to support the implementation of SDG14. The following cross-cutting issues relevant to support the implementation of SDG 14 will be explored among others:

- Mobilizing finance for SDG 14.
- Marine science and technology (including technology development and transfer) and the use of traditional knowledge for ocean health.
- Capacity-building.

2. Strengthening Partnerships (including Voluntary Commitments)

This section will focus on key initiatives undertaken in partnership at the global, regional and national levels with a diverse set of stakeholders. Contributions may also highlight voluntary commitments made and their impact as relevant.

3. Mobilizing All actors

This section will consider the relevant stakeholders that need to be mobilized to accelerate ocean action, with a focus on the role of women, youth, indigenous peoples and local communities to leave no one behind.

V. Possible themes for the Ocean Action Panels

Recommendations will be made for the themes of the ten Ocean Action panels in this section, based on the input received.

VI. Way Ahead/Next Steps