



Mr António Guterres
Secretary-General
United Nations
405 East, 42nd Street
New York, NY, 10017
United States of America - USA

Via email: sgcentral@un.org

23rd September 2020

Dear Mr Guterres,

The transportation sector has inevitably been hit hard by new regulatory restrictions designed to contain the spread of Covid-19. With 90% of trade carried by sea, the maritime industry has been especially disrupted, with new restrictions on docking, crew changes, ship inspections and the issuance of ship sanitation certificates. This is creating huge disruption to global supply chains – including those for critical goods such as food and hygiene products.

The difficulty faced by ship operators worldwide to conduct crew changes is a most pressing challenge to global trade. Typically, around 100,000 crew changes take place every month. However, since the coronavirus outbreak, most countries have either implemented new restrictions on crew changes or prohibited them all together – it is estimated that more than 300,000 seafarers are waiting to be repatriated and a similar number are waiting to join ships. These regulatory constraints are significantly disrupting maritime operations and the global network of interconnected shipping lanes. Many seafarers have now been on board ships without access to shore leave for months beyond their original contracts, in contravention of international maritime regulations which are in place to protect the life, health and welfare of seafarers and avert environmental disaster.

This has led to a major disruption of global supply chains, which are vital to manufacturers and retailers and their ability to produce and offer essential consumer goods, including food and hygiene products. The situation has also inadvertently created a modern form of forced labour.

To unblock sea transportation routes, ensure the supply of critical goods, support the global economy and protect seafarers' wellbeing and their human rights (in alignment with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and in support of ILO's Decent Work Agenda), the consumer goods industry is calling for measures to be put into effect, including:

- Implementing the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) detailed [protocols](#) to facilitate safe and secure crew changes.
- Classifying seafarers as 'key workers' providing an essential service so they can continue their operations.
- Introducing a robust test and trace regime to ensure the safety of seafarers and crew changes.
- Reviewing personal protective equipment requirements to ensure seafarers can access masks, overalls and other essential items.
- Ensuring that seafarers should spend no more than the legal maximum of 11 months on board a vessel to help mitigate fatigue and mental health issues.
- Limiting any unavoidable crew contract extensions to the next scheduled port where crew change is possible and/or diverting course to a port where repatriation can and will be arranged in line with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) latest [information note](#) on *maritime labour issues and coronavirus*.
- Allowing flexibility on competency and medical certificates for seafarers, and sanitation certificates for ships to allow for continuity of service (noting this [guidance](#)).

- Creating a framework for enhanced coordination between ports, within countries and internationally, to more effectively manage the issues as identified above.

The signatories will communicate these requests to our shippers, logistics providers and suppliers, and The Consumer Goods Forum will continue to encourage all stakeholders to mainstream our [Priority Industry Principles](#) on Forced Labour

International trade and global supply chains are dependent on the smooth operation of maritime transportation. As members of The Consumer Goods Forum, we support your efforts to encourage governments to act now to ensure we can continue to serve our customers with the essential goods they need and want.

Yours sincerely,

Emmanuel Faber, Chairman & CEO, Danone – Manufacturer Co-Chair of The Consumer Goods Forum

Özgür Tort, CEO, Migros Ticaret – Retailer Co-Chair of The Consumer Goods Forum

Dolf van den Brink, Chairman of the Executive Board/CEO, Heineken

Alexandre Bompard, Chairman & CEO, Carrefour

Edgard Bonte, Chairman, Auchan Retail

Alex Bongrain, Chairman & CEO, Savencia

Richard Brasher, Group CEO, Pick n Pay Retailers

Steve Cahillane, Chairman & CEO, Kellogg Company

Wai-Chan Chan, MD, Consumer Goods Forum

Claudio Colzani, CEO, Barilla Group

Beth Ford, President & CEO, Land O'Lakes

Xiao An Ji, Chairman, Beijing Hualian Group

Fisk Johnson, Chairman & CEO, S.C. Johnson

Alan Jope, CEO, Unilever

Carsten Knobel, CEO, Henkel

Olaf Koch, Chairman of the Management Board, METRO AG

Ramon Laguarta, Chairman & CEO, PepsiCo

Dave Lewis, CEO, Tesco

Brian McNamara, CEO, GSK Consumer Healthcare

Thibaut Mongon, EVP, Worldwide Chairman, Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health

Frans Muller, President & CEO, Ahold Delhaize

Malina Ngai, CEO, AS Watson

Dirk Van de Put, Chairman & CEO, Mondelēz International

Grant Reid, President & CEO, Mars, Incorporated

Mark Schneider, CEO, Nestlé

Pedro Soares dos Santos, Chairman & CEO, Jerónimo Martins

Richard Smucker, Executive Chairman, Smucker

Per Strömberg, CEO, ICA Gruppen AB

David Taylor, Chairman, President & Chief Executive, Procter & Gamble

Noel Wallace, Chairman, President & Chief Executive, The Colgate-Palmolive Company

Galen Weston, Executive Chairman, Loblaw Companies

CC:

Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

World Health Organization (WHO)

United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)

The Food & Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

United Nations working group on Business & Human Rights