



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS
SHIPPING DEPUTY MINISTRY

Information paper submitted by the Government of Cyprus to the Fourth Meeting of the STC (Part I)

Proposal for a global approach on Seafarers Vaccination Programme

In response to the worldwide crew crisis, the Cyprus Shipping Deputy Ministry would like to propose a practical, global approach to delivering COVID-19 vaccinations to seafarers.

Recognizing the importance to keep the maritime transport afloat and operational, Cyprus was one of the first countries worldwide that recognized seafarers as key workers and introduced all necessary measures to facilitate crew changes amid the COVID-19 pandemic. These measures resulted, since May 2020, to crew changes and repatriation of more than 12.000 seafarers through Cyprus' ports and airports.

Cyprus recognizes there are challenges with the logistics of a vaccination programme for seafarers, including the country of origin or residence of the seafarers, transport and customer restrictions, availability of the approved or authorised vaccines, the two-stage vaccination process, and the subsequent time required for a seafarer to be considered as inoculated. Therefore, Cyprus believes there should be a distinction on the basis of the duration of the sea voyage. The suggested programme comprises two main strands:

1. For **short sea shipping**, national measures remain workable and regional cooperation easier to achieve.
2. For **deep sea shipping**, Cyprus believes that vessels operating on long distance intercontinental routes should be designated as an isolated COVID-19 zone; a "bubble". The focus should therefore be on seafarers ashore. Cyprus suggests a coordinated global approach to ensure adequate numbers of approved or authorised vaccines, acceptable to all governments, are available to seafarers for inoculation in their country of residence before they travel to join their respective ships.

In this framework, Cyprus believes that such an approach could form the basis for a solution to the facilitation of crew changes and invites all the members to evaluate further this proposal with a view to consider proposing a coordinated approach to all the relevant international bodies. Cyprus approach on this extremely important issue has been communicated to IMO Secretary-General, the EU Transport and Health Commissioners and to the global shipping community, emphasizing the need for a practical, feasible and collective approach to addressing the issue of seafarer inoculations.

However, Cyprus would be supportive to any action undertaken towards formulating a coordinated approach aiming for a global solution and expresses its willingness and determination to work constructively with all interested parties towards pursuing the deployment of a seafarers' vaccination program at global level in an efficient way.