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Marine Advisory 04/2026

Subject: Prevention and Elimination of Harassment and Bullying onboard Ships

Reference: a) Maritime Labor Convention, as amended (MLC 2006)
b) International Chamber of Commerce Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying

To: Owners/Operators/Seafarers of Liberian Flagged Vessels

Dear Owners/Operators/Seafarers:

Purpose

The purpose of this Marine Advisory is to remind shipowners and operators to develop policies and measures to prevent and address harassment and bullying onboard ships. The Advisory also aims to assist seafarers to:

- a) recognize cases of harassment and/or bullying;
- b) identify incidents through the use of effective grievance procedures;
- c) become involved in situations where they see others being harassed and bullied and to offer support to them when necessary;
- d) avoid bullying and harassing others;
- e) report if bullying and harassment are observed or experienced;
- f) comply with companies' policies; and
- g) apply any other applicable measures.

Background

At its 105th session in June 2016, the International Labor Organization (ILO) approved amendments to the Part B of the Code of MLC, 2006 addressing shipboard harassment and bullying.

Marine Notice MLC-005/3.3.3 requires shipowners to adopt, effectively implement and promote an occupational health and safety program, including its implications for seafarers' health and safety, taking into account the current version of the '*Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying*' published by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and the International Transport Worker's Federation (ITF).

The ICS define 'harassment' as a form of discrimination, which has the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person and of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Furthermore, 'bullying' is a form of harassment that includes hostile or vindictive behavior, which can cause the recipient to feel threatened or intimidated.

Requirements

Shipowners and operators shall ensure that they adopt and implement policies and measures to prevent and address shipboard harassment and bullying. The policy and measures shall:

- a) Contain a message from the Chief Executive or person in charge of the Company;
- b) Set out the company's commitment to preventing and eliminating harassment and bullying onboard their ships and the goal of a working environment in which there is respect for the dignity and well-being of all seafarers;
- c) Require seafarers and others concerned to comply with the applicable policies and measures implemented to prevent and address shipboard harassment and bullying;
- d) Establish safe, fair and effective reporting mechanisms and procedures for cases of shipboard harassment and bullying;
- e) Identify a person in senior management with overall responsibility for the policy;
- f) Contain examples of cases of the types of behavior that may be classed as harassment and bullying; and contain contact information to enable seafarers to report incidents.

The shipowner/operator shall ensure that all seafarers and relevant shore-based personnel are made aware of the policy. They should be presented with copies of documents containing the policy and a similar document should be displayed prominently on onboard ships and in shore-side offices.

Identifying and Reporting Incidents of Harassment and Bullying

A. Reporting Incidents

In order to prevent and eliminate harassment and bullying, it is important that companies actively encourage seafarers to bring incidents to their attention immediately. Addressing harassment and bullying onboard ships requires seafarers to report incidents, including those that affect others.

B. Complaints Procedures

Companies are encouraged to maintain fair procedures for dealing expeditiously with complaints from seafarers. Complaints of harassment and bullying are usually dealt with using clear grievance and disciplinary procedures. Such procedures should:

- a) Provide for confidentiality;
- b) Provide safeguards against victimization;
- c) Provide safeguards for both the person/s making the complaint and the alleged perpetrator to be accompanied by a fellow employee or seafarer representative of their choice; and
- d) Ensure that the parties to the complaint are treated with equal dignity and fairness.

Measures to Prevent and Eliminate Harassment and Bullying

A. Company disciplinary codes may identify certain acts which could constitute harassment and/or bullying for which disciplinary action may be taken. Examples include:

- a) physical assault including sexual assault;
- b) intimidation;
- c) coercion;
- d) Interference with the work of other seafarers; and
- e) Conduct based on gender affecting the dignity of women and men at work which is unwanted, unreasonable and/or offensive to the recipient.

B. Shipowners/operators and seafarers' organizations have a duty to:

- a) support the right of everyone to be treated with dignity and respect at work;
- b) actively promote a working environment in which harassment and bullying are not tolerated; and
- c) ensure that seafarers are aware of their responsibilities.

For further information regarding this Advisory, please contact MLC@liscr.com.

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