

PRESS RELEASE

MARITIME MANPOWER SINGAPORE CONFERENCE – *CREWING CRISIS – A CALL FOR ACTION*

Singapore, 7 September 2007 – Collaborative tripartite training by the maritime industry partners was amongst the several proposals put forward at the Maritime Manpower Singapore Conference 2007 earlier today.

The conference, attended by the experts and practitioners from the international and local maritime industry, hosted a series of discussions on issues ranging from seafaring manpower shortage onboard the world fleet, regional strategies to address the shortage, criminalisation of seafarers and tripartite maritime training as a solution to the Officer shortage onboard.

Mr Heng Chee How, the Minister of State for Health and Deputy Secretary-General of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), who officiated at the conference, called on shipowners and shipmanagers to invest in the training and upgrading of the skills of seafarers sailing onboard ships to grow the pool of skilled manpower.

He also cautioned against manpower poaching saying, “If everyone expects someone else to do the training and themselves to do the poaching, then the skilled manpower pool will not grow and the shortages will only get worse”.

Mr Heng also added, “Shipowners and shipmanagers could also pool their resources and invest in training infrastructure to collectively and effectively provide training to more seafarers and those aspiring to sail.”

In his presentation to delegates at the conference, Mr Thomas Tay, General Secretary of the Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union (SMOU) proposed collective tripartite training funds in Singapore and in Asia for maritime training.

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Mr Tay said, “With the commitment from our tripartite partners towards contributions to a collective fund, much can be achieved in terms of dealing with the shortage. The fund can be invested in the establishment of regional training centres in either Singapore or Asia to effectively and costs efficiently train more quality seafarers to man the ever-increasing world fleet.”

A new training initiative was also introduced at the conference. CadetsPlus, a solution developed together between the shipping employers and the SMOU is a step forward in terms of tripartite contribution towards maritime training. The employers’ requirements for quality seafarers are satisfied, the training offered is of quality and most importantly, union members who are seafarers will have access to better employment opportunities. A pioneer batch of 80 seafaring cadets will be graduating on 14th September 2007 and will commence their sea career shortly.

Also speaking at the conference were local and international industry guests representing shipping employers, port authorities and unions including, Mr Jon Whitlow from the International Transport Workers Federation, Mr Kenichi Kuroya, Managing Director of K Line Pte Ltd, Mr Li Shanmin representing COSCO Manning Cooperation and Mr Hans Sande from the Norwegian Maritime Officers’ Association.

Organised by the Seafarers Training and Education Advisory Committee and managed by Wavelink, the MMS 2007 is the fourth biennial conference since its inception in 2001.

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About Wavelink

Wavelink Co-operative Ltd (Wavelink) was jointly founded by **Singapore Maritime Officers' Union** (SMOU) and **National Trades Union Congress** (NTUC) on 29 June 2000 in an attempt to venture into new frontiers and business opportunities. The Co-operative aims to promote opportunities for social interaction, cultural appreciation, healthy recreation and leisure activities on an economic co-operation basis, at the same time, create career opportunities for members in the maritime and/or other industries.

About STEAC

At the initiative of SMOU, a newly formed committee called **Seafarers Training and Education Advisory Committee (STEAC)** was formed on 5th March 2001. STEAC consists of members who are individuals coming from the key shipping industry. It looks into the future training standards for quality seafarers and the raising of resources and funds to meet those objectives. This is in line with the nation's aspiration to discharge its responsibility as a premier International Maritime Centre.

As an integral part of the shipping community, STEAC and SMOU are committed to be responsive to the rapid changes in the maritime world and to help promote a high standard of maritime training for quality seafarers to remain relevant and to find gainful work onboard Singapore ships.

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