



The Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change

Overcoming the Seafarer Crisis: Enabling Crew Changes and Repatriation

The Covid-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented crew change crisis which has led to hundreds of thousands of seafarers being impacted and in many instances left stranded on ships¹, beyond the expiry of their contracts. Despite significant efforts by international organizations, governments, industry associations, labor unions, NGOs and individual companies including the adoption on 1 December 2020 by the UN General Assembly of a resolution on *International cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic to support global supply chains*², the issue is still far from resolved.

This is not an acceptable way to treat seafarers, who are the frontline workers of the maritime industry carrying 90% of global trade. Fatigue after extended periods at sea has significant consequences on the physical and mental wellbeing of seafarers. It also increases the risk of maritime incidents and environmental disasters, and poses a wider threat to the integrity of global supply chains, which depend on safe and reliable maritime transport.

This is why a taskforce of stakeholders from across the maritime value chain has identified the following key issues preventing crew changes, that require urgent action:

- While high-quality health protocols have been adopted internationally, they have not been consistently implemented in practice. This has led authorities to perceive seafarers as a Covid-19 risk, which has limited the possibilities of crew changes.
- Implementing high-quality crew change protocols will reduce the economic risk of disrupted supply chains but will lead to increased short-term costs.
- The disruption of international air travel has reduced the number of flights, causing connectivity issues between major crew change hubs and major seafaring nations, which has complicated crew changeovers.

Taking action to deliver on our shared responsibility

We, the signatories to The Neptune Declaration on Seafarer Wellbeing and Crew Change, recognize that we have a shared responsibility to ensure that the current crew change crisis is resolved as soon as possible and to use the learnings from the crisis as an opportunity to build a more resilient maritime supply chain.

We believe that the most effective way of addressing the crew change challenge and building a more resilient maritime logistics chain, is by working together across the value chain with industry stakeholders, organizations and with governments to implement solutions that work in practice.

Therefore, we commit to take action to resolve the crew change crisis, based on our position and role in the value-chain, thereby ensuring the rights and wellbeing of the seafarers supporting global supply chains. We call on our peers and other stakeholders, in particular relevant government bodies, to join us in our efforts.

1 http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_755390/lang--en/index.htm

2 <https://www.undocs.org/en/A/75/L.37>

To make tangible improvements, the following actions should be implemented:

- **Recognize seafarers as key workers and give them priority access to Covid-19 vaccines**

Seafarers should be recognized as key workers by all governments in line with the UN General Assembly resolution adopted on 1 December 2020 and the transition of seafarers across borders should be facilitated based on internationally agreed, high-quality health protocols.

Governments and other stakeholders should work together with the maritime industry to ensure that seafarers, irrespective of their nationality, get priority access to Covid-19 vaccines alongside other key workers and health care professionals in recognition of their critical role in global supply chains and trade. This should include developing protocols that ensure vaccinations are correctly certified and effectively administered to seafarers as well as establishing a standardized format for health passes that contain tamper proof information about vaccination and testing status to facilitate crew changes.

- **Establish and implement gold standard health protocols based on existing best practice**

The maritime industry and governments should implement *The Recommended Framework of Protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic*³ which has been recognized by the International Maritime Organization.

To minimize the risk of Covid-19, to build trust that crew changes can be carried out in a safe manner, and to ensure that the measures taken can be universally accepted, the implementation of the Framework of Protocols should be based on the highest practicable standards. The STAR Crew Change Protocols⁴, which are based on existing best practice, are thus recommended for industry-wide adoption.

- **Increase collaboration between ship operators and charterers to facilitate crew changes**⁵

Facilitating crew changes based on high-quality health protocols is a shared responsibility which will create benefits for all by minimizing the risk of Covid-19 spread on vessels, minimizing the risk of disruptions to global supply chains, while contributing to maritime safety and the wellbeing of seafarers.

Ship owners and charterers should share relevant information transparently and collaborate to ensure that necessary crew changes can be carried out with the least impact possible in terms of cost and delays. The owner should provide the charterer with as much notice as possible on intended crew changes, while the charterer should make all reasonable efforts to accommodate crew changes including when the vessel has to make a reasonable deviation.

No charter contracts should contain clauses preventing necessary crew changes from being carried out, as the aggregate effect of such clauses could be a serious obstacle to the safe operation of maritime trade and the protection of the wellbeing and rights of seafarers.

By implementing high-quality health protocols, ship owners can reduce the risk of trade disruption due to Covid-19, which also creates benefits to charterers. These benefits should be reflected in chartering decisions to create incentives for shipowners to implement high-quality health protocols and be transparent about actions taken as well as costs incurred.

- **Ensure air connectivity between key maritime hubs for seafarers**

The aviation industry should work together with the maritime industry to ensure that airlift capacity is established between major crew changing hubs and seafaring nations.

Additionally, the aviation and maritime industries as well as governments – involving all relevant ministries and agencies – should work together to establish a universally accepted and harmonized framework of standards for the validation of trusted health data for seafarers to facilitate border crossing and ensure the long-term resilience of air connectivity.

3 The reference is to the latest version of the Protocols, last updated on 22nd April 2021: [MSC.1-Circ.1636 - Industry Recommended Framework Of Protocols For Ensuring Safe Ship Crew Changes And Travel.pdf \(imo.org\)](https://www.imo.org/en/About/Pages/press-releases.aspx?CIDPR=2021042201)

4 <http://www.globalmaritimeforum.org/content/2020/12/The-Neptune-Declaration-STAR-protocols.pdf>

5 A group of charterers from both the wet and dry bulk sectors has outlined a set of best practices they have used to turn the Neptune Declaration recommendations into concrete action: <http://www.globalmaritimeforum.org/content/2021/05/The-Neptune-Declaration-Best-Practices-for-Charterers.pdf>

Signatories

2020 Bulkers

3Seas Shipping

7SHIPPING

A

A. M. Nomikos Transworld Maritime Agencies

A. O. Schifffahrt

A. P. Møller-Mærsk

A. Pérez y Cía

ABC Maritime

Aderco International

ADNOC Logistics & Services

Adriatic Crewing and Maritime Agency

Advanced Polymer Coatings

Advent International

Africa Ports & Ships

Airports Council International (ACI) World

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Alassia NewShips Management

Alberta Shipmanagement

Asahi Shipping

Alfa Laval

Alfa Ship & Crew Management

Algeciras Bay Port Community (COMPORT)

Alios Bulkers

Allmode Global

All-Ukrainian Association of Crewing Companies

Alma Maritime Group Corporation

ALP Maritime Services

Altera Infrastructure

Amazon Crew Services

AMCF - Agents Maritimes et Consignataires de France

American Express Global Business Travel

American Maritime Services

AMSOL - African Marine Solutions

Anchor SM (Singapore)

Anglo-American

Anglo-Eastern Univan Group

Anker Crew Insurance

Anosis Maritime

Anglo International Shipping Operations

Anthony Veder Group

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Apex Ship Management

Apollo 1969 at Lloyd's

Apollo Ship Management

APORMAR Seafarers Portuguese Agency

Apostleship of the Sea of the United States of America

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ARCADIA SHIPMANAGEMENT

Ardmore Shipping

ARGELAN SHIPS SERVICE

Argo Crew

Armateurs de France

Asahi Shipping

Ashley Chartering Limited

Asiatic/Atlantic Lloyd Group

ASP Crew Management Group

Assarmatori

Associated Maritime (Hong Kong)

Associated Steamship Agents

Association of Canadian Port Authorities

Association of German Shipmasters and Ship Officers

Association of Malaysia's Maritime Professionals/IKHTISAS KELAUTAN MALAYSIA (IKMAL)

Association of Marine Pilots Ireland

Atlantic Ship Management

Atlantska Plovidba

Atlas Marine Valves

Atlas Professionals

Atlas Sea Group

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Australian Mariners' Welfare Society

Australian Seafarers' Welfare Council

AV Global Marine

Avance Gas Holding

AVB Ahrenkiel Vogemann Bolten

Azimuth Ship Management

B

Bahri Ship Management

Bao-Island Enterprises

BAO-NYK Shipping

BBC Chartering

Belships Management (Singapore)

BEMAC Corporation

Ben Line Agencies

Berge Bulk

Bernhardt Schulte Shipmanagement

BHN Shipping Group

Bibby Marine

BIMCO

Black Sea Contractors

Blackbird Air Charter

Blue Ocean Marine and Offshore Solutions

Blue Planet Shipping

BMT

Bodrum Mariners Association

Boers Crew Services - a part of the BCS Group

Borealis Maritime

BOURBON

BP

Signatories

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Bridgefort Crew Management	Cluster Maritime Français	Danaos Shipping
Briese Crew Management	CMA CGM Group	Danica Crewing Specialists
Briese Schifffahrts	CMAF- Comité Marseillais des	Danz & Tietjens Schifffahrtsgruppe
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C	Columbia Shipmanagement	DFDS
C Solutions	Compagnie Maritime Nantaise - MN	DHT Holdings
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(Singapore)	Cyrus	Emirates Ship Investment Company
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Chugoku Marine Paints	d'Amico Soc. di Navigazione	ENESEL Group
CIS Karkont Inspection Services –	D. Oltmann Reederei	ENL Services
Turkey	Daihatsu Diesel	Enterprises Shipping and Trading
Citi	Daikin MR Engineering	EP Resources
	Daiwa Kisen	

Signatories

EPI Group Holdings

Epic Gas

EPSCO Group

Ernst Jacob

Esenyel Partners - Lawyers & Consultants

ESGPlus

Esvagt

Euronav

European Community Shipowners' Associations

Evergas

Evergreen Marine Corp

EveryWay Travel

Excelerate Technical Management

Executive Ship Management

EXMAR

Exporters Competitive Maritime Council

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Federal Fleet Services

F. Laeisz

Fednav

Fidelity International

Filipino Association for Mariners' Employment (FAME)

Filipino Shipowners' Association (FSA)

Filistos ASCOT

First Ship Lease Trust

Flagship Ship Agencies

Fleet Management

FLEX LNG

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Foreign Owners Representatives and Ship Managers Association

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GERMAN MARINE AGENCIES

German Nautical Association founded 1868

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Grieg Maritime Group

Grimaldi Group

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Grupo Stier

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Gungen Denizcilik ve Ticaret

Gunvor

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H. Vogemann Group

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Hamanaka Chain Manufacturing

Hammonia CrewCo

Hammonia Reederei

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Helm Specialist Recruitment

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HMM

Höegh Autoliners

Höegh LNG

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Association

Hong Kong Shipowners Association

Hong-Kong Maritime Museum

Horizon Maritime Offshore

Horizon Maritime Services

Houston International Seafarers' Center

Human Rights at Sea

Humanistische Vereinigung, K. d. R., Seafarer's Social Service Oldenburg

Hunterlink EAP

I

ID Shipping Agency

IDWAL

Ignazio Messina & C.

IHI Power Systems

Signatories

Imabari Shipbuilding	International Parcel Tankers Association	Japan Marine United Corporation
IMC Shipping	International Propeller Club of the US - Le Havre	Japan Radio
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Ince	International Seaways	JCJ Consulting
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ING	International Transport Workers' Federation	Jebsen PTC Maritime
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INTERCARGO - International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners	Interorient Shipmanagement	Junge & Co. Versicherungsmakler
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International Association of Classification Societies (IACS)	INTERTANKO	K Line Ship Management (Singapore)
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International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM)	IS Container	KOTUG group of companies
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	ITU Maritime Faculty Alumni Association (ITU Denizcilik Fakultesi Mezunları Dernegi)	Kyoei Tanker
	J	L
	J&J Denholm	LADOL Free Zone

Signatories

Leonis Navigation	Marine Benefits	MF Shipping Group
Leth Agencies	Marine Capital	MH Bland Group
Let's Talk Supply Chain	Marine One (Private) Limited	Michele Bottiglieri Armatore
Levend Maritime Association	Marine Services Group	Milaha
Liberian Registry	Marine Tours	Ministry to Seafarers Vancouver
Liberty Blue Shipmanagement	Marine Transport Workers Trade Union of Ukraine	MINSHIP Shipmanagement
Lighthouse Shipmanagement Phils	Marine Underwriting Services	Mintra
Lindholm Shipping	MARINO Party-List	MISC Group comprising MISC Bhd, AET and Eaglestar Marine Holdings (L)
LLC Novikontas Kaliningrad	Maritima	Mitsubishi Ore Transport
Lloyds' Register	Maritima Del Estrecho Gib	Mitsubishi Shipbuilding
Lloyd's Register Foundation	Maritime Association of Shipowners, Shipmanagers & Agents	Mitsui E&S Shipbuilding Company
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Lydia Mar Shipping Co.	Martracon Group	MOL LNG Transport (Asia)
M	MarTrust Corporation	MOL Ship Management
M.T. Maritime Management (USA)	MarynarzSwiata.pl - The Polish Seafarer Blog	MOL Ship Management (S)
MAC Equity Maritime Services	MasOceans	MOL Tankship Management
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Magsaysay MOL Ship Management	McNeal Law Firm	MSC Crewing Services Philippines
Magsaysay People Resources Corporation (MPRC) / Magsaysay Maritime Corporation (MMC)	HURTWORRINGOFFSHORE.com	MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company
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Marin Shipmanagement	Mertech Marine	N
Marine & Offshore Div., Bureau Veritas Japan	Metrostar Management	Naftomar Shipping and Trading

Signatories

Nagasaki Sempaku Sobi	NYK Bulk & Projects Carriers	Pacific Carriers Limited
Nakakita Seisakusho	NYK Bulkship (Asia)	PACIFIC GAS
Namura Shipbuilding	NYK Bulkship (ATLANTIC)	Pacific International Lines
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Navigator Gas	NYK FIL Maritime E-Training	Petredco
Neda Maritime Agency	NYK Line	PetroStrat
Neptune Dry Management	NYK LNG Shipmanagement (UK)	Philippine Association of Manning Agencies and Ship Managers (PAMAS)
Neptune Lines Shipping & Managing Enterprises	NYK LNG Shipmanagement	Philippine Transmarine Carriers
NET Ship Management	NYK Shipmanagement	Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC)
Netvision	NYK-FIL Ship Management	Phoenix Shipping Group
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Niovis Shipping	O	Pole Star
Nippon Kaiji Kyokai (ClassNK)	OBT Shipping Group	Polski Związek Przedsiębiorców Zeglugowych (Polish Shipping Companies Association)
Nippon Pusnes	Ocean Networks Express	Ponant
Nissen Kaiun	Ocean Technologies Group	Port Arthur International Seafarers' Center
Nitta Kisen Kaisha	Oceanwide Expeditions	Ports Australia
Norbulk Shipping UK	Odfjell SE	POSH Fleet Services
Norden	Offshore & Specialist Ships Australia	POSH Saudi
Nordic Bulk Carriers	Olympic Shipping & Management	Potentia Unleash The Power of People
Nordic Hamburg Shipmanagement	OMA Group West Africa	Precious Shipping PCL
Nordic P&I Group	Oman Shipping Company	PREVENTION at Sea
Norse Shipholding	OMS Group	Prime's Bunkersplus Services
Norstar Ship Management	OneLearn Global Limited	probunkers
North American Maritime Ministry Association	Orange Marine	Project Cargo Weekly
Northern Lighthouse Board	Orient Overseas Container Line	Promar
Norwegian Coastal Shipowners	ORION Reederei	Promare Rabb Carvalho Advogados
Northern Marine Group	Ortaköy Maritime Alumni Association	PROPEL Social
Northern Shipping Fund Management	Oshima Shipbuilding	PSA International
Norwegian Shipowners' Association	Osiris Consultants	Purus Marine
Nova Marine Carriers	Oskar Wehr KG	
NRP Finans	OSM Maritime	
NRP Maritime Asset Management	OSPR - The Offshore Safe Professionals Register	
NSB Group	P	
	P&O Maritime Logistics	
	Pacific Basin Shipping	

Signatories

Q		
Q88	Scalabrini Center for People on the Move	Shunzan Kaiun
Qatar Gas Transport (Nakilat)	Scalabrini Development Office	SimaMarine (India)
Quantica Agency	Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN)	Singhai Marine Services (Shanghai)
Queensway Navigation	Scorpio	Sirius Ship Management
Queensway Services	SE "Ukrainian Sea Ports Authority"	Sitara Shipping
Qwest Maritime	Sea Culture Association of Turkey	Skuld
	Sea Globe Management & Trading	SKV Group
R	Sea Trade Holdings	SMT Shipping Poland
Red Sea Marine Services	Sea Wellbeing	SOCATRA
Rederiet Stenersen	Sea World Management & Trading	Sogestran Shipping
Reederei Bernd Sibum	Seacor Marine	Solstad Offshore
Reederei Hamburger Lloyd	Seafarers' House	Someca Transport
"Reederei Nord Shipmanagement on behalf of REEDEREI NORD Group"	Seafarers Trade Union Organization/OMK NSZZ Solidarnosc	Sonangol Marine Services
Reederei Zurich	Seafarers UK	Songa Container
Republic of the Marshall Islands Maritime Administrator	Seamar Management	Songa Shipmanagement
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Safe Bulkers Management	Shin Kurushima Dockyard	Stella Maris - Arica, Chile
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Saga Shipholding (Norway)	ShipMed Medical Services	Stella Maris - Manila
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Sailors' Society	ShipParts.com	Stella Maris Kaohsiung
Samba Shipping	Shipping Australia	STELLA MARIS Rio de Janeiro
Samudera Indonesia	Shipping Professional Network in Hamburg	Stella Maris Scalabrinian Network
Santoku Senpaku	Shipz	Stella Maris/ Apostolatus Maris, Montevideo
Sarikaya + Sahin Law Firm		Stena Bulk
		Stena Shipping and Ferries

Signatories

Stichting Pastoraat Werkers Overzee	The Marcura Group	TriNøden Marine
Stewart World Port	The Merchant Navy Association	Tsakos Shipping and Trading
Stolt Tankers	The Mission to Seafarers	Tsavliris Alexander G. & Sons Maritime Company
StratumFive	The Nautical Institute	Tsuneishi shipbuilding
Subsea Global Solutions	The Nautical Institute - US Gulf Branch	Tufton
Suisse-Atlantique	The Nautical Institute of Ukraine	Turk P&I Sigorta
Sun Enterprises	The Naval Connection	Turkish Chamber of Shipping
Sunrui Marine Environment Engineering	The Nordic Association of Marine Insurers (Cefor)	Turkish Maritime Federation
Sunship Schiffahrtskontor	The Shipping Corporation of India	Turkish Maritime Pilots' Association (TUMPA)
Sustainable Shipping Initiative	The Shipping Professional Network London	Turkish Ocean-going Masters' Association
Swire Pacific Offshore	The Standard Club	Turkish Shipowners' Association
Swire Shipping	Thomas Miller Holdings	Türkiye Denizciler Sendikası (Seafarers' Union of Turkey)
Swiss Ocean Yacht Management	Tidewater	U
Swiss Re Corporate Solutions	Tilla Technologies	U Ming Marine Transport
Swiss Shipowners Association	Titanic Society of Atlantic Canada	UK Chamber of Shipping
Synergy Marine Group	TMS Technical Marine Solutions	UK Club
T	TMS-Hamburg Technical Marine Services	Ultranav
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Taiheiyo Kisen Kaisa	Tohmei Shipping	Unibaltic Shipping
Taihua Ship Management	Tokyo Keiki Inc. Marine Systems Company	Unicrew Management
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Tamar Ship Management	Torm	Unilever
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Tata NYK Shipping	Total Marine Solutions	Uniteam Marine Limited
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TCC Group	Trafigura	United Offshore Support
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The College Clinic	Transocean Shipmanagement (Phils)	V
The Council of American Master Mariners	Transportation Institute	V. Group
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Signatories

Van Weelde Shipping Group
Vanmar Shipping
VENLYS Maritime Specialisation
Services
Vento Shipping
Verifai
Viking Marine Services Group

ViraHaber
Viridian Maritime
Vitol
Vortexa
Vroon

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W Marine
Wah Kwong Maritime Transport
Holdings Limited
Wallem Group
Wallenius Wilhelmsen
Wan Hai Lines
WaterFront Maritime Services DMCC
Waterfront Shipping Company
Wesmans
Western Bulk
Western Shipping
Wilhelmsen Ahrenkiel Ship
Management
Willis Towers Watson
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Windward
Wintermar Offshore Marine
Wisby Shipmanagement
WISTA Canada
WISTA Colombia
WISTA International
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World Economic Forum
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XT Management

Y

Yang Ming Marine Transport
YANMAR POWER TECHNOLOGY
YDK Technologies
Yieldstreet Marine
Yokogawa Electric Corporation

Z

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ZIM Integrated Shipping Services
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