Solidarity Declaration with Tug Workers on the Panama Canal

The ITF/ETF Tug Conference meeting in London on 23rd and 24th September 2015 has learnt with great concern of the planned unilateral introduction of unproven working practices and the general poor maintenance condition of the tugs in the expanded Panama Canal and its locks.

Changes in a potentially dangerous working environment under new conditions, i.e. significantly larger vessels operating in new locks should only be realised in close co-operation with the workers concerned and their representatives.

The representatives present at the conference:
- Welcome the initiative of the ITF to commission a simulator project to assess the operations of the new locks;
- Stress the fact that the Panama Canal Authorities have to comply with all relevant and applicable international conventions;
- Urge the Panama government to take up its responsibility to make sure that the appropriate international standards and conventions are respected and upheld;
- Deplore the lack of willingness of the Panama Canal Authority to engage in meaningful consultation with the tug crews and their unions;
- Express their concern that an introduction of untried practices in the new environment could pose not only a danger to the health and safety of the crews but also to the safety of the vital traffic through the canal;
- Call on the Panama Canal Authority to postpone the introduction of new working practices until the ITF study can present its conclusions and then only subject to an agreement with the crews and their unions;
- Express their solidarity with the crews and their unions and salutes their determination in defending their safety and dignity.

London, 24th September 2015

Chair, ITF Inland Navigation Section

For the participating unions:
- MUA, Australia
- BTB, Belgium
- CGT Equipage, France
- FOMM UGICT CGT, France
- FIT CISL, Italy
- UCOC, Panama
- FSC-CC.OO, Spain
- Nautilus International, Switzerland
- Nautilus International, Netherlands
- Unite, United Kingdom

ACV Transcom, Belgium
3F, Denmark
FGTE-CFDT, France
Ver.di, Germany
UIL, Italy
UIM, Panama
SMC-UGT, Spain
FNV Havens, Netherlands
Nautilus International, United Kingdom