



## PRESS RELEASE

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### EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS STAND FIRM AGAINST CRIMINALISATION OF SEAFARERS

**On the eve of the Day of the Seafarer (25 June 2016), the European Social Partners for Maritime Transport – the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF)<sup>i</sup> and the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA)<sup>ii</sup> – are visiting in Athens the Captain of the sunken Prestige oil tanker, Apostolos Mangouras, to express their solidarity and to demonstrate their firm stand against the trend of criminalising seafarers.**

Fourteen years after the Prestige disaster the Spanish Supreme Court has convicted Captain Mangouras to two years of prison for “recklessness resulting in catastrophic environmental damage”. It thereby overturned a previous judgment by the Provincial Court of La Coruña (Galicia) which had cleared him of any responsibility.

The joint delegation consisting of ECSA's Sectoral Social Dialogue spokesperson Tim Springett (UK Chamber of Shipping), Eirini Tsakona (ECSA Secretariat), ETF Political Secretary Philippe Alfonso, and Cristian Castaño from the Spanish trade union Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO.) voice their concerns about the continuing criminalisation of seafarers and condemn in the strongest terms the Supreme Court's judgement.

*“On the eve of this symbolic day it is fundamental to pay tribute to people working in difficult conditions on board ships, and to condemn the trend of seafarers being used too often as easy scapegoats upon whom to shift all responsibility for accidents at sea,”* says **Philippe Alfonso**.

The European Social Partners fully support Captain Mangouras and refuse to accept that seafarers have to pay such a heavy price. It is fitting that, as the day on which we honour the men and women working on the ships that transport 90% of internationally-traded goods and millions of passengers each year, social partners join with Captain Mangouras to restate their call for the rights of seafarers to fair treatment to be respected and upheld.

**Tim Springett:** *“Captain Mangouras' situation demonstrates that there is a strong case for the implementation and observance of the joint ILO/IMO Guidelines on Fair Treatment of Seafarers following a Maritime Accident, so we can finally remove what has become a significant obstacle to the recruitment of the future generations of seafarers on which an overwhelming proportion of trade depends.”*

In addition, the Social Partners fear that such a ruling will have a negative impact on the attractiveness of the profession and consequently on the future recruitment of young and competent European seafarers. At a time when ECSA and ETF – together with the European Commission – seek to promote the European maritime profession, the Supreme Court's judgement sends entirely the opposite message.

ETF and ECSA are doing the utmost to stimulate seafarers' recruitment and employment by strengthening the attractiveness of the EU shipping industry and by continuing the fight against unjustified criminalisation of seafarers.

ETF and ECSA sincerely hope that this wholly unjustified sentence will not be served, as logic suggests a man who is past 80 and deeply marked by injustice cannot again be pointlessly sent to jail.

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<sup>i</sup> *ETF is a pan-European trade union organisation which embraces more than 3.5 million transport workers from 230 transport unions and 41 European countries. It works within an overall framework of global solidarity to represent and defend the interests of transport workers throughout Europe.*

<sup>ii</sup> *ECSA is the organisation representing the interests of the national shipowners' associations of EU Member States and Norway. ECSA works through a permanent secretariat in Brussels and a Board of Directors, as well as a number of specialised committees. Its aim is to promote the interests of European shipping so that the industry can best serve European and international trade and commerce in a competitive free enterprise environment to the benefit of shippers and consumers.*