

Day of the Seafarer 2014
Message from Koji Sekimizu
Secretary-General, International Maritime Organization

To celebrate the fourth Day of the Seafarer, I am speaking to you today amid the cranes and containers at one of Europe's busiest ports, Hamburg, in Northern Germany.

Like many ports all over the world, this vibrant hub never sleeps, working 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year as cargoes bound for and arriving from all the corners of the world are loaded and off-loaded from ships of all types and sizes.

Consumer goods and products arrive on giant containerships from the Far East and the Americas for the markets of Europe; huge bulk carriers fill their holds with iron ore, minerals, coal and grain; fertilizers and animal feedstuffs arrive for Europe's farmers; and tankers carry crude oil, oil products and chemicals to and from the continent's industrial centres. All over the world, ports like Hamburg are the planet's pumping hearts, bringing life to billions.

In the midst of all this activity are the people who work on the ships – approximately 1.5 million seafarers, who face hardship and danger every day to keep our global economy afloat. They live a tough life, working long hours in all weathers, living in confined conditions with limited opportunities for social interaction or relaxation. The work is hard and the level of responsibility is high.

Separation from family and loved ones for months at a time is a constant backdrop to a seafarer's life, and the threat of piracy and shipwreck are at the back of many seafarers' minds.

So, this year, on June 25th, the Day of the Seafarer, we are once again asking people everywhere to show their appreciation for the seafarers that quietly, mostly unnoticed, keep the wheels of the world in motion.

Last year our campaign was a tremendous success, generating numerous web stories, videos, blog postings, news articles and opinion pieces from experts and media outlets all over the world. Twitter messages from the campaign reached more than ten million people, while Facebook reached more than 300,000 users.

So this year, why don't you join our campaign? All you need to do is complete the sentence "Seafarers brought me...." and post it on social media.

Think of something you own and which came by sea. Whether it's the car you drive, the food you eat, the clothes you wear, the gadgets you use or the furniture you sit on, write it down and post it, adding the hash tag "thank you seafarer." If you can also post a photo or video, even better.

By doing so, you will be adding your voice to the millions of others who, on this one day, take the time to stop and thank those who work so hard, in the face of great hardship, to make our lives better.

So "Thank you, seafarers".
