



Fifth Meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee established under Article XIII of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, as amended

Geneva, 7–11 April 2025

► Addendum to the Background paper for discussion: Proposed amendments to the Standing Orders of the Special Tripartite Committee

A. Introduction

1. The Special Tripartite Committee (STC), under *Any other business*, will need to consider proposed amendments to its Standing Orders, aimed at addressing an issue which it has faced recently. This concerns the need to enable it to continue to discharge its advisory function towards the Governing Body, in between meetings.
2. The proposed amendments presented below are put forward jointly by the shipowners' and seafarers' groups, in consultation with the Officers of the STC and the Office, to enable the Officers the STC to convene extraordinary meetings.
3. A decision point is also presented below, under section C.

B. Proposed amendments

1. **Proposed amendments to enable the STC to continue to discharge its advisory function towards the Governing Body in between STC meetings**
(see new text shaded in grey)

New paragraphs 7-11 added to article 3: *Meetings and agenda*

[...]

6. The Officers of the MLC Committee shall adjust the times referred to in paragraphs 4 and 5 above, where a meeting is convened at short notice.

7. Extraordinary meetings of the MLC Committee, held in between two meetings convened by the Governing Body, shall be convened by the Officers to enable the Committee to address urgent matters within its mandate [after a notice of 2 months], whenever 10 of the ratifying Members, and both the shipowners' and seafarers' groups, give notice to the Director-General that they desire such a meeting to be arranged. The Director-General shall immediately inform the Officers of the Governing Body. The communication to convene an extraordinary meeting shall include the agenda as adopted by the Officers of the MLC Committee.

8. The purpose of extraordinary meetings includes providing advice to the Governing Body, ILO Members and its tripartite constituents, such as by way of resolutions on actions to be taken on matters impacting or relating to the MLC, 2006. Extraordinary meeting shall not be convened for the purposes of amending provisions of the MLC, 2006.

9. Extraordinary meetings shall be organized only in English and at no cost to the Office, beyond those related to the preparation of documents and to the provision of video conferencing services. They shall take place in a format that allows for remote participation or for participation in a hybrid format (i.e., both physical and remote attendance).

10. The Officers may invite to the extraordinary meeting representatives of interested official international organizations and of non-governmental international organizations or other entities as referred to in article 9, paragraphs 3 and 4.

11. These Standing Orders shall apply insofar as relevant, with the exception of article 18.

Explanations

Ensuring quality labour is the responsibility of employers, unions, national and international regulators. Due to the extremely negative experiences that seafarers went through during the Covid-19 pandemic, the shipping industry is still to this day experiencing notable shortages in the workforce. This has continued to have a knock on effect on the wider supply chain, which remains under strain in the midst of ongoing global uncertainty.

In the context of lessons learned from COVID-19, the following can be concluded:

- There is a need for stronger, long-term cooperation between industry and governments is required to address the increasing challenges and changes to maritime trade and labour markets.
- Government-industry collaboration is essential.

- Competent national government ministries and agencies need to collaborate with intergovernmental organizations and liaise more closely with industry and unions, to improve the treatment of seafarers.
- Unless meaningful changes are implemented, the same issues faced during the pandemic will re-emerge.

Moreover, Article XIII of the MLC, 2006 specifies that “The Governing Body of the International Labour Office shall keep the working of this Convention under continuous review through a committee established by it with special competence in the area of maritime labour standards”. However, no framework currently exists for the STC to address urgent matters in between sessions. This includes, for example, to provide advice to the Governing Body, ILO Members and its tripartite constituents, such as by way of resolutions, on actions to be taken on matters impacting or relating to the MLC, 2006.

With all of the above in mind and in the context of the MLC, 2006, this proposal is submitted to ensure that there is stronger cooperation between ILO, national governments, industry and unions in the event of an emergency of international concern – not limited to a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) subject to meeting the conditions and thresholds for convening extraordinary meetings of the STC.

The amendments proposed under Article 3 of the Standing Orders are therefore intended to establish a new framework, through which extraordinary meetings of the STC can be convened, at no cost for the Office, to address urgent matters, and at the exclusion of amendments to the Code of the MLC, 2006.

C. Point for decision

4. **The Special Tripartite Committee decides to recommend to the Governing Body, at its 355th Session (November 2025) the adoption of the amendments to Article 3 of the Standing Orders of the Special Tripartite Committee established for the Maritime Labour Convention in order to allow it to hold extraordinary meetings.**