

## **NUSI AND MUI HOSTED JOINTLY “THE BRICS SEAFARERS FORUM 2026”**

The BRICS Seafarers Forum 2026, jointly hosted by the Maritime Union of India (MUI) and the National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI) at NUSI Bhavan, Mumbai, concluded successfully today with a strong international call for greater cooperation, decent work, social dialogue and enhanced protection of seafarers.

The Forum brought together the International Labour Organization (ILO), leading seafarers’ trade unions, government representatives, maritime authorities, shipowners and maritime experts from BRICS nations and partner countries.

Representatives from Brazil, Russia, India, Iran, Indonesia and other participating nations joined the Forum, both in person and virtually, united by one fundamental commitment: SEAFARERS FIRST.

The Forum was inaugurated by Shri Shyam Jagannathan, Director General of Maritime Administration, Government of India, who welcomed the international delegates to Mumbai and highlighted the critical challenges confronting the global maritime workforce.

In his inaugural address, Shri Jagannathan emphasised that seafarers remain the backbone of international trade, yet continue to face unprecedented challenges arising from geopolitical tensions, armed conflicts, crew abandonment, rapid technological change and the global transition towards a greener maritime future.

Referring to the Forum’s theme, “Strengthening Cooperation Among BRICS Seafarers’ Unions for Decent Work, Maritime Sovereignty and Peace,” he stressed the importance of closer cooperation, dialogue and mutual support among BRICS maritime nations to protect the rights, welfare, safety and dignity of seafarers.

He expressed confidence that discussions on maritime labour issues, training, decarbonisation, digitalisation, women in maritime, crew abandonment and the protection of seafarers in conflict zones would contribute to constructive outcomes and stronger international maritime cooperation. He also welcomed the proposed Mumbai Declaration 2026 and resolutions aimed at advancing the welfare and protection of seafarers across BRICS nations.

The Forum was further strengthened by the distinguished participation of Ms. Beatriz Vacotto, Head of the Maritime Section, International Labour Organization (ILO), and Dr. Augusto Grieco Sant’Anna Meirinho, Labour Prosecutor and Secretary for International Labour Cooperation of the Brazilian Labour Prosecution Service (Ministério Público do Trabalho – MPT).

Ms. Beatriz Vacotto congratulated the organisers on the successful convening of the Forum and highlighted the significance of the 20th anniversary of the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC, 2006). She emphasised that the MLC remains a powerful instrument for protecting seafarers through inspections, certification, financial security and insurance mechanisms, and strong social dialogue.

She stressed the importance of ensuring that seafarers are fully aware of their rights, particularly in relation to wages, abandonment and insurance protection. Highlighting the 2025 amendments to the MLC, 2006, she noted the recognition of seafarers as key workers and the strengthening of protections against violence, harassment and abandonment.

Ms. Vacotto further called for stronger implementation of the MLC, necessary legal and regulatory reforms, and enhanced global cooperation to ensure that the rights and protections guaranteed to seafarers are effectively enforced in practice.

Their participation, together with senior representatives of BRICS seafarers' unions, the Brazilian Government and Maritime Authority, shipowners and leading Indian maritime organisations, reinforced the Forum's international significance and its commitment to decent work, social dialogue and the protection of seafarers.

The active contribution of BRICS seafarers' unions CONTTMAF, SUR, IMMS, KPI, FNTTAA, SINDMAR, SINDFOGO and TCWUIF; representatives of the Brazilian Government and Brazilian Maritime Authority; Syndarma-ABEAM and Petrobras Transporte; together with India's SWFS, SPFO, FOSMA, MASSA, ICCSA, INSA, NUSI and MUI, gave the Forum a truly global and tripartite maritime character.

### **KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED**

The Forum held extensive discussions on the protection of seafarers in armed conflicts and situations of geopolitical tension; crew abandonment and stronger enforcement of the Maritime Labour Convention; fair treatment of seafarers and protection against criminalisation; collective bargaining and maritime labour standards; women in maritime, equality and inclusion; decarbonisation and a Just Transition; artificial intelligence, automation, cybersecurity and future maritime skills; maritime training, certification and career development; national fleets, cabotage and maritime sovereignty; and safe manning, fatigue prevention and occupational safety.

### **BRICS SEAFARERS COORDINATION NETWORK**

In a major step towards sustained international cooperation, the Forum resolved to strengthen permanent coordination among BRICS seafarers' unions through the BRICS Seafarers Coordination Network, enabling regular engagement and exchange between annual meetings.

The Forum also agreed to establish a BRICS Working Group on Collective Bargaining and Labour Standards to exchange national experiences, identify best practices and examine common principles for the protection of seafarers and minimum acceptable maritime labour standards.

A clear message emerged from Mumbai: technology must empower seafarers and must not replace their rights; decarbonisation must deliver a Just Transition and must not become a job-cutting exercise; women must have equal opportunities to enter, remain and lead in the maritime industry; and no seafarer should become a victim of war, geopolitics, abandonment or unjust criminalisation.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Milind Kandalgaonkar, General Secretary-cum-Treasurer, National Union of Seafarers of India (NUSI), said:

"Ships may sail under different flags and seafarers may come from different nations, but their struggles, sacrifices and aspirations are the same. India has sent a clear message the seafarers of the Global South will cooperate, coordinate and stand together. No seafarer should ever stand alone."

The BRICS Seafarers Forum 2026 – Mumbai has strengthened the foundation laid in Salvador, Brazil, in 2025 and taken cooperation among BRICS seafarers' unions towards a more permanent, action-oriented international platform.

From Salvador to Mumbai. From dialogue to action. From cooperation to solidarity.

The Forum concluded with a renewed commitment to strengthen cooperation among seafarers' unions of the Global South and to collectively advance decent work, dignity, safety and justice for seafarers worldwide.