

Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City

Nineteenth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 628

Introduced by TUCP Part-List
REP. RAYMOND DEMOCRITO C. MENDOZA

A RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE PHILIPPINE GOVERNMENT TO IMMEDIATELY CONVENE ALL LEGITIMATE STAKEHOLDERS OF THE PHILIPPINES SEAFARING INDUSTRY TO URGENTLY ADDRESS THE ISSUES RAISED BY THE EMSA AUDIT

WHEREAS, the Philippines, as a signatory to the 1978 International Maritime Organization's (IMO) International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), is duty-bound to comply with the minimum requirements on education, training, and certification of seafarers;

WHEREAS, the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), as mandated by the European Commission (EC), conducts inspection-audit of countries that deploy seafarers aboard European Union (EU)-flagged ships to determine whether their maritime education, training, and certification comply with the STCW;

WHEREAS, the EMSA audit informs the decision of the EC, the executive arm of the EU, alongside the EU Member States on whether to extend or withdraw their recognition of the country-issued certification of seafarers;

WHEREAS, since 2006, the Philippines continues to fail to comply with the STCW as audited by EMSA. In 2006, there were a total of 158 findings or grievances. In 2010, there were 24. In 2012, there were 16. In 2013, there were 116. In 2014, there were 6. In 2017, there were 42. In its most recent audit in 2020, the EMSA discovered 13 shortcomings and 23 grievances, citing insufficient course design, inconsistent teaching, and unsystematic assessment, among others;¹

WHEREAS, after more than a decade of continued non-compliance, per industry sources, this is the final year set by the EMSA for the Philippines to address the deficiencies through corrective action on the education, training, and certification of Filipino seafarers towards full compliance with the STCW;²

¹ OIC-Executive Director Samuel Batalla, as the representative of the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), enumerated the findings based on EMSA Inspections conducted between 2006 and 2020 during the Fourth (4th) Regular Meeting of the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs held on October 27, 2022.

² Based on Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) Assistant Secretary Jerome Pampolina's presentation during the Fourth (4th) Regular Meeting of the Committee on Overseas Workers Affairs held on October 27, 2022.

WHEREAS, should the Philippines continue to fail to address these deficiencies, around 50,000 Filipino seafarers aboard EU ships are at risk of losing their jobs. If the recognition by the EU of Philippine-issued certification is withdrawn, Filipino seafarers will no longer be qualified to be deployed in EU-plying vessels that require such certification. The Philippines will further need to undergo a new round of evaluation and must satisfactorily comply with the findings before the recognition is restored;

WHEREAS, the decertification by the EU may further influence other ship-owning countries worldwide, such as risking the Philippines' position in the "White List" of countries compliant with the STCW by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the specialized agency of the United Nations tasked with regulating the safety and security of shipping. This will severely impact the country's image in the global maritime arena and its national economy;

WHEREAS, in cognizance that the Philippines continues to recover from the socio-economic scarring brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and as the nation grapples with surging inflation, lack of jobs, and poor job quality, the Philippine economy cannot absorb any more job losses, especially in the ranks of Filipino seafarers. In recent years, the total number of seafarers deployed overseas per year is as follows: 376,663 (2017), 337,502 (2018), 469,996 (2019), and 217,223 (2020).³ This number of jobs is at risk if the Philippines fails to meet the minimum international standards of maritime education, training, and certification;

WHEREAS, overseas Filipino workers' remittances have a significant impact in uplifting their families' economic standing and in contributing to the growth of the national economy since remittances serve as a buffer for the balance of payment deficits of the country and its reserves during crises alongside its significant contribution to the nation's export earnings and gross national product.⁴ Remittances are so crucial that in the past years, annual remittance inflows account for as much as 10% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).⁵ It is absolutely imperative to recognize and address the issues raised by the EMSA audit as a top national economic priority concern, especially in terms of the remittances of the Philippines seafaring industry. In recent years, the total sea-based remittances to the country are as follows: \$6,870,827,000 (2017), \$6,139,512,000 (2018), \$6,539,246,000 (2019), \$6,353,522,000 (2020), and \$6,545,002,000 (2021).⁶ On average, Filipino sea-based remittances amount to approximately more than ₱368 billion. This amount of remittances is also threatened by the Philippines' continued non-compliance to the STCW as audited by the EMSA;

WHEREAS, considering the significant contribution of the Philippines seafaring industry to the country and the scope and magnitude of the issues that the industry faces, there is an urgent need for comprehensive consultations among seafarers unions, manning agencies,

³ Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) Data as cited in Gorecho, D. (2022, March 25). Philippines still a top supplier of seafarers. Business Mirror. <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/03/25/philippines-still-a-top-supplier-of-seafarers/>

⁴ Bagasao, I.F. (2005). Migration and Development: The Philippine Experience. In Maimbo, S. & Ratha, D. (eds.), *Remittances: Development Impact and Future Prospects*, pp.133-142. The World Bank.

⁵ Bayangos, V. & Jansen, K. (2010). The Macroeconomics of Remittances in the Philippines. *International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University (ISS), The Hague, ISS Working Papers - General Series*, 61. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/46433512_The_Macroeconomics_of_Remittances_in_the_Philippines

⁶ Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Data as cited in Gorecho, D. (2022, March 25). Philippines still a top supplier of seafarers. Business Mirror. <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/03/25/philippines-still-a-top-supplier-of-seafarers/>

employers' representatives, and the concerned government agencies, led by the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Department of Transportation (DOTr), the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), and the Department of Finance (DOF), among others;

WHEREAS, tripartite meetings among all legitimate stakeholders must be conducted as soon as possible with the deepest sense of urgency and dispatch to arrive at innovative solutions to maintain the Philippines's stature as the preferred supplier of seafarers for the international commercial maritime industry. These discussions should center on crystalizing the ways forward for the welfare of Filipino seafarers and the future of the Philippines seafaring industry through measures: i) to ensure Philippine-issued certificates of competency and proficiency for seafarers remain unquestioned; ii) to ensure that Filipino seafarers remain the preferred hire in the international maritime and cruise industries and a major source of dollar remittances to Filipino families which also assist their economic recovery; iii) to ensure that MARINA, DMW, DOTr, and CHED regularly meet and maintain the international standards of training that comply with international audits such as those of EMSA; iv) to ensure that training programs should not be unduly burdensome financially and time-wise to Filipino seafarers; and v) to ensure the Philippines's future competitive position in the seafaring industry with the introduction of new technology;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives calls on the relevant government agencies, spearheaded by spearheaded by DOTr-MARINA in cooperation and coordination with DMW, CHED, DFA, and DOF, to immediately convene all legitimate stakeholders concerned with the Philippine seafaring industry in order to address the issues raised by the EMSA audit, in the interest of Filipino seafarers and their families, the industry, and the country as a whole.

Adopted,



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