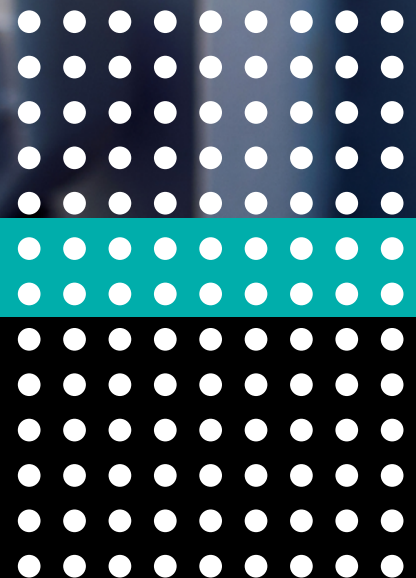# International Chamber of Shipping

Shaping the Future of Shipping

Industry Principles for Establishing Effective Measures to Combat and Eliminate Harassment and Bullying in the Maritime Sector

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Industry Principles for Establishing Effective Measures to Combat and Eliminate Harassment and Bullying in the Maritime Sector

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Background

The ability of the maritime sector to successfully combat harassment and bullying on board ships highly depends on the effectiveness of company policies and other complementary measures. This includes how they are developed, implemented, applied and monitored.

Drawing inspiration from an array of company policies and complementary initiatives, ICS and its global network of shipowners and operators have produced a set of industry principles for establishing effective measures to combat harassment and bullying. These are outlined below.

All shipowners and operators are being strongly encouraged to take these ICS principles into account, when reviewing their existing policies or establishing new policies and complementary measures to address harassment and bullying.

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Five High-Level Principles

Company policies and complementary measures to successfully combat harassment and bullying in the maritime sector should be mindful of the following high-level principles:

1	Be data driven (e.g., surveying employees on board and ashore).
2	Foster a culture of inclusion and diversity.
3	Support all cultural backgrounds, races, religions and faith.
4	Treat complaints of harassment or bullying with seriousness and treat those making complaints with respect and dignity, avoiding "victim blaming".
5	Include a statement of strong leadership commitment to the elimination of harassment and bullying.

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Eight Detailed Principles

Company policies and complementary measures to successfully combat harassment and bullying in the maritime sector should also be mindful of the following, more detailed, principles.

1	**Defining 'harassment and bullying'**
	Principle 1: Define what 'harassment and bullying' means for your company, including examples of behaviours that constitute these actions.

Principle 1.1: Clearly define, through social dialogue and engagement with seafarers, what 'harassment and bullying' means for your company, in accordance with any prevailing national laws and regulations of the flag state, including the International Labour Organization (ILO) Violence and Harassment Convention (C190), as applicable. These should, for example, also clearly distinguish between mental, physical and sexual harassment.

Principle 1.2: In the absence of applicable national laws and regulations from the flag state, clearly define what 'harassment and bullying' means for your company, using international regulatory regimes or global industry guidance as a basis, such as the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention (C190) and the latest version of the ICS/ITF *Guidance on Eliminating Shipboard Harassment and Bullying*.

Principle 1.3: The applicable definition should highlight differences between 'bully' behaviour (conflict + malice) and 'tough boss' behaviour (conflict + no malice), as well as how these are addressed. Likewise, it should distinguish between 'minor personal or professional conflicts' (e.g., personality clashes or interpersonal issues) and 'serious misconduct' leading to harassment or bullying complaints. Harassment and bullying through cyber and digital technologies also needs to be addressed. Outdated management styles should be eradicated through appropriate training and instruction.

2	**Raising awareness about harassment and bullying throughout the company**
	Principle 2: Raise organisation wide awareness about your company's stance and expectations regarding 'harassment and bullying'.

Principle 2.1: Promote awareness about what 'harassment and bullying' means, in the context of your company, through companywide communications and other complementary measures targeted at all employees. These should also encourage 'bystanders' to become defenders or 'upstanders' to prevent harassment and bullying.

Principle 2.2: Make it clear that your company does not tolerate any kind of harassment, including sexual harassment, or bullying and will treat all complaints seriously and in strict confidence, to protect whistleblowers.

Principle 2.3: Seafarers should also be made aware that, as a last resort, they have the right to file a complaint directly to an appropriate external authority, e.g., flag administration; port state control (PSC) officials; local seafarer labour organisation representatives; or other seafarer welfare assistance services.

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3	**Establishing anti-harassment and bullying policies**
	Principle 3: Establish effective company policies to combat 'harassment and bullying' throughout your company.

Principle 3.1: Effective policies contain, for example, frameworks of processes and procedures which could include: training to encourage staff members to examine their own attitudes and behaviour; effective preventive measures; confidential whistleblower reporting channels; clear complaints procedures, including steps to file a complaint and for complaints investigation and management (in line with applicable professional standards); involving company welfare officers or company ILO Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) representatives; timely, appropriate and proportionate disciplinary measures where such action is necessary; and potential consequences for failure to protect the identity of all participants of an investigation.

Principle 3.2: A company's complaints management framework should cover the shoreside and all shipboard departments (deck, engine and shipboard hotels, in the case of cruise ships); with a dedicated Complaints Manager assigned as investigator to each of these groups. Any employee handbook, seafarers' charter, company 'Code of ethics or conduct' should have dedicated sections addressing the issue of harassment and bullying specifically.

Principle 3.3: Remedial action should focus on the perpetrator. Strict disciplinary action might need to be taken against serious offences, including the prospect of dismissal. In the event of an infraction of law, assistance should be provided in reporting the case to applicable authorities or criminal justice system. Protection should be guaranteed against victimisation and malicious complaints, e.g., providing knowingly false evidence could also lead to grounds for legal and/or disciplinary procedures (including dismissal).

4	**Ensuring companywide support for anti-harassment and bullying policies**
	Principle 4: Ensure that anti-harassment and bullying policies are developed through social dialogue with workers and are fully supported by senior management.

Principle 4.1: To achieve full effectiveness and impact, ensure that the policy is developed through social dialogue, benefiting from active engagement with all relevant employees on board and ashore.

Principle 4.2: To ensure maximum buy in throughout the company, the CEO and all levels of management should continuously demonstrate their full commitment to adhering, implementing and enforcing the company's policy to eliminate harassment and bullying and promoting the underlying goal of a sustainable working environment underpinned by respect for the dignity and well-being of all workers.

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5 Considering additional measures to complement anti-harassment and bullying policies

Principle 5: Consider additional measures for adoption, as a complement of existing company policies to combat 'harassment and bullying'.

Principle 5.1: Sometimes a person might be unaware of the effect that their behaviour might have on others, or does not have any intention to bully. Additional measures to combat harassment and bullying could include, for example: anti-harassment and bullying days; training for monitoring, preventing, reporting and effectively addressing harassment and bullying (including e-learning courses, as appropriate); awareness sessions prior to embarkation, developed in accordance with best practice standards, such as ISO's Quality Management Systems for training courses (ISO 9001), etc.

Principle 5.2: Establish a 'Buddy' system to help support the settling in process of new trainees (i.e., cadets), providing them with emotional support to smoothly integrate into the shipboard working environment. If not already in place, also consider establishing adequately trained crew welfare officers who can serve as Points of Contact (POCs) and first ports of call in cases of harassment and bullying.

6 Identifying and implementing further measures to complement anti-harassment and bullying policies

Principle 6: Identify and implement further measures, complementary to company policies to combat harassment and bullying holistically.

Principle 6.1: Further measures to combat harassment and bullying could include, for example: implementing 'Speak Up' campaigns, underpinned by a no-retaliation policy, to encourage employees to report their concerns; and 'Conversation Circles' where employees can openly discuss their experiences and challenges in a safe space.

Principle 6.2: Establish company hotline services, which can be used for reporting cases of harassment and bullying. This could also include, for example, support desks specifically for those most vulnerable to these actions, such as female seafarers and cadets.

7 Benchmarking companies' anti-harassment and bullying policies and complementary measures

Principle 7: Ensure sustained improvements in your anti-harassment and bullying policies and complementary measures.

Principle 7.1: For sustained improvements to your existing company policies and initiatives, explore new measures and practices available and benchmark your existing initiatives against these.

Principle 7.2: Remain open to innovation and learning to continually improve your practices and maintain a workplace that sets the standard for respect, inclusion and employee well-being.

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8 Fostering a positive work culture on board

Principle 8: Combat harassment and bullying by fostering and promoting a positive work culture on board

Principle 8.1: The success of company policies and complementary measures to combat harassment and bullying is highly dependent on the work culture that companies instil on board their ships over time.

Principle 8.2: Fostering a positive culture on board, with a clear set of shared values – underpinned by diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) principles and cultural awareness policies – will help to address issues such as harassment and bullying and ensure long-term success.

Principle 8.3: Instilling a positive culture on board should be underpinned by company policies and measures that provide strong support to all seafarers, taking into account their diverse cultural backgrounds, races, religions and faith.

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