

Groups join forces to call for air sector to gain 'key worker' designation

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ICAO has joined the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) in calling for personnel maintaining global air and sea trade capacities to be designated as key workers.

The call to world governments comes as Covid-19 restrictions and guidelines continue to curtail travel and restrict border movements, ports and airports are being closed and ships and aircraft are being denied entry, and entire transport hubs are being affected.

The UN agencies are encouraging states to ensure the 'key worker' designation for seafarers, marine personnel, fishing vessel personnel, offshore energy sector

personnel, aviation personnel, air cargo supply chain personnel, and airport and port services personnel.

Signed on behalf of ICAO secretary general Dr Fang Liu, IMO secretary general Kitack Lim, and ILO director general Guy Ryder, the joint statement highlights that air transport moved some 35% of all global cargo combined by value last year, and that the total number of licensed aviation professionals, which include pilots, air traffic controllers and licensed maintenance technicians, was 887,000 in 2019, according to most recent ICAO data.

It also underscored how more than 80% of global trade by volume is moved by maritime transport and the world's 2 million seafarers, including much of the global food supply.

The statement reads: "We are seeking the support of governments to facilitate crew changes, operations essential to maintain the global cargo supply chains and operations related to humanitarian aid, medical and relief flights. For humanitarian reasons – and the need to comply with international safety and employment regulations – crew changes cannot be postponed indefinitely."