Standard A1.4 – Recruitment and placement

1. Each Member that operates a public seafarer recruitment and placement service shall ensure that the service is operated in an orderly manner that protects and promotes seafarers' employment rights as provided in this Convention.

2. Where a Member has private seafarer recruitment and placement services operating in its territory whose primary purpose is the recruitment and placement of seafarers or which recruit and place a significant number of seafarers, they shall be operated only in conformity with a standardized system of licensing or certification or other form of regulation. This system shall be established, modified or changed only after consultation with the shipowners' and seafarers' organizations concerned. In the event of doubt as to whether this Convention applies to a private recruitment and placement service, the question shall be determined by the competent authority in each Member after consultation with the shipowners' and seafarers' organizations concerned. Undue proliferation of private seafarer recruitment and placement services shall not be encouraged.

3. The provisions of paragraph 2 of this Standard shall also apply – to the extent that they are determined by the competent authority, in consultation with the shipowners' and seafarers' organizations concerned, to be appropriate – in the context of recruitment and placement services operated by a seafarers' organization in the territory of the Member for the supply of seafarers who are nationals of that Member to ships which fly its flag. The services covered by this paragraph are those fulfilling the following conditions:

(a) the recruitment and placement service is operated pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement between that organization and a shipowner;

(b) both the seafarers' organization and the shipowner are based in the territory of the Member;

(c) The Member has national laws or regulations or a procedure to authorize or register the collective bargaining agreement permitting the operation of the recruitment and placement service; and

(d) the recruitment and placement service is operated in an orderly manner and measures are in place to protect and promote seafarers' employment rights comparable to those provided in paragraph 5 of this Standard.

4. Nothing in this Standard or Regulation 1.4 shall be deemed to:

(a) prevent a Member from maintaining a free public seafarer recruitment and placement service for seafarers in the framework of a policy to meet the needs of seafarers and shipowners, whether the service forms part of or is coordinated with a public employment service for all workers and employers; or

(b) impose on a Member the obligation to establish a system for the operation of private seafarer recruitment or placement services in its territory.

5. A Member adopting a system referred to in paragraph 2 of this Standard shall, in its laws and regulations or other measures, at a minimum:

(a) prohibit seafarer recruitment and placement services from using means, mechanisms or lists intended to prevent or deter seafarers from gaining employment for which they are qualified;

(b) require that no fees or other charges for seafarer recruitment or placement or for providing employment to seafarers are borne directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, by the seafarer, other than the cost of the seafarer obtaining a national statutory medical certificate, the national seafarer's book and a passport or other similar personal travel documents, not including, however, the cost of visas, which shall be borne by the shipowner; and

(c) ensure that seafarer recruitment and placement services operating in its territory:

(i) maintain an up-to-date register of all seafarers recruited or placed through them, to be available for inspection by the competent authority;

(ii) make sure that seafarers are informed of their rights and duties under their employment agreements prior to or in the process of engagement and that proper arrangements are made for seafarers to examine their employment agreements before and after they are signed and for them to receive a copy of the agreements;

(iii) verify that seafarers recruited or placed by them are qualified and hold the documents necessary for the job concerned, and that the seafarers' employment agreements are in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and any collective bargaining agreement that forms part of the employment agreement;

(iv) make sure, as far as practicable, that the shipowner has the means to protect seafarers from being stranded in a foreign port;

(v) examine and respond to any complaint concerning their activities and advise the competent authority of any unresolved complaint;

(vi) establish a system of protection, by way of insurance or an equivalent appropriate measure, to compensate seafarers for monetary loss that they may incur as a result of the failure of a recruitment and placement service or the relevant shipowner under the seafarers' employment agreement to meet its obligations to them.

6. The competent authority shall closely supervise and control all seafarer recruitment and placement services operating in the territory of the Member concerned. Any licences or certificates or similar authorizations for the operation of private services in the territory are granted or renewed only after verification that the seafarer recruitment and placement service concerned meets the requirements of national laws and regulations.

7. The competent authority shall ensure that adequate machinery and procedures exist for the investigation, if necessary, of complaints concerning the activities of seafarer recruitment and placement services, involving, as appropriate, representatives of shipowners and seafarers.

8. Each Member which has ratified this Convention shall, in so far as practicable, advise its nationals on the possible problems of signing on a ship that flies the flag of a State which has not ratified the Convention, until it is satisfied that standards equivalent to those fixed by this Convention are being applied. Measures taken to this effect by the Member that has ratified this Convention shall not be in contradiction with the principle of free movement of workers stipulated by the treaties to which the two States concerned may be parties.

9. Each Member which has ratified this Convention shall require that shipowners of ships that fly its flag, who use seafarer recruitment and placement services based in countries or territories in which this Convention does not apply, ensure, as far as practicable, that those services meet the requirements of this Standard.

10. Nothing in this Standard shall be understood as diminishing the obligations and responsibilities of shipowners or of a Member with respect to ships that fly its flag.