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PRESS RELEASE

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Labour protection: Commissioner Andor welcomes adoption of new international standards to protect victims of forced labour and seafarers

László Andor, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion has welcomed the adoption by the International Labour Organization (ILO) of two new international instruments to combat forced labour, and the approval of important amendments to the ILO's [Maritime Labour Convention](#). The new standards were adopted at today's plenary session of the 103rd International Labour Conference, taking place in Geneva from 28 May to 12 June 2014.

László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion said: *"The updating of the Forced Labour Convention is a big step towards the definitive suppression of this terrible human rights violation. With these new instruments, we will be better equipped to combat today's forms of forced labour. Furthermore, the new amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention will raise global standards and ensure relief and support to seafarers and their families in case of abandonment, or if death or long-term disability occurs as the result of occupational injury, illness or hazard. I encourage all EU Member States to ratify and apply these instruments as soon as possible"*.

Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Home Affairs, said: *"I very much welcome the adoption of the Protocol and the Recommendation supplementing the ILO Forced Labour Convention. Now we must ensure these standards are applied globally. We must prevent forced labour and trafficking in human beings, protect and support the victims, and we must do it together."*

New Protocol and Recommendation on Forced labour

The International Labour Conference adopted a new Protocol and a new Recommendation to supplement the [Forced Labour Convention](#). These instruments provide for measures to prevent the use of forced labour, in particular in the context of trafficking in human beings. They require signatory countries to improve the protection of victims and provide access to appropriate and effective remedies, such as compensation. They also enhance international cooperation in the fight against forced or compulsory labour. The ILO estimates that today over 21 million people are victims of forced or compulsory labour, which generates US\$ 150 billion in illegal profits per year.

The [Forced Labour Convention](#) is a milestone of international labour law and has been ratified by all 28 EU Member States. However, it was originally established in 1930 and now needs to take account of how the phenomenon of forced labour has changed.

During this year's Conference, representatives of governments, workers and employers examined what needed to be done to strengthen action to end forced labour and to bring the Forced Labour Convention in the modern era. In the past two weeks, over 200

delegates discussed and reached agreement on more than a hundred amendments to the draft Protocol and Recommendation.

The adoption of these new instruments is of great importance for the European Union, not only because their provisions echo the principles of EU legislation and policies, but also because many EU international instruments refer to the ratification and effective implementation of the core ILO labour standards.

Improvements to ILO Maritime Labour Convention

The amendments agreed to the [2006 Maritime Labour Convention](#) aim to further protect seafarers from abandonment and ensure rapid compensation in case of death or disability. The Commission has supported the introduction of these new provisions, which were backed by the EU's Council of Ministers on 26th May 2014.

Under the new provisions, ships will be required to carry certificates or other documents to establish that financial security exists to protect seafarers working on board. Failure to provide this proof of protection may be grounds for a ship to be detained in port. According to the amendments, ship owners shall:

- comply with the financial support provisions to better protect seafarers from the consequences of abandonment in ports
- respect a set of additional minimum requirements for the financial support they provide to ensure that seafarers and their families are protected from the financial consequences of sickness, injury or death occurring in connection with their employment.

According to the [ILO's Abandonment of Seafarers Database](#), there were 159 unresolved abandoned merchant ships as of March 2014, some dating back to 2006. Many abandoned seafarers are aboard ships without pay, often for several months, and lack regular food supplies, medical care or means to return home.

In November 2013 the European Commission presented a [proposal to include seafarers in several EU labour law Directives](#), which complements standards of the Maritime Labour Convention as implemented in EU law (see [IP/13/1094](#)).

For more information

[ILO's website on force labour](#)

[László Andor's website](#)

[EU anti-trafficking website](#)

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