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THE PRIME MINISTER

19 October 2020

Dear Huw,

Thank you for your letter of 2 July about the plight of seafarers stranded on their ships as a result of the coronavirus pandemic.

As an island nation with a proud seafaring tradition and with many of our own citizens affected, it is only fitting that we have taken a lead role in efforts to tackle this unfortunate situation. This pandemic has highlighted to many that our global trade is almost entirely reliant on the shipping industry and those who operate within it. In March, the Maritime Minister stated to the UN bodies that we would continue to facilitate the transit and transfer of seafarers. Furthermore, to reduce any unnecessary distress to seafarers, we have ensured that quarantining rules do not apply for those of them travelling to the UK.

The international summit hosted by the Secretary of State for Transport on 9 July was an unprecedented step taken to bring together the great seafaring nations to address the issues of crew changes. Without the ability to carry out safe and timely crew changes, the well-being of many seafarers, and with it global trade, is put at risk. Of the fifteen major states in attendance, all were in support of taking significant steps to tackle the issues and fourteen have currently committed to the pledges set out in the joint statement.

The importance of this issue cannot be understated and we will continue to work hard until it is resolved.

Thank you, once again, for writing.

Mr Huw Merriman MP