Press Statement Brussels, 3 May 2016

ETF[i] AND ECSA[ii] JOINT DECLARATION ON THE RISKS OF THE ZIKA VIRUS AND GUIDANCE TO STAY SAFE FOR CREWS ONBOARD SHIPS CALLING IN AFFECTED COUNTRIES

INTRODUCTION

In the framework of the Sectoral Social Dialogue for Maritime Transport, the Social Partners for Maritime Transport ECSA and ETF acknowledge the need to draw shipping companies' and seafarer's attention to the risks from the Zika virus and to provide crew members onboard ships calling at ports in affected countries with relevant guidance to protect themselves.

JOINT DECLARATION

1. In the light of the current circulation of the Zika virus in Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, ETF and ECSA wish to underline the need to adopt and observe appropriate precautions against contracting the virus, and measures to minimise the risk of the virus spreading further, and to ensure that the welfare and well-being of seafarers are not put at risk. In particular attention should be paid to the need for prevention of contamination for pregnant women onboard (an increasing body of evidence is suggesting a link between Zika virus and babies born with microcephaly).

2. ETF and ECSA welcome and fully recommend the International Guidelines provided to shipping companies and seafarers by the UK Chamber of Shipping, and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) on the risks posed to ships' crews calling in countries affected by the Zika virus and the related precautionary measures that should be adopted. For ease of reference, these guidelines including key facts, health risks and symptoms, are attached to this Joint Declaration.

3. ETF and ECSA also welcome the work done by the EU SHIPSAN[1] ad hoc working group on the role of maritime transport in the spread of the Zika virus disease, and on health measures recommendations and guidelines for Member States and ship operators to prevent transnational vector-borne diseases and vector dispersal. For ease of reference, these guidelines are attached to this Joint Declaration.

4. According to this working group, although the introduction of human cases of Zika virus disease through ship travel is considered very low, there is certainly a risk of introducing invasive mosquito species through specific types of imported goods such as used tyres and ornamental plants, carrying infected Aedes adult or immature mosquitos.

5. Although the World Health Organisation (WHO) is not recommending travel or trade restrictions related to Zika virus disease, and although the symptoms are, for most

[1] The SHIPSAN ACT is a European Joint Action funded by the European Commission under the Health Programme (2008-2013) where **32 partners** from **24** European **countries** participate and deals with the impact on maritime transport of health threats due to biological, chemical and radiological agents, including communicable diseases and supports the implementation of International Health Regulations 2005.

people, mild, ETF and ECSA wish to point out the risks for crews onboard ships calling in affected countries, since little is yet known about the complications of the disease, and there is no specific treatment or vaccine. Moreover, the precautionary measures to prevent infection by the Zika virus are also effective against other mosquito transmitted diseases such as malaria, dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.

6. ETF and ECSA call on all relevant maritime stakeholders, notably (Member) States, International Organisations, ship-owners and crew members, to take their share of responsibility in taking precautionary measures so as to ensure that seafarers' health and safety is sufficiently protected and to prevent the spread of the virus. Shipmasters must be given the necessary information and resources in order to be able to properly comply with the attached Guidelines and to avoid placing crews in danger of infection.

7. ETF and ECSA acknowledge the right for individual (Member) States to adopt their own national measures to prevent the import of the Zika virus onto their territories, while reminding them of their obligations as port States with regard to the provision of free pratique and in ensuring immediate medical support and advice. The Social Partners would like to recall that free pratique is a WHO entitlement.

8. ETF and ECSA encourage the competent authorities and ship operators to follow the guidelines of the EU SHIPSAN ad hoc working group recommending implementation of Integrated Pest Management Plans at ports and on board ships, and application of regulations, control measures and treatment on ships carrying high-risk goods.

9. ETF and ECSA refer to, welcome and encourage the adoption of initiatives at national and/or company level in the fight against the Zika virus. In this respect, reference can be made to the creation of dedicated working groups of shipowners and trade unions with the aim of sharing information and exchanging views on best practices.

10. ETF and ECSA call upon their respective membership to ensure the widest possible dissemination of the attached Guidelines and invite EU Member States to support the work that is being carried out with an aim at combating the Zika virus in the infected areas.

11. More information on the Zika disease can be found on the following websites:
    a. http://www.itfglobal.org/en/resources/reports-publications/zika-factsheet
    b. http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/zika/en/
    c. http://www.shipsan.eu/Home/Zikavirus.aspx

For further information please contact:

- ***Philippe Alfonso**, ETF Political Secretary for Maritime Transport*
  Tel. +32.2.285.45.84, email p.alfonso@etf-europe.org
- ***Patrick Verhoeven**, ECSA Secretary General*
  Tel. +32.2.510.61.26*, email patrick.verhoeven@ecsa.eu*

[i] ETF is a pan-European trade union organisation which embraces more than 3.5 million transport workers from 230 transport unions and 41 European countries. It works within an overall framework of global solidarity to represent and defend the interests of transport workers throughout Europe.

[ii] ECSA is the organisation representing the interests of the national shipowners' associations of EU Member States and Norway. ECSA works through a permanent secretariat in Brussels and a Board of Directors, as well as a number of specialised committees. Its aim is to promote the interests of European shipping so that the industry can best serve European and international trade and commerce in a competitive free enterprise environment to the benefit of shippers and consumers.