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TRAINING AND WATCHKEEPING  
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**MENTAL HEALTH – HAPPY AND HEALTHY SEAFARERS ,MENTAL HEALTH –  
INTRODUCTION OF WELLBEING AND STRESS MANAGEMENT EDUCATION FOR THE  
CADETS AND FUTURE SEAFARERS**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document highlights the urgent need to address mental health as a critical component of seafarer competence and operational safety. It proposes structured amendments to the STCW Convention and Code to include psychological resilience and emotional wellbeing in mandatory training. The development of IMO-sanctioned mental health support tools, such as the **C-ECK** framework and confidential AI-based assistance, for crew. A review of company responsibilities under the ISM Code is suggested to incorporate proactive mental health management onboard. The paper also calls attention to the operational impact of early sign-offs due to mental distress and recommends pre and post voyage emotional readiness assessments. These proposals align with IMO's Strategic Goals 3 and 4, reinforcing both safety and the human element in global shipping.

<b>Agenda item</b>	Mental Health – Human Element
<b>Strategic direction</b>	3 and 4
<b>Output</b>	6.17
<b>Action to be taken</b>	Para 18 and its sub sections
<b>Related documents</b>	HTW 11/6, HTW 11/6/4, HTW 11/6/20, HTW 11/6/21, HTW 11/6/24, HTW 11/6/25, HTW 11 Inf. 15, HTW 11/WP4

## RESEARCH GAP

1 The **Comprehensive Review of the 1978 STCW Convention and Code** (10–13 Feb 2025, chaired by Capt. Cathleen Burns Mauro, United States) highlighted significant gaps under both **Appendix 11: Mental Health, Psychological Safety, and Gender & Cultural Diversity** and **Appendix 10: Violence and Harassment, including Sexual Harassment, Bullying, and Sexual Assault (SASH)**, underscoring that psychological safety and protection from harassment remain critical yet insufficiently addressed aspects of seafarers' welfare.

2 In the Appendix 11, ISWG-STCW 1/2/22, Regulation I/5, It Lacks provision for the responsibility of each Party in promoting a psychologically safe maritime work environment.

3 In the Appendix 11, ISWG-STCW 1/2/40, Table A-VI/1-4 (PSSR), Understand and take necessary actions to maintain mental health and emotional and psychological well-being' may be added as a new competency in column 1 as row 7 is mentioned.

4 In the Appendix 11, ISWG/STCW 1/2/42, Section A-VIII/2, part 3, paragraph 8.2 and part 4-1, paragraph 17.5, Paragraph 8.2 reads as follows: "Watches shall be carried out based on bridge and engine-room resource management principles."

5 In the Appendix 10, ISWG-STCW 1/2/22, Regulation I/14, Lacks provision for the responsibility of companies to ensure a maritime workplace safe from violence and harassment and a **grievance mechanism that ensures safe zones for victims, enabling them to file complaints without fear.**

6 In the Appendix 10, ISWG-STCW 1/2/27, annex 4, Part B, chapter II Include a nominated contact ashore, who is independent of the company providing the training at sea, with whom the prospective officer can make contact at any time during the normal working day of the student's Flag Administration to raise concerns of health and safety.

7 In Appendix 10, ISWG-STCW 1/2/46, Table A-II/2 Table A-II/2 should be revised to emphasize the understanding of Human Element and how to lead for safety, compliance with SASH requirements, psychological safety, and the factors that enhance and impact seafarers' well-being and mental health.

ASPECTS	DEVELOPED NATION	DEVELOPING NATION
Depression & Anxiety	6% depression, 20% anxiety; 55% considered leaving jobs (Europe/UK)	19.5% Indian seafarers report depression; 58.3% sleep problems; 75.1% poor coping; 17% Filipino seafarers with severe distress
Contract Length	4–6 months	9–12 months
Access to Counselling	Telemedicine, digital helplines, fatigue monitoring	Minimal counselling, peer-support only; social stigma limits uptake
Support Uptake	10,000+ ISWAN helpline calls in 2022	Very low due to absence of structured support
Regulatory Approach	Proactive, preventive frameworks integrated into safety systems	Reactive; mental health rarely included in official checks

Table 1.1: ISWAN (2020); BMC Public Health (2023); ILO (2018); BIMCO/ICS(2021); ISWAN (2022); EMSA (2021); ILO/WHO (2020); EMSA (2021); ILO (2018)

## **PROPOSAL**

8 The Committee is invited to consider measures to address the absence of binding provisions on psychological well-being within the STCW Convention, drawing on research evidence and best practices to strengthen early detection and intervention mechanisms:

8.1 The Sub-Committee is invited to consider the **development of a standardized regulatory framework jointly established by IMO and WHO—mandating Port Health Organizations to integrate brief, counselor-led mental health assessments into the Free Pratique process. Utilizing secure digital tools**, this compliance mechanism would help identify emotionally unfit seafarers early and provide access to timely counseling support, without disrupting voyage operations.

### **C-ECK : ( Crew Emotional Check-in Kiosk )**

8.1.1 As mental health challenges among seafarers continue to rise silently, the need for real-time emotional monitoring has never been more urgent.

8.1.2 The **C-ECK – Crew Emotional Check-in Kiosk** is a proactive solution designed to bridge the emotional gap between ship and shore. Installed in every vessel, C-ECK enables crew members to record their emotional state each day through a simple emoji-based interface—just a single tap to indicate whether they feel **“Happy” or “Sad”**.

8.1.3 These emotional check-ins are then securely transmitted, either in real-time or at scheduled intervals, to a centralized mental health monitoring system accessible to certified onshore counsellors. This enables timely identification of distress signals, early interventions, and a continuous emotional pulse of life at sea—all without disrupting daily operations. C-ECK is not just a system; it's a silent companion and safety net, ensuring **no seafarer is left emotionally unheard**.

#### **8.1.4 Following steps for using CECK :**

**STEP 1 : Seafarer clicks on the Kiosk machine - SMILE 😊 SAD 😞**

**STEP 2 : If SAD - Various options are displayed (Anxiety | Psycho Education | Family Matters | Depression | Grief | Stress | Physiological Issue | On Board Issues | Bullying | Trauma)**

**STEP 3 - Seafarer selects any one or multiple options.**

**STEP 4 - Mention his Unique Identity number and confirm.**

**STEP 5 - Data sent to the PHO and designated NGO in nearest proximity.**

**STEP 6 - Data is received and analyzed by the Mental wellbeing team consisting of a doctor, counselor and a psychiatrist.**

**STEP 7 - The Wellbeing team will reach out to the seafarer via communication means such as phone calls, messages and email for first interaction.**

**STEP 8 - Once the Well being assessment of seafarer is completed further on necessary sittings, activities and actions would be taken accordingly.**

8.1.5 Seafarers who are unable to convey emotions via the C-ECK options due to poor mental well-being will be identified by the team using their CDC number and available emoji-based feedback. The mental well-being verification will be conducted as a distinct process, separate from any other health clearance required for the port. Designated mental well-being officers shall board the vessel to carry out in-person verification of the crew. Compliance with this verification will be required as part of the overall port-clearance procedure.

8.1.6 At the next port of destination, when the Port Health Officer (PHO) boards the vessel to check for any medical cases—the **Mental Wellbeing Team will also accompany the PHO**. They will have a **one-to-one interaction with the identified seafarer**. If the seafarer requires further assistance, they will be **signed off from their duties on board** and taken ashore for proper care. If the seafarer feels ready to resume work before the vessel departs the port, they can **sign back in and continue their duties**; otherwise, they will remain under the care of the Mental Wellbeing Team with all necessary support provided and substitute crew will sign in.

8.1.7 Apart from this, seafarers are also **supposed to give mandatory updates on their mental well-being every 7days via the C-ECK Emoji GUI during the voyage** to help monitor seafarers well being.

8.1.8 After the successful implementation of C-ECK, we can further support seafarers mental well-being by integrating **biometric and RFID scans to track and regulate working hours and overtime beyond standard limits**, with this data shared with NGOs and PHOs. **Thus, shipowners can be held accountable for the mental well-being of seafarers**, as they are often responsible for instructing captains to push work even under harsh conditions. In addition, it will create opportunities for **stronger regulations and enforcement** to safeguard seafarers' welfare.

#### 8.1.9 Features of C-ECK Hardware

- **GPS | WIFI/LAN | One click GUI | Temperature resisting hardware | IOTs**

8.2 **Consider amending the STCW Convention and Code** to integrate psychological wellbeing as a core element of mandatory training.

8.3 **Recommend the development of IMO-endorsed mental health guidance materials and mobile tools, including AI-integrated "Sailor Buddy" applications.**

8.4 **Review company responsibilities under the ISM Code to ensure that mental wellbeing is given equal consideration alongside occupational safety. During operations with short sailing and short port stays like STS or coasting runs whenever required additional crew can be included in safe manning so as to comply with rest hour regulation ensuring no seafarer is stressed or under fatigue.**

8.5 **Start pre-voyage wellness checks and emotional readiness assessments by trained crew members to support seafarers' mental health** while also addressing the growing issue of anxious or stressed seafarers asking to leave early, which disrupts voyages and affects fair crew rotation, and this would not only help seafarers maintain stable mental well-being but also **reduce the risk of accidents at sea caused by strained crew members.**

### **ACTION REQUESTED OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE**

9. The Sub-Committee is invited to consider the proposal in para 8 and its sub sections and take action, as appropriate.