



BRICS Seafarers

Gente do Mar dos BRICS

Моряки БРИКС

ब्रिक्स नाविक

金砖国家海员

Final Resolution

Panel 1

Protection of National Cabotage and Maritime Sovereignty within the BRICS

Salvador, August 8, 2025

The representatives of seafarers' trade unions from BRICS countries, gathered at the "BRICS Seafarers" Forum, adopt the following Resolution on National Cabotage and Maritime Sovereignty, considering that:

1. Cabotage is an expression of national sovereignty over maritime transport and related activities within the territorial waters of each State;
2. Its protection guarantees decent jobs, development of the shipbuilding and maritime industries, national security, environmental preservation, and logistical autonomy of nations;
3. BRICS countries adopt their own cabotage protection policies, which must be recognized, strengthened, and respected by other countries, shipowners, and seafarers:
 - **Brazil:** maintains protected cabotage through **Law 9432/1997** and, more recently, sought to promote coastal shipping via the **BR do MAR program**, which incorporates social and labor safeguards to ensure meaningful participation of Brazilian seafarers and support the national-flag fleet.
 - **Russia:** maintains rules for the protection of national cabotage and recognizes the **Northern Sea Route (Arctic passage)** as part of its strategic cabotage navigation, thus ensuring sovereignty over this crucial maritime corridor and maintaining important jobs that are essential for Russian seafarers.
 - **India:** protects its shipping industry under the **1958 Cabotage Law**, reserving coastal trade for Indian-flagged vessels and promoting the national merchant marine and jobs for Indian seafarers.
 - **China:** maintains consistent policies that regard cabotage as a strategic sector, with strong state regulation and exclusivity for companies under national flag and ownership, thus locally employing a huge number of Chinese seafarers.
 - **Indonesia:** protects cabotage under the **Shipping Law No. 17/2008**. Domestic maritime transport is reserved for Indonesian-flagged and owned vessels with national crews, thus ensuring employment for Indonesian seafarers across thousands of islands and integrating the archipelago.
 - **Iran:** under **Iranian Maritime Law**, vessels operating in domestic waters must be at least 51% Iranian-owned and primarily crewed by Iranian nationals, with a phased substitution of foreign crew. These measures aim to strengthen national maritime capacity and ensure employment for Iranian seafarers.
 - **Ethiopia** – Although not a coastal country, Ethiopia has established strategic trade agreements with neighboring nations that secure access to ports and maritime routes. It operates a state-owned enterprise with exclusive rights over maritime activities, supported by a dedicated regulatory framework. This structure, designed to ensure transport using national capabilities, includes

Ethiopian seafarers systematic training, thereby guaranteeing operational sovereignty in the sector.

4. Other major global players, such as the **G7 countries** (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, and Japan), also implement strong and strategic policies to protect and develop their **maritime transport capacity**, including **national cabotage regimes**, **shipbuilding industries**, and the **employment of national seafarers**. Many nations around the world likewise recognize the strategic relevance of maintaining control over **domestic maritime transport**, adopting legislative, regulatory, and financial mechanisms that prioritize the use of **national-flag vessels** and **domestic crews**. Such frameworks are essential not only to **protect national interests and economic sovereignty**, but also to **secure maritime jobs, stimulate technological development, and enhance resilience in logistics and trade flows**.

Also, expressing serious concern:

1. Over the recent measure enacted by decree by the Government of Argentina, **without social dialogue**, which unilaterally and irresponsibly **deregulates its cabotage policy**, causing **serious harm to maritime workers, weakening the national shipbuilding industry**, and **restricting fundamental union rights**, such as the **right to strike**; we also express our **solidarity with Argentine seafarers and maritime unions**, who are directly impacted by this decision, and emphasize the need to uphold labor rights, national maritime capacity, and social dialogue in policymaking.

Resolve:

Art. 1 – To reaffirm and strongly support the sovereign right of each BRICS Member State to reserve maritime cabotage (including coastal, riverine, offshore, and port support operations) for vessels flying the national flag, under national ownership, and crewed by national citizens.

Art. 2 – To reject deregulation, unrestricted market opening, or flexibilization of cabotage that would undermine national control over the maritime sector, threaten jobs, security, or sustainability.

Art. 3 – To promote the establishment of a **BRICS Seafarers Forum** dedicated to defending cabotage, national fleets, and maritime sovereignty, with joint action in multilateral forums and mutual support among member countries.

Art. 4 – To encourage BRICS governments to:

- Establish criteria ensuring a **genuine link** between vessel flag, ownership, management, and crew for ships operating in national waters;
- Prioritize the **training and qualification of national seafarers**, linking such policies to the expansion of cabotage;
- Create **sovereign financing mechanisms** and protections for the domestic shipbuilding industry;
- Ensure that all cabotage-related legislation includes **social and labor safeguards**, such as the protection of local maritime jobs, in addition to the usual environmental and economic provisions;
- Support **cooperation mechanisms and international maritime transport agreements** among BRICS countries that prioritize seafarers from the bloc in international navigation, without compromising the protection of national cabotage.

Art. 5 – To propose the creation of a Correspondence Working Group with participation of each national coordinator to prepare a **BRICS Seafarers' common framework of principles on cabotage and maritime sovereignty**, based on consolidated national experiences that value national workers in their own waters, to be jointly presented in relevant international forums and organizations and to be adopted at a later stage as a **Cabotage Policy of the BRICS Seafarers Forum**.

Art. 6 – To demand the recognition of cabotage as an essential pillar for security, sustainable development, territorial integration, and decent work in BRICS countries, and to defend this position within the respective Global Union Federation.

Proposed by:

CONTTMAF Brazil

SUR Russia

NUSI India

KPI Indonesia

IMMS Iran

TCWUIF Ethiopia