



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Singapore, 3 February 2025 | Embargoed until 1400HRS**

### **Empowering the Future: SMOU and Tripartite Partners Invest in Maritime Workforce Development**

**Singapore, 3 February 2025** – The Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU), in partnership with the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute), SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG), and shipping companies, is driving efforts to enhance the training and recruitment of seafarers through the Tripartite Maritime Training Award (TMTA) programme. This collaboration aims to ensure a resilient Singaporean core in the maritime workforce while addressing the evolving needs of the industry.

Guest-of-Honour Brother Ng Chee Meng, Secretary-General of the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC), highlighted the significance of this initiative during SMOU and Wavelink's annual Lunar New Year Luncheon and Hong Bao Presentation. He encouraged stakeholders to look forward to shorter training durations and higher training allowances as part of the TMTA's enhancements. Further information on the TMTA programme will be shared in the upcoming month.

SG Ng said, "As the maritime sector faces challenges from global uncertainties and stricter environmental standards, tripartism remains key to building resilience and driving transformation. The Singapore Maritime Officers' Union has been steadfast in supporting seafarers' well-being and skills development, ensuring a strong Singaporean core in the workforce. NTUC and our unions will continue to ensure that our workers, like our seafarers, are provided the training, resources and tools they need to navigate these challenges and excel in their respective industries."



## Transforming Maritime Careers with the Tripartite Maritime Training Award (TMTA)

First relaunched at last year's SMOU and Wavelink Lunar New Year Luncheon and Hong Bao Presentation, the TMTA programme is poised for a significant revamp to address the dynamic needs of the maritime industry. This collaboration among SMOU, MPA, e2i, SSG, and shipping companies exemplifies the collective commitment of tripartite partners to strengthening Singapore's maritime workforce.

With SMOU committing \$4.2 million to this initiative, the TMTA programme reflects the union's dedication to nurturing talent and preparing seafarers for meaningful careers. Planned enhancements will include a shorter training duration and higher training allowances, ensuring participants have an efficient and well-supported pathway into the maritime sector.

TMTA is designed to provide participants with the skills and experience needed to thrive in maritime roles. Through a structured curriculum that combines classroom-based learning with practical, sea-based training, the programme ensures participants gain both theoretical knowledge and hands-on expertise, equipping them for success in the industry.

### Quote from Stakeholder(s):

Mary Liew, General Secretary of SMOU, shared:

“The TMTA programme exemplifies the strength of tripartite collaboration in addressing the evolving needs of the maritime sector. By working together to enhance training opportunities, we are not only building a stronger Singaporean core in the workforce but also ensuring that aspiring seafarers are well-equipped to thrive in the industry. This collective effort reflects our shared commitment to nurturing talent and sustaining Singapore's position as a leading maritime hub.”



Cheah Aun Aun, Director (Shipping)/Director of Marine, MPA, said:

“As a global shipping hub and international maritime centre, Singapore is committed to grow the maritime workforce. Together with our tripartite partners including Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union, government agencies, and industry partners, we are working together on the Tripartite Maritime Training Award programme to build a strong and diverse local seafaring talent pool for the maritime industry.”

Ms Loh Gek Khim, Director of the Industry Development Division of SSG, said:

"Equipping our workers with the relevant training and development is pivotal in ensuring that Singapore's maritime workforce remains resilient. SSG is committed to working closely with SMOU, MPA and our other tripartite partners to make this possible. Through this exciting collaboration, we look forward to seeing more joining the sector, and to the career growth of our aspiring seafarers."

#### Advancing Workers’ Welfare Through Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs)

SMOU continues its advocacy for seafarers through its Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs). From 2023 to 2024, the number of ships covered under CBAs increased by 7%, reflecting the union’s dedication to ensuring fair wages, enhanced working conditions, and comprehensive benefits for seafarers.

#### Celebrating Milestones: SMOU’s 75th Anniversary in 2026 and Singapore’s 60th Birthday in 2025

As Singapore celebrates its 60th year of independence in 2025, SMOU looks ahead to its 75th anniversary in 2026. These milestones highlight SMOU’s enduring legacy in advancing the maritime sector. While plans for commemorative events are underway, the union remains focused on honouring its heritage and driving progress in the maritime community.



### Acknowledging the Power of Partnerships

The success of SMOU's initiatives would not be possible without the steadfast support of its tripartite partners. The collaboration among unions, employers, and government agencies remains central to advocating for seafarers, driving innovation, and ensuring sustainable growth within the maritime industry.

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## **About Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU)**

SMOU was established in 1951. The union has grown from a membership base of about 400 in the 1970s to more than 30,000 members. SMOU is pivotal in promoting good industrial relations between seafarers (members) and their employers, the ship owners and ship-management companies, and the governments through its strong tripartite relationships with the local, regional and international maritime community. It seeks to improve the wages and working conditions of members in the maritime industry through collective bargaining agreements with shipping companies which employ them.

Since 1993, SMOU has helped distressed seafarers claim more than US\$20 million in unpaid wages. SMOU is an affiliate of NTUC and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). Visit [www.smou.org.sg](http://www.smou.org.sg)

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