

**The Rt Hon. David Cameron MP, Prime Minister**  
**10 Downing Street**  
**London**  
**SW1A 2AA**

11 December 2015

Dear Prime Minister,

**Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships**

Unite the Union is the UK's largest trade union and represents tens of thousands of men and women engaged in the UK's shipbuilding and ship repair industry. As you will be aware, the UK workforce has a proud history of building ships and submarines for the Royal Navy and are currently engaged in building new aircraft carriers, offshore patrol vessels and Astute class submarines.

We are affiliated to IndustriALL Global Union which represents more than fifty million workers in 143 countries, in 15 industrial sectors including the shipbuilding-shipbreaking industry. IndustriALL has initiated a global campaign urging all shipbuilding, shipbreaking and shipping states that have not yet ratified the Hong Kong Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, to do so now.

Shipbreaking activities pose an enormous threat to the health and safety of the workers involved, and also to the marine environment surrounding the yards. Besides the high risk of industrial accidents, toxic substances such as oils, asbestos, and PCBs affect the health of workers who are not protected by appropriate control measures or protective equipment and also affect to surrounding environment and ecosystems.

Under those circumstances, every year, hundreds of shipbreaking workers lose their lives facing serious occupational accidents in the shipbreaking yards of the South Asia region. The incidence of occupational diseases is largely unknown but believed to be extremely high. It is only a dream for most workers to live or survive until the age of 60.

The Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships (the Hong Kong Convention) was adopted in May 2009, aiming at ensuring that ships, when being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives, do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health, safety and to the environment.

The convention will enter into force 24 months after ratification by 15 States, representing 40 per cent of world merchant shipping by gross tonnage, combined maximum annual ship recycling volume not less than 3 per cent of their combined tonnage. Five years have already passed since its adoption; however, the convention has been ratified by only 3 countries as of today, and shamefully, many of the shipbuilding, shipbreaking and shipping states have not ratified yet.

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Therefore, Unite demands the United Kingdom government to be part of an effective solution to the problem of unsafe and unsustainable shipbreaking, and urgently ratify the Hong Kong Convention.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ian Waddell".

**Ian Waddell**  
National Officer - Aerospace & Shipbuilding