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Hamburg, 2 March 2022

German Shipowners' Association condemns Russia's attack on Ukraine Concern for seafarers / Shipping relies on free trade routes / Ukrainians and Russians im- portant part of crews / Ships stranded in Ukrainian ports

During its annual press briefing today, the German Shipowners' Association (VDR) also commented on the situation in Ukraine. VDR President Gaby Bornheim said: "People from dozens of different countries live and work on board the ships of Germany's merchant fleet – including thousands of Ukrainian and Russian seafarers. Shipping is a profoundly global industry that is crucially dependent on peace and free trade routes to ensure the security of supply worldwide. Given these and other circumstances, we are shocked by current developments and condemn Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine."

President Bornheim also pointed out that individual merchant ships remain stranded in Ukrainian ports, saying: "We demand that all ships and their crews be allowed to leave the conflict zone unharmed. Russia must respect the freedom of navigation. Uninvolved merchant vessels must not be attacked."

In conclusion, President Bornheim said: "The safety of our seafarers is our top priority. We call on all parties to ensure that – in addition to the Ukrainian population – the men and women on board, regardless of their nationality, do not become victims of this war."

Ukrainian and Russian seafarers also make up an important part of the crews on the ships of Germany's merchant fleet. An estimated total of roughly 5,000 seafarers from both countries are working on board, some on the same ship. Crew members from both countries collectively make up 14.5 per cent of the 1.89 million seafarers worldwide. Of them, nearly 200,000 are Russian and 76,000 Ukrainian.

About the German Shipowners' Association

The German Shipowners' Association (*Verband Deutscher Reeder, VDR*) is responsible for representing the common business and social policy interests of German shipping companies at federal and state government level as well as in relation to European and international bodies. Founded in 1907, the VDR merged with the Association of German Coastal Shipowners in 1994. With a membership of around 200, the VDR represents the majority of Germany's merchant fleet. For more details, visit www.reederverband.de.

Press photographs of Gaby Bornheim:

<https://www.reederverband.de/en/media/downloads/portraits-vdr-association-leadership>

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