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for Transport

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My Lords,

I thank you for the constructive debate on the Seafarers' Wages Bill at Report Stage on 26 October and for your engagement with this important piece of proposed legislation throughout its passage in the House. This Bill is an important step to improving seafarers' welfare and working conditions and I am pleased that we are a step further towards it becoming law.

I write to further explain some points raised in the debate, and to provide an update on the progress of the Seafarers' Charter as promised.

Lord Hendy asked me to clarify the position of the Crown Dependencies. As stated in Clause 1(1), the Bill applies to a service for the carriage of persons or goods by ship, with or without vehicles, between a place outside the United Kingdom and a place in the United Kingdom. Crown Dependencies are not part of the United Kingdom, and therefore a harbour in one of the Crown Dependencies is a place outside the UK for the purposes of the Bill. Likewise, Crown Dependencies have their own territorial waters, which are not UK territorial waters. Therefore, services from a Crown Dependency to a harbour in the UK would be covered by the Bill, as they would be services between a place outside the UK and a place in the UK. As with any other service in scope of the Bill, operators would need to evidence that they pay at least the equivalent to national minimum wage for work carried out in the UK and its territorial waters.

Any agreement for a bilateral minimum wage corridor would need to be negotiated with the Crown Dependencies on an individual basis, in much the same way as any we would seek to agree with our other near neighbours.

Lord Hendy also asked me to provide an update on the progress of the Seafarers' Charter. We continue to engage constructively with unions, relevant operators and the UK Chamber of Shipping. Officials most recently met several key stakeholders on 11 October to discuss the latest policy

position on the Seafarers' Charter, having considered all stakeholder feedback submitted to the Department on 1 September.

Further, officials recently visited Geneva and discussed the Seafarers' Charter with the International Labour Organization, further highlighting the progress of work on this issue. There are a range of views on a number of aspects of the Charter which we are exploring and Ministers will shortly be launching the voluntary code.

Once again, I thank Noble Lords for their continued interest in this matter. I look forward to Third Reading, and to handing over this Bill for introduction into the House of Commons. I will place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours,
Charlotte

BARONESS VERE OF NORBITON