

ICS Opens New Office

In December, ICS Chairman, Spyros M Polemis officially opened the new ICS offices at 38 St Mary Axe, London. Alongside guests from other international shipping organisations, the Reverend Tom Heffer from the Mission to Seafarers blessed the new headquarters, which will host meetings of ICS's member national associations and serve as a centre of maritime policy making for the international shipping industry.



Flag State Performance Table

ICS and ISF have published their latest annual Shipping Industry Flag State Performance Table – see www.ics-shipping.org/flag-performance.htm

The presentation of the Table has been modified slightly in order to address feedback from governments. However the purpose is the same: to encourage shipowners to examine whether a flag state has substance before using it and to encourage them to pressure their flag administrations to effect any improvements that might be necessary.



Rest Hour Changes

Ship operators are reminded to ensure compliance with the Manila amendments to the IMO STCW Convention, particularly in relation to seafarers' rest hours that apply worldwide from 1 January. The new rest hour requirements are likely to be vigorously enforced by Port State Control which will have the authority to check that ships maintain accurate records for individual seafarers. Amongst other changes, seafarers must now always receive at least ten hours rest in any 24 hour period. To help further reduce the possibility of fatigue, much of the flexibility that previously applied under STCW has now been removed. Other new STCW requirements governing seafarers' competence standards and certification will be phased in between now and 2017.

Useful advice and reference information is available in the updated ISF Guidelines to the IMO STCW Convention – see www.ics-shipping.org/publications.htm. In addition, the ISF Watchkeeper 3 software will assist compliance with the new rest hour record keeping requirements – see www.isfwatchkeeper.com for a free trial.

UN Climate Change Conference

ICS represented the shipping industry at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban, which agreed to establish a 'Green Climate Fund' to help mitigation and adaption projects in developing countries. While the details of how this will be financed have still to be decided (US\$ 100 billion a year by 2020), a number of governments have proposed that some of this funding should be raised from international shipping, presumably via a linkage to Market Based Measures (MBMs) that are being developed by IMO.

MBMs are controversial amongst shipowners, especially as the high cost of fuel means that they already have every incentive to improve their efficiency. Indeed, some governments appear more interested in how much money can be raised from shipping rather than the emissions reductions that this might deliver. ICS therefore stressed to UNFCCC delegates that shipping is not a 'cash cow', and that any financial contribution that it might be required to make should be proportionate to its share of the world's total emissions.

Governments must also avoid the possibility of modal shift. If excessive costs are added to shipping there could be far greater use of less efficient transport modes which would generate additional CO₂.

ICS recognises that the need to prevent climate change is a political challenge as much as a technical one, and that shipping needs to play a constructive part in the discussion about MBMs at IMO, which will take place in 2012. But if governments decide to implement a shipping MBM, the clear preference of the majority of the shipping industry is for an IMO compensation fund linked to fuel consumption, rather than a system based on emissions trading. Whatever is decided, ICS will continue to argue that in the absence of a global framework to address shipping's CO₂ there is a serious risk of regional unilateral measures for shipping, not least by the European Union, which introduced a regional (and highly controversial) emissions trading scheme for aviation in January.

ILO MLC

In Geneva, in December, ISF co-ordinated shipowner representation at a major tripartite meeting of governments, employers and unions (co-ordinated by ITF) which agreed terms of reference for a Special Tripartite Committee that will oversee proposals for amendments to the ILO Maritime Labour Convention once it enters into force, probably in early 2013. The Chairman of the ICS Labour Affairs Committee, Arthur Bowring (Hong Kong) served as the employers' spokesman, supported by 25 delegates from national shipowners' associations.

Piracy Victim Support

The Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Initiative (which, among other organisations, includes ISF) has recently compiled good practice guidelines for shipping companies and manning agents to help support seafarers and their families if affected by pirate attacks - see www.ics-shipping.org/piracy.html

China Pollution Regulations

New regulations in China governing pollution prevention introduced new operational and liability requirements for shipowners as from 1 January. At the invitation of the International Group of P&I Clubs, ICS and representatives of the China and Hong Kong Shipowners' Associations recently met with the Chinese Maritime Safety Agency in Beijing. In particular, ICS explained concerns about the ability of foreign shipowners to comply with the requirement to contract with local Spill Pollution Response Organisations in order to enter Chinese ports. China has since postponed the compliance date until 1 March in those ports which do not yet have such organisations in place, but the requirement is still being enforced elsewhere.

Briefly...

Tracking Pirate Financiers

In New York, ICS attended the latest meeting of the international Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia. ICS welcomes the establishment of a new working group to explore methods for clamping down on the financial beneficiaries of Somali piracy. In Bahrain, at a meeting of SHADE (Shared Awareness and Deconfliction), ICS also briefed military providers in the region about the industry's ongoing efforts to prevent pirate attacks.

ICC

ICS represented the shipping industry at the recent International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Transport Commission meeting in Istanbul, explaining the industry's position to shipper representatives with respect to the reduction of CO₂ emissions.

Manning and Training Adviser

Mr Phillip Binks has joined ICS/ISF as a Manning and Training Adviser.

EU Visa Issues

ISF and the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA) recently met with the European Commission and representatives of EU Member State immigration authorities, in order to explore visa problems experienced by non-EU seafarers visiting nations covered by the Schengen agreement. Until the entry into force of the ILO Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention, it was suggested that the best immediate solution would be for local consulates of EU Member States to issue long term multiple entry visas in accordance with the EU Visa Code.

Sustainable Shipping

In December, in Geneva, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) invited ICS to make a presentation to governments on sustainability in shipping. While reporting on progress towards the protection of the environment and the provision of decent working conditions for seafarers, ICS highlighted the problems with shipbuilding policy that have contributed to the industry's current economic problems, with too many ships chasing too few cargoes.

Container Weighing

In a welcome move, the International Association of Ports and Harbors has joined with ICS, the World Shipping Council and BIMCO in their efforts to encourage IMO to amend the SOLAS Convention to require, as a condition for stowing a loaded container on board, that the ship and the port facility have a verified actual weight of the container. As well as improving safety, such a measure would also help to address wider security concerns about the content of containers.

Shipbuilding

In China, ICS Chairman, Spyros M Polemis, led the ICS delegation to the latest Tripartite meeting on shipbuilding issues between representatives of shipyards, classification societies and shipowners. A key focus of the discussions was the impact for new ship designs of the Energy Efficiency Design Index recently agreed by IMO.

IMO Assembly

ICS represented the industry throughout the recent biennial IMO Assembly, which confirmed the appointment of Mr Koji Sekimizu (Japan) as IMO Secretary-General with effect from 1 January.

IMEC Joins ICS/ISF

The International Maritime Employers' Committee (IMEC), which negotiates collective bargaining agreements with seafarers' unions, has become an associate member of ICS/ISF.

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ICS/ISF Conference

The 2012 ICS/ISF International Shipping Conference will be held on 12 and 13 September at the British Library in London. To reserve a place please contact shantel.ryan@ics-shipping.org.

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