



Shipping Australia Chairman's Report

By CLINT EVANS,
outgoing chair of Shipping Australia

Global terrorism, attacks on shipping, strikes around the world, and global environmental rules are just a few issues that spring off the top of the mind when reviewing the year just gone.

Let us first address the ongoing tragedy in the Red Sea.

I won't now recount the details as this particularly dreadful story is, by now, well known. Suffice it to say that the Yemeni terrorist group, Ansar Allah ("the Houthis"), continue to endanger seafarers, attack ships, damage the environment, destroy property and threaten the freedom of navigation.

Even today, the Pure Car / Truck Carrier, the Galaxy Leader, remains in the possession of the Houthis after it was hijacked in the Red Sea near Hodeida, a Yemeni city, back in November 2023. It was an astonishing attack that had all the hallmarks of a sophisticated commando raid.

The International Maritime Organization's then Secretary General, Kitack Lim, expressed his "grave concerns" and the hope that the seafarers would be released as soon as possible. That was to be a forlorn hope, with the current Secretary General, Arsenio Dominguez, re-demanding the release of the crew after the meeting of the Maritime Environment Protection Committee last year.

Those seafarers have been kidnapped and held hostage for over a year.

We must also remember seafarers who were killed in the course of their work, merely for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Secretary-General Dominguez sent his deepest condolences and those of the entire IMO to the families of the seafarers who lost

their lives and who were injured on the merchant ship, True Confidence.

And yet another crewmember died after a Houthi attack, this time in June 2024, after the attack on the ship, the MV Tutor.

After the attack on the True Confidence, Mr Dominguez declared that "innocent seafarers should never become collateral victims". That is a statement with which we all can – and should – agree.

Talking of the IMO, we saw the conclusion of Secretary General Lim's term at the helm of the world's foremost shipping body. It was a term that met with many great successes. Perhaps the greatest success was seen in Maritime Environment Protection Committee 80 which voted for international shipping to be net-zero greenhouse gas emissions-free by 2050. That was a truly momentous and historic decision.

The IMO Council then voted to appoint Mr. Arsenio Antonio Dominguez Velasco of the Republic of Panama, for an initial four-year term, as our current Secretary-General, and his term began on 1 January 2024. Mr. Dominguez Velasco was already a highly experienced IMO official, formerly holding the role of Director of IMO's Marine Environment Division from January 2022, and he held other IMO positions before that. We wish the new Secretary General every success during his time in office.

Meanwhile, there has been progress on developing rules to protect the planetary atmosphere. After setting out the grand vision of net-zero in MEPC 80, the IMO is tackling the detailed work of implementing that vision. Since MEPC 80, the IMO has developed global regulations on energy efficiency, agreed an outline of a framework

toward net-zero, and has set the stage for the introduction of a global marine fuel standard along with a pricing mechanism. Work continues.

We have also seen developments on marine litter, ballast water management, ship recycling, underwater noise reduction and more.

It is true that the wheels of international maritime diplomacy turn slowly. But they do turn. We continue to see progress toward a cleaner and more sustainable ocean, one that is better suited to its status as the common heritage of all mankind.

And that, surely, is a development that all ought to wish for.

There is much more that could be said of the global maritime arena, but lack-of-space forbids.

I will conclude my internationally focused comments here and will direct readers who are interested in domestic matters to the article by Capt Melwyn Noronha, CEO of Shipping Australia.

My time as the Chair of Shipping Australia will have, by the time of publication, drawn to a close.

The vacant Chair will be ably filled for the next term by My-Therese Blank. I'm sure all members of Shipping Australia will join me in wishing her the best of luck for the duration of her term.

As for me, I would like to thank all members for their support, and even more so the Shipping Australia team who continue to work tirelessly, in many instances behind the scenes, to serve the interests of our members and the Shipping Industry at large. I will look forward to meeting you out-and-about in the industry. ▲



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