



PRESS RELEASE

MARITIME CYPRUS 2022 CONFERENCE FOCUSES ON SEAFARER RIGHTS WITH PERSONAL ACCOUNT FROM CAPTAIN LASOTA

Highlights from speeches and panel sessions on the final day of the conference

CYPRUS, Wednesday 12, 2022: The Maritime Cyprus 2022 conference continued today for the third day in Limassol, and has successfully reached its conclusion.

Opening discussions, Mr Anders Hvid, Co-founder, DareDisrupt explored the topic “**Leveraging digital transformation and innovation for a brighter future in shipping.**” He noted several observations in shipping and energy, where an accelerating level of innovation will see complete transformation of certain sectors over the next decade. One example was the rise of solar energy, and its ever-decreasing cost which will cement renewables as reliable, affordable, and sustainable sources of energy. Commenting on the power of data in shipping, Mr Anders Hvid said “The green transformation is the biggest challenge we have ever faced, and digitalization is a mighty, powerful tool we can use to solve it.”

Today’s discussions continued with the panel “**Automated and autonomous Shipping: Is the pace fast enough?**” with moderator Ms Despina Panayiotou Theodosiou, President, WISTA International and CEO, Tototheo Maritime. The panel included Ms Maja Markovčić Kostelac, Executive Director, European Maritime Safety Agency, Mr Yi Han Ng, Director of Innovation, Technology & Talent Development, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, Mr Mark O’Neil, President, InterManager and Dr Evangelos Ouzounis, Head of Policy Development and Implementation Unit, European Union Agency for Cybersecurity.

The panel agreed that use of automation in shipping is showing much promise, with development accelerating in areas such as artificial intelligence. Participants discussed the potential of technology but warned that human error was a risk factor that the industry needs to consider. Mr Mark O’Neil explained automation would always require people power either onboard or onshore and semi-automation is the future. He continued to highlight how regulatory progress needed to support automation.

The discussion also covered the value of protecting the handling and collection of data and how sharing data can be a conflict - both how it might help the maritime industry but also help it progress. The panel closed with comments on how the industry needs to prepare for developments in automation, with training noted as critical to success, particularly as maritime technologies and alternative fuels develop.

Following the first panel, the highlight of the day focused on the question “**Is Seafarers’ welfare and rights in jeopardy?**” Leading discussions, Captain Lasota focused on the non-criminalization of seafarers. The moderator was Dr Iliana Christodoulou-Varotsi and panelists included Mr Stephen Cotton, General Secretary, International Transport Workers’ Federation, Mr Jan Meyering, Joint Managing Director, Marlow Navigation Co. Ltd, and Mr Guy Platten, Secretary General, International Chamber of Shipping.

Captain Lasota gave a heartfelt account of his personal experiences, which involved himself being unjustly prosecuted and jailed for two years in a narcotics case. He called for ongoing discussion around, and development of legislation relating to, seafarer rights.

Panelists explored the state of seafarer rights within the context the regulatory landscape, emphasizing the importance of tackling the challenge head on to avoid further suffering by keyworkers forming the backbone of the shipping industry.

The panel also outlined what changes could be made to rectify the current seafarer shortage including improved connectivity, investment in programs geared towards increased diversity, equity and inclusivity and encouraging more female involvement in the industry.

The final panel of the day explored the topic of “**Challenging the Communication Challenge**”, which was moderated by Ms Liana Charalambous Tanos, Conference Chairwoman, Permanent Secretary, Shipping Deputy Ministry. The panelists for this discussion were Mr Stuart Neil, Director of Strategy and Communications, International Chamber of Shipping, Ms Anna Vourgos, President, WISTA Cyprus, Mr Sean Treacy, Senior Vice President Hotel Operations, Royal Caribbean International and Ms Michelle Wiese Bockmann, Markets Editor/Analyst, Lloyd’s List.

Ms Liana Charalambous Tanos opened the panel by questioning how shipping is presenting itself to the general public. In response to this, Ms Michelle Wiese Bockmann highlighted the abundance of room for improvement in how shipping approaches communications. Citing the Ever Given’s obstruction of the Suez Canal in 2021, she highlighted the situation as a missed opportunity for shipping leaders to shift the narrative and highlight the importance of the sector to the global supply chain.

Ms Anna Vourgos encouraged leaders of the sector to adjust the tone, increasing promotion of the industry to the general public, governments and external regulatory bodies and financiers. “We are not a visible industry but we need to be,” she said. The panel agreed the industry needs to be self-critical and professionalize how it communicates. “When headlines hit the Financial Times front page, the government acts,” he said.

Joining the stage for the final panel, Cyprus Shipping Deputy Minister to the President, Mr Vassilios Demetriades, communicated his support for the drive for external communication outside of the industry. “Strong external relations will ensure we are visible, and it will have positive results,” he concluded.

Following this last debate, Mr Vassilios Demetriades thanked all the delegates, participants and high caliber speakers as well as the conference sponsors and co-organizers, the Cyprus Shipping Chamber and the Cyprus Union of Shipowners for joining discussions for Maritime Cyprus 2022.

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