

18 May 2021
Singapore

Press Release

Asia, Support Crew Changes to Save Our Seafarers

Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) held its 30th Annual General Meeting virtually on 18th May 2021. The focus of the meeting was clearly on the continuing difficulties of Crew Changes of our seafarers, under the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr Tadaaki Naito, ASA Chairman said 'ASA highly appreciates the UN Assembly Resolution A/75/L37 last November on key worker status for seafarers. We will put our utmost efforts to save our seafarers.'

Priority for our seafarers to be vaccinated

Chairman of ASA Seafarers' Committee, Mr Han Chao said, 'Now is the time that the whole world recognise the importance of seafarers who are the unsung heroes always exposing themselves to all kind of adversities to make the world trade go round.' He urged all governments to implement the UN Resolution, thereby providing seafarers with access to COVID-19 vaccination at the earliest opportunity, respecting their fundamental rights under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006 (MLC 2006).

ASA says NO to 'No Crew Change' clauses

Chairman of ASA Ship Insurance and Liability Committee, Mr Richard Hext said, 'At the peak of the crew change crisis last year, around 400,000 seafarers were stranded at sea. This figure has mercifully reduced to around 200,000, but is still intolerable. It is especially disappointing to see cases of prominent ship charterers, including some who have publicly voiced support for seafarers, demanding the inclusion of "no-crew change" clauses in their charterparties or voyage instructions. Such clauses go against the human rights of seafarers and are in clear contravention of Owners' responsibilities under MLC 2006.'

Reaffirmation to sustain the global supply chain during the pandemic

With regards to the recent supply chain congestion issues, ASA acknowledged concerns raised by governments, shipper groups and other parties. ASA noted that various issues occurred, especially in the liner sector, such as an unexpected surge and concentration in demand, customers' difficulties in booking a space, terminals congestions and shortage of available containers. The grounding incident in the Suez Canal in March, which was resolved by applaudable efforts chiefly by the Suez Canal Authority, has worsened the situation over the short term. Chairman of ASA Shipping Policy Committee, Mr Takashi Nakashima said, 'As the shipping industry plays an indispensable role in underpinning the stable global supply chain, ASA reaffirmed its firm determination to work with related stakeholders and continue to make its best endeavours.' As for the grounding incident, considering the utmost importance to secure smooth logistic system, ASA will keep close watch on the developments of the ongoing situation. ASA also appreciated the recent decision by the Panama Canal Authority to postpone its upward revision of the booking fees, which contributed to the stability and foreseeability of the world's waterway, responding to the united voices of ASA/ICS/ECSA.

The Hong Kong Convention (HKC)

ASA reaffirmed the need to urgently expand the HKC compliant to sustainably promote environmentally sound ship recycling. The driving force is the early entry into force of the HKC. Chairman of ASA Ship Recycling Committee, Mr Ron Huang emphasises that, 'It is essential to continue motivating China and Bangladesh to sign up for this important convention and encourages the Asian shipowners to promote usage of HKC compliant yards, for boosting an early enactment of the HKC.'

Shipping Industry urges IMO to lead Decarbonisation

Chairman of ASA Safe Navigation and Environment Committee, Ms Caroline Yang said, 'I trust that the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee will continue its work at the upcoming 76th session (MEPC 76) in June 2021, where one of the most important items on the agenda will be the development of the proposed International Maritime Research and Development Board (IMRB), which is currently co-sponsored by ten IMO Member States and eight industry associations.' The IMRB will provide up to US\$6 billion in funds contributed by the shipping industry to identify, develop and demonstrate the fuels and technologies of the future that will allow international shipping to decarbonise in line with ambitious targets set by the IMO and consistent with the Paris Agreement. Concurrently, ASA hopes that IMO Member States and other stakeholders will also bring to the table concrete proposals for possible Market Based Measures that we can consider in parallel with discussions on the IMRB.

Mr Tae Soon CHUNG, Vice-Chairman of ASA and Chairman of Korea Shipowners' Association (KSA) was appointed as the 31st ASA Chairman. Mr Xu Lirong, Chairman of China Shipowners' Association (CSA) was appointed as the Vice-Chairman of ASA. The next ASA AGM will be held in Korea in May 2022.

ASA 30th AGM was hosted by Japanese Shipowners' Association (JSA) and attended by representatives from all ASA member associations.

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Editor's Note:

The Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) is a voluntary organization of the shipowner associations of Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and the Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Associations comprising shipping associations of ASEAN countries. The aims of the ASA are to promote the interests of Asian shipowners. Between annual ASA meetings, the ongoing work is carried out by five Standing Committees: The Seafarers Committee (SC), the Ship Insurance and Liability Committee (SILC), the Safe Navigation and Environment Committee (SNEC), the Shipping Policy Committee (SPC), and the Ship Recycling Committee (SRC). It has been estimated that ASA shipowners and managers control and operate around 50% of the world's cargo carrying fleet.