



International
Chamber of Shipping

Press release
14 April 2026

Hong Kong Shipowners Association
Shipping Dialogue with International Chamber of Shipping

Today (14 April), at the invitation of the Hong Kong Shipowners Association (HKSOA), Mr. John Denholm CBE, Chairman Designate of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), visited Hong Kong for a Shipping Dialogue with HKSOA members and guests. Over 120 key stakeholders, including ship owners, marine service providers and industry experts, as well as representatives of the Maritime Talent Cultivation Alliance, attended the event (held in the Renaissance Harbour View), which was followed by a Luncheon in honour of Mr. Denholm.

During the event, Mr. John Denholm CBE exchanged views with the audience on major issues of concern to the maritime community, in particular the impact of the recent outbreak of new hostilities in the Middle East, global decarbonization efforts in light of the deliberations of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Marine Environment Protection Committee, and the many challenges faced by the shipping industry over the years with respect to technology innovation and talent development.

Commenting after the Shipping Dialogue, Mr. Denholm said: "Events like this remind us how interconnected and interdependent global shipping truly is. While the challenges we face, from geopolitical uncertainty to the energy transition, are significant, they also create an opportunity to strengthen collaboration across regions. Hong Kong has a unique role to play, not just as a maritime hub, but also as a convening point for conversation, innovation and talent development across Asia and beyond. I look forward to picking up these conversations at our events during Hong Kong Maritime Week this November. If we are to deliver a successful transition for our industry, it will depend on partnerships like these, grounded in openness, practicality and a shared commitment to keeping global trade flowing safely and efficiently."

In his welcome remarks, HKSOA Chairman Mr. Richard Hext highlighted the strategic position of Hong Kong as a leading maritime centre and the key role played by the HKSOA: "For almost 70 years, the Hong Kong Shipowners Association has advocated for the interests of the shipping industry and served as a "super-connector" between East and West, through information exchange, open dialogue and constructive cooperation with stakeholder sectors at all levels – local, national and global."

“In particular, the Association has strong partnerships with major international institutions including the International Chamber of Shipping,” said Mr. Hext. “Our two organisations have worked side by side to address shared challenges – from digitalization to decarbonization, and from seafarer welfare to talent growth. We have common aims to uphold high standards of safety and environmental performance and to keep trade moving efficiently with a level-playing field. All these are in the common interests of both the industry and the global community”.

In his speech, Mr. Hext expressed his gratitude for the visit of Mr. John Denholm CBE and the many achievements of the ICS in global shipping. He referred to several collaborations between the two organisations, including the ICS’s 2019 decision, following the HKSOA’s suggestion, to establish its first overseas office outside London in Hong Kong. He also commended the very good response to the two Global Maritime Trade Summits hosted by the ICS in Hong Kong respectively in 2024 and 2025, with the support of the Hong Kong SAR Government and the HKSOA.

In the Shipping Dialogue, Mr. Denholm was joined by HKSOA Deputy Chairman Mr. Kenneth Lam JP, who is also Chairman of the ICS Shipping Policy Committee. During the dialogue, Mr. Lam noted that the ICS is always in the forefront in advocating for free trade, rules-based multilateralism and a level-playing field for all. “Hong Kong has always been an international finance, shipping and trade centre servicing China and the rest of the world,” he said. “Many ship owners across the globe have chosen to base their operations in Hong Kong because of its free port status, its Common Law jurisdiction and the government’s ability to provide tax, legal and regulatory stability in its ongoing policies.”

“We would all love to see an open sea whereby the carriage of goods can be conducted efficiently, with ship owners getting the necessary financial support and being close to the underlying trades in finalizing contracts,” added Mr. Lam. “Achieving these efficiencies also depends on leveraging technology and attracting top talent. Hong Kong has all the above and will continue to support the ICS to provide the safest and the most cost-effective shipping solutions to all end-users around the world”.

The Shipping Dialogue was moderated by two young shipping professionals, Miss Joanna Kwok and Miss Daysie Whitmore. Miss Kwok is Hong Kong’s first female to serve as Chief Engineer on a deep-sea trading vessel. Miss Whitmore specialises in risk assessment and claims related to maritime liabilities.

The International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) is the principal global trade association for merchant shipowners and operators, representing all sectors and trades and over 80% of the world’s merchant fleet. More information can be found at www.ics-shipping.org.

Mr. John Denholm, CBE qualified as a chartered accountant before joining J. & J. Denholm, the family shipping company. In J. & J Denholm, he held a number of roles before being appointed as Chief Executive in 1993. During his time as Chief Executive, he expanded the Shipping business and diversified the activities of the Group into several new divisions including Logistics, Seafoods, Industrial Service and Oilfield Service. He stepped down as Chief Executive in 1998 and is today Executive Chairman of J. & J. Denholm and Denholm Energy Services, which was demerged from J.&J. Denholm in 2015. John has held a number of industry roles over his career and is a past President of UK Chamber of Shipping and of BIMCO.

The Hong Kong Shipowners Association (HKSOA), founded in 1957, is a major trade organisation in Hong Kong, with over 200 corporate members including ship owners, ship managers, and various service providers in ship finance, marine insurance, agency and brokerage, equipment and energy supply, maritime arbitration, ship survey, and so forth. Over the years, the HKSOA has been a key driver of maritime decarbonization and a strong advocate for free trade, promoting the long-term, sustainable growth of the industry and commanding the respect and trust of the maritime community at the local, national and global levels.

In November 2025 during Hong Kong Maritime Week, on the initiative of the HKSOA, the Maritime Talent Cultivation Alliance was launched to strengthen industry-education integration. It brings together many prestigious organisations and business corporations with the shared goal of cultivating a new generation of maritime talent, equipping them with a global perspective of the business world and practical insights into industry operations. The International Chamber of Shipping (China) Liaison Office is one of the 16 founding members of the Alliance.

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