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Hong Kong

## **Press Release**

### **Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) 33rd Annual General Meeting Hosted by Hong Kong Shipowners Association Hong Kong**

#### ***“Asia Shipping, Greener Together”***

The Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) held its 33rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Hong Kong on 28 May 2024. The meeting was hosted by the Hong Kong Shipowners Association (HKSOA) and attended by more than 200 representatives from the ASA member associations. The focus of the meeting was on the challenges and constraints including safety at sea, manpower at sea and decarbonisation at sea.



ASA Chairman, Mr Angad Banga, welcomed all members to the AGM. He said, “The ASA AGM is the premier annual regional event dedicated to advancing the interests of the Asian shipowning community. This year, we are also proud to host the 2024 International Shipping Forum under the theme of “Asia Shipping, Greener Together.” We were honoured to welcome the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), along with many esteemed guests and speakers. Together, we explored critical topics such as green fuels, new technologies, training and development, and regulatory compliance.

#### **Calls for Maritime Security Vigilance In The Red Sea**

The ASA Safe Navigation and Environment Committee (SNEC) calls for the shipping industry to prioritise maritime security, in light of the heightened geopolitical tensions and renewed piracy and armed robbery threats in the Red Sea. The surge of Houthis attacks off the African coasts presents a significant threat to maritime operations, endangering the lives of seafarers and the integrity of vessels. Geopolitical tensions have led to increased military presence and patrols in the Red Sea, aimed at safeguarding vessels navigating through the area. The ASA welcomes these efforts and emphasises the importance of collaboration among regional stakeholders and international partners to effectively address these challenges. Ensuring the safety and security of navigation in the Red Sea and surrounding areas is essential to protect the lives of our seafarers, our vessels, and to keep global trade going. The ASA remains committed to advocating for enhanced maritime security measures and calls on the shipping industry to remain vigilant in the face of evolving threats.

## **Seafarers are at the core of maritime transition towards green and smart shipping**

The ASA Seafarers Committee (SC) discussed that environmental awareness is no longer a conversation but an obligation, meanwhile smart ships that once looked like a dream are now becoming a reality. With the maritime technological and environment friendly innovations and transitions to come in the foreseeable future, seafarers' competencies and skill sets are expected to change accordingly. The shipping sector's success has always been heavily dependent on high-caliber seafarers. The ASA therefore calls on maritime stakeholders in Asia to get prepared to offer seafarers with an upskilled education, care for their physical and mental health and well-being, and provide opportunities for their career development.

## **Crew Welfare, Unfair Criminalization, and Prosecution of Seafarers**

The ASA Ship Insurance and Liability Committee (SILC) expresses its deep concern over the unfair criminalisation and prosecution of seafarers. Seafarers are increasingly being detained in ports under suspicion of crimes, particularly when drugs are found on ships. The evidence suggests that in most cases, seafarers are quite unaware of the concealment of drugs or other illegal items on board their ships and have no involvement in the illegal operations. Yet, they often face unjust detention and criminal charges, highlighting the urgent need for fair treatment and due process. The ASA also condemns the unfair criminal prosecution of seafarers in the aftermath of maritime casualties. Despite stringent safety protocols and adherence to international regulations, seafarers are often unfairly scapegoated and subjected to legal proceedings following accidents at sea. Such unjust treatment not only undermines the morale of maritime personnel but also poses a significant threat to the overall integrity and efficiency of the maritime industry; thus the ASA calls for comprehensive reforms to ensure the protection of seafarers' rights and to prevent their unjust criminalisation and prosecution. The ASA urges governments, maritime organisations, and relevant stakeholders to adopt fair and transparent legal frameworks that uphold the principles of justice and due process for seafarers.

## **Efforts in achieving sustainability of the Global Supply Chain**

The ASA Shipping Policy Committee (SPC) said that the safety of crews on board vessels should be the highest priority and the decision to reroute with extra days was inevitable under the heightened geopolitical tensions in the Red Sea area and the continued water shortage at the Panama Canal. Confronted with the dilemma to also address further reductions of GHG emissions from shipping, the ASA agreed to seek to secure from the Panama Canal Authority a fair allocation between the different types of vessels regarding reservation slots whilst restrictive measures were in place as well as a commitment to ensure the predictability of their strategic policies in response to water shortages on a short, medium and long-term basis to allow operators to develop more efficient and environmentally friendly voyage plans. To achieve those goals, the ASA shared the view that a unified approach by the industry and regular dialogues with relevant authorities should be ensured. Furthermore, in response to the recent decisions by the EC and the UK to expire their consortia regulation, the ASA reconfirmed to take the necessary actions to call for the maintenance of anti-trust immunity systems in other jurisdictions around the world as the immunity systems remain indispensable for the efficient operations which contribute to the reduction of GHG emissions and a better quality of liner services covering more ports.

## **The Hong Kong Convention (HKC)**

The ASA Ship Recycling Committee (SRC) said that the HKC will now enter into force on 26 June 2025, which is an important milestone for safe and environmentally

friendly ship recycling worldwide. The ASA affirms that we will further promote and strengthen our standing policy of encouraging the preferential use of HKC-certified yards and urging ship recycling yards in relevant countries to upgrade their infrastructure and raise the standards of their premises to meet the requirements of the HKC. Besides that, there is a need to resolve possible conflicts between the HKC and the Basel Convention and to ensure that compliance with the HKC will not be sanctioned by the Basel Convention. The ASA also strongly hopes that the EU-SRR, a regional regulation, should be aligned with the HKC before its entry into force. The ASA will continue to speak out on our arguments for contributing to global environmental conservation by promoting environmentally friendly ship recycling.



The 33rd ASA AGM officially approved the Ordinary membership application of the Cook Islands Ship Owners Association (CISOA). CISOA will be the Ordinary Member of ASA as from 1 June 2024.

At the same ASA AGM, Mrs Carmelita Hartoto, Vice-Chairperson of ASA and Chairperson of Federation of ASEAN Shipowners' Association (FASA), was appointed as the 34th ASA Chairperson.

She commented that ASA is gaining more recognition in the international shipping community and is delighted to have CISOA come on board the ASA's Ordinary Membership.

Ms Eleanor Keukura Roi, CEO of CISOA was also appointed as the Vice-Chairperson of ASA.

On the other hand, Maritime Industry Australia Limited (MIAL) that had been one of the Founding Members of ASA since 1992, submitted its resignation notice from the ASA Ordinary Membership and ASA accepted it with many regrets. ASA thanked MIAL for their contributions and support all those years and hoped that MIAL would rejoin ASA in future.

The next ASA AGM will be held in Bali, Indonesia, tentatively on 20 May 2025

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***Editor's Note:***

*The Asian Shipowners' Association (ASA) is a voluntary organisation of the shipowners' associations of China, Cook Islands, 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 ASA AGM meetings, the ongoing work is carried out by five Standing Committees:*

*Seafarers Committee (SC)*

*Ship Insurance and Liability Committee (SILC)*

*Safe Navigation and Environment Committee (SNEC)*

*Shipping Policy Committee (SPC)*

*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.*

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