

SUSTAINABILITY

serving the world's essential needs



The International Association of Dry Cargo Shipowners (INTERCARGO) represents the interests of quality dry cargo shipowners. INTERCARGO provides the forum where dry bulk shipowners, managers and operators can learn about, discuss and share concerns on key topics and regulatory challenges, especially in relation to safety, the environment and operational excellence. Director/Secretary General Dr Kostas G Gkonis answered questions for Inside Marine.

As representatives of the international dry bulk trade, how important is it for INTERCARGO to work closely with supranational bodies such as the EU and IMO?

It is absolutely essential. Dry bulk shipping is a truly global industry, moving the raw materials that underpin economies worldwide. To achieve a level playing field and workable regulations, we must engage closely with the IMO, where global frameworks are agreed.

On the other hand, we monitor and actively engage as needed in regional regulatory developments, such as those of the EU, which develops its own schemes in areas such as emissions and sustainability. INTERCARGO ensures the voice of bulk carrier owners is clearly heard so that regulation is both ambitious and practical. ↗

INTERCARGO's membership now exceeds 400 companies from more than 35 countries and comprises over 185 Full Members, representing over 4,500 ships of some 426 million DWT, plus another 215 Associate Members. This expansion strengthens our international voice and reflects the confidence the industry places in the Association's work.

Given the global importance of maritime trade, how is the organisation voicing the concerns of members regarding the various events disrupting world shipping?

Our members are directly exposed to disruption – whether from geopolitical tensions, regional conflict, port congestion or trade restrictions. INTERCARGO maintains close dialogue with them to understand the pressures they face, and we ensure these concerns are voiced to governments, regulators, authorities and international fora. We also work with sister associations so that bulk carrier issues are seen in the wider context of global shipping and trade resilience.

Safety and security are ongoing concerns for all your members. How else is INTERCARGO able to support members in these areas?

Safety is at the heart of our mission. Alongside our advocacy, we provide guidance, share best practice and create a trusted space for owners to exchange experience. From security and piracy, where INTERCARGO works closely with partners associations and the naval forces operating regionally, to cyber threats to onboard safety culture, INTERCARGO

helps members strengthen their defences and ensures they are not addressing these issues in isolation.

A recent INTERCARGO Benchmarking Bulk Carriers Report highlighted the impressive levels of safety and compliance by member fleets. How has the association helped members achieve these impressive results?

Our Benchmarking Bulk Carriers Report has become a vital tool for members. It allows them to measure performance, compare compliance and learn from one another. By promoting transparency and continuous improvement, and by encouraging standards that raise the quality bar above the minimum requirements, INTERCARGO has created an environment in which excellence is the norm. The impressive results of member fleets are evidence of that collective commitment.

Sustainability remains a strong theme within shipping. What action is INTERCARGO taking to support the energy transition?

Dry bulk is the largest shipping segment and one of the hardest to decarbonise, particularly for smaller owners operating unpredictable tramp trades. With zero- or near-zero-emission fuels unlikely to be available at all ports for many years, we support pragmatic decarbonisation regulations at IMO and energy efficiency technologies as technical solutions.

Yet while we are working to ensure the energy transition is ambitious, fair and achievable for all our members, sustainability is a much broader ▶

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I WOULD EMPHASISE THAT DRY BULK SHIPPING IS THE BACKBONE
of global trade”
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Director/Secretary General

Dr Kostas G. Gkoniis



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SAFETY & SEAFARER WELFARE WILL REMAIN AT THE VERY HEART of our mission 99

challenge; our report on ESG published last year, and available on our website, describes our activities and our sector's achievements in ESG.

INTERCARGO runs regular lunchtime briefing seminars for members and invited guests. How popular and successful are these online events?

Although Covid disrupted the in-person lunchtime seminar series we had been running for many years, it also opened the door to new opportunities through online

events. These proved especially successful, enabling us to engage a far wider audience across geographies and time zones, while also simplifying organisational logistics. The seminars thus stand as a clear example of turning a period of challenge into one of successful opportunity.

With such a varied range of activities at INTERCARGO, would you be able to pick a single project, current or old, that best highlights the organisation's capabilities?

If I had to highlight one project, it would be our first-ever ESG Review in 2024. This report highlights our mission and achievements while setting out the course ahead for dry bulk shipping. Sustainability today is not just about compliance – it's a roadmap for resilience and long-term success.

We placed seafarers' well-being at the top, while also addressing the big environmental challenges. We showcased innovation and talent development as vital enablers, and through the launch of the Dry Bulk Centre of Excellence with RightShip, we demonstrated how robust governance can raise standards across our sector.

So, this piece of exercise was more than a publication: it was a statement of intent. It showed INTERCARGO's ability to lead,

to turn challenges into opportunities and to push dry bulk shipping toward safer, stronger, and more sustainable practices.

What are the biggest challenges you face? Are you optimistic about the outlook for the global economy?

The greatest challenge is uncertainty. Geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruption, environmental regulation and rapid technological change all affect our members, both their current operations as well as their plans and investments into the future. Yet bulk shipping is a resilient sector, and demand for dry bulk commodities will remain. While we cannot ignore the headwinds facing the global economy, I am optimistic about our sector's ability to adapt and continue fulfilling its essential role.

Please share with us INTERCARGO's plans and objectives for the future

Safety and seafarer welfare will remain at the very heart of our mission. We will continue championing safety, supporting a practicable pathway to decarbonisation and ensuring independent bulk carrier owners are strongly represented at international level. Finally, sustainability is a defining theme for the future.

Therefore, we will keep expanding the value we provide to members, so that INTERCARGO remains both a strong voice and a trusted partner representing our sector.

What aspect of your job excites you personally?

What excites me is the global and multi-faceted nature of dry bulk shipping – every

day brings new challenges, from safety to sustainability. I am especially motivated by the opportunity to introduce fresh ideas and innovations, often inspired by other sectors, and to help turn them into real impact for our industry.

Is there anything not covered by the above questions that you would like to share with our readers?

I would emphasise that dry bulk shipping is the backbone of global trade. Our vessels carry the raw materials that feed populations and fuel economies, yet the sector is often less visible than others. INTERCARGO's role is to ensure that the voice of dry bulk owners is heard, that our members are supported through the challenges ahead and that our industry continues to operate safely, sustainably and efficiently.

Above all, we want to remind readers that behind bulk carriers is a community of companies and seafarers playing a vital role in people's daily lives. ■

