



Classification societies on the move

World's leading shipbuilding fair highlights harmony in environmental protection and efficiency

SMM 2010 – 24th international shipbuilding fair at the Hamburg Fair site from 7 to 10 September

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Classification societies have a key role to play in protecting the marine environment and reducing the carbon footprint of shipping. They are vital as technical consultants to the authorities, said Dr. Hermann Klein, Chairman of the International Association of Classification Societies Ltd. (IACS) and a Member of the Management Board of Germanischer Lloyd AG, in an exclusive interview for HMC in the run-up to SMM 2010. HMC (Hamburg Messe und Congress) is the organiser of SMM 2010, 24th shipbuilding, machinery & marine technology, international trade fair hamburg. It will be held at the Hamburg Fair site from 7 to 10 September 2010, with some 2,000 exhibitors from 60 nations. They will present their latest products and technologies in shipbuilding and marine equipment to more than 50,000 trade visitors from all continents. A large proportion of the innovations on show will give an improvement in environmental protection and at the same time greater efficiency in operation.

“Energy efficiency and competitiveness of ships have been major issues for Germanischer Lloyd for many years,” added Dr. Klein. Shipping is a global business, so we need global standards – they are discussed and adopted at political level by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in London. Current examples are IMO’s Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships, the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ship’s Ballast Water and Sediments, and successive toughening of limits to sulphur content in fuel oils. Dr. Klein confirmed this view – “Policy decisions in the IMO committees would simply not be possible without the technical expertise of the classification societies and other industry representatives.”

Safety continues to be crucial. “There are a range of studies which show that some 80% of all ship collisions, groundings, fires and other disasters are due to human error,” explained Dr. Klein. That is why GL has recently developed new design specifications for passenger ships and ferries. The “safe return to port” rules mean ship design has to ensure safe return of the vessel to port under its own propulsion following defined damage, and minimise risk of fuel spills due to accidents. The reliability of the components installed is an important factor. For example, safety can be put at risk by use of counterfeit spare parts which do not comply with the usual standards. “That is a subject which will certainly gain in importance in the future.”

Dr. Klein saw little scope for cost reduction in the classification process. The costs are normally less than 1% of the purchase cost of a ship. He feared that further reductions in cost would be at the expense of safety.

Despite this, the Class Regulation initiated by the European Union last year will also make the classification process more efficient and less expensive, without endangering safety standards. It sets two main goals – harmonisation of design standards and certification procedures of the classification societies recognised in Europe (including uniform interpretation of international regulations), and creating the conditions for mutual recognition of certificates of the various European classification societies. The Class Regulation has to be applied within the next four years.

Discussion of this issue was launched at SMM four years ago by the European Marine Equipment Council (EMEC), which represents 1,300 European companies. “In our view, these are reasonable objectives,” said Jaakko Eskola, EMEC Chairman and Group Vice President of Wärtsilä Ship Power – “harmonisation will bring clarity in the regulatory framework. The European marine equipment industry looks forward to operate in accordance with harmonised rules, defined with a view to reflecting the current state of technology and promoting safety. Mutual recognition of certificates will also bring more efficiency to the functioning of the maritime industry.” Today, the material is certified by various different classification societies. The marine equipment suppliers believe there is a lot of potential for improvement in this multiple certification process, without any negative impact on safety. “We are aware that the Class Regulation brings changes to the current system and that Third Countries have concerns about the impact that Article 10 may have outside the EU” said Jaakko Eskola. The European equipment suppliers provide support, but it is up to the classification societies to achieve progress in harmonisation of standards and to set the conditions for mutual recognition of their certificates.

The EU Regulation addresses the European classification societies recognised by the Commission, and they have started their work. Dr. Klein noted that a working group has now been set up to develop procedures for mutual recognition of certificates in accordance with the criteria of the EU Regulation. He added that IACS is not involved in this process.

SMM 2010 will be held at the Hamburg Fair site from 7 to 10 September 2010. There will be over 2,000 exhibitors from more than 50 nations, presenting the latest developments in all areas of the maritime industry. This leading trade fair of the global shipbuilding industry is expected to attract more than 50,000 trade visitors from over 100 countries.

On the occasion of SMM 2010, the first global maritime environmental congress (gmec) will be held on 7 and 8 September 2010. This conference brings together more than 700 high-ranking representatives from industry, government, academia, navies and environment protection organisations, to elaborate and present practical solutions for environmentally sound, sustainable shipping. www.gmec-hamburg.com.

The complete interview with Dr. Klein, Chairman of IACS, is available at the SMM website www.smm-hamburg.com.

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