

Campaign to speed up IMO convention ratification

ICS wants governments to act on 'vital safety environmental protection and liability regulations', writes Sandra Speares - Wednesday 31 January 2007

A campaign to encourage countries to ratify and implement International Maritime Organization conventions has been launched by the International Chamber of Shipping and its members.

The ICS is particularly targeting six conventions which it believes governments should ratify as a matter of urgency.

They concern ballast water management, anti-fouling systems, limitation of liability for maritime claims, hazardous and noxious substances and bunker spill liability conventions as well as Marpol Annex VI, which covers air pollution.

While the time of the initiative is not related to the MSC Napoli, the casualty has highlighted the need for action over the conventions, particularly those involving dangerous substances.

National shipowners' associations that form part of ICS are planning to write to or seek meetings with shipping ministers in their jurisdictions to press the case for ratification of the conventions and stress the importance of a global regulatory framework in an international industry such as shipping.

ICS secretary general Tony Mason said: "It is vital that regulations governing matters such as safety, environmental protection and liability are common to all ships in international trade and that the same rules apply at both ends of the voyage."

The alternative, he said, would be "conflicting national regulations, resulting in market distortions and administrative confusion that would compromise the efficiency of world trade".

The fact that new conventions failed to come into force or were not widely ratified encouraged "unwelcome calls for unilateral or regional regulation", Mr Mason said.

ICS says the failure to implement the HNS convention has been given as a reason for various European Commission proposals and most recently the directive on civil liability and financial securities of shipowners which ICS opposes.

It says that unless the convention comes into force the directive on environmental liability for preventing and remedying environmental damage will apply to HNS incidents from April 30 this year.

Unless the bunker spill liability convention is implemented, the same directive will apply to bunker spills in European Union waters.

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