

## Press Release · Pressemitteilung

### Maritime transition: Innovation and courage must be rewarded

The opening press conference for the leading international maritime trade fair gave a foretaste of the coming SMM days. Political and business leaders discussed current challenges and opportunities facing the shipping industry. The overarching topic was the decarbonisation of the shipping sector. The conclusion: While the technology is mature, what is needed now is courageous investment decisions – and a system to reward that courage.

**Hamburg, 03-09-2024** – The 31st edition of SMM was launched today with a top-flight kick-off event. “SMM has an overwhelming reach. We are excited to welcome so many participants from around the world,” said **Heiko M. Stutzinger**, who has been CEO of Hamburg Messe und Congress since the beginning of 2024. He and his team were able to report an initial major success on opening day: The number of exhibiting companies has risen by 12 per cent compared to 2022.

In their video messages on the occasion of the SMM opening ceremony, German Chancellor **Olaf Scholz**, honorary patron of SMM, and Federal Minister of Economic Affairs **Robert Habeck** underlined the enormous importance of the maritime sector for the German economy and the global energy transition. Scholz also emphasised the industry’s innovative technologies and sustainable solutions in this context. Habeck stressed that as the backbone of international trade, the maritime industry plays a key role in ensuring a successful transformation towards a carbon-neutral future.

This was followed by political and business leaders discussing the pressing challenges and opportunities facing the shipping industry:

- **Alberto Maestrini**, Chairman of the Board of Directors – VARD and Head of Offshore Division – FINCANTIERI
- **Arsenio Dominguez**, Secretary General, International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- **Dieter Janecek**, Coordinator for the Maritime Industry – German Federal Government
- **Dr Gaby Bornheim**, President – Verband Deutscher Reeder (German shipowners association)
- **Dr. Uwe Lauber**, CEO, MAN Energy Solutions
- **Cpt. Silke Lehmkoester**, Managing Director Fleet, Hapag-Lloyd
- **Knut Ørbeck-Nilssen**, CEO, DNV Maritime

- **Magda Kopczyńska**, Director General – DG Move, EU Commission

### **Security: Global trade routes are in jeopardy**

VDR President **Gaby Bornheim** highlighted the importance of the shipping sector for the world economy, saying: “There are over 50,000 merchant ships trading internationally, transporting eleven billion tons of cargo each year – that’s equivalent to the weight of over 2 billion fully grown elephants.” However, escalating violence in the Red Sea and growing tensions in the Indo-Pacific are increasingly endangering international trade routes. “Without security, there is no shipping, no global trade, no prosperity, and no supply of goods, raw materials, and energy to the world,” said Bornheim, calling on governments to take action. **Magda Kopczyńska**, Director General of DG Move, explained the comprehensive set of measures taken by the EU commission to improve maritime security.

### **Decarbonisation: IMO remains committed to its climate goals**

The top item on the panel’s agenda was Mission Zero Emission. The commitment of the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to achieving carbon-neutrality by 2050 is a gigantic challenge for the shipping industry. Too gigantic? IMO Secretary-General **Arsenio Dominguez** renewed the organization’s commitment to this goal, saying that further specifics on the Pathway to Net Zero Emissions would soon be announced: “Advancing discussions to adopt a fresh set of binding global measures to reduce GHG emissions from shipping demonstrate IMO’s commitment to achieve our shared climate goals.” Germany wants to take a leading role in these efforts, asserted **Dieter Janecek**, the Federal Government’s Coordinator for the Maritime Industry, adding: “For this reason, we have launched a process with all relevant stakeholders for a National Action Plan for Climate-Friendly Shipping, which will be adopted in 2025.”

### **Market development: Shipowners are refitting their vessels**

The industry’s current status in implementing the IMO ambition was summarised by **Uwe Lauber**, CEO of MAN Energy Solutions: “The maritime energy transition is under full sail and making good headway, with over half of new engine capacity ordered since 2023 focused on future-fuels technology, while we also see a keen interest in the retrofit of existing engines to add future-fuels capability.”

Hapag-Lloyd is a good example: The Hamburg-based shipping company is undertaking a major overhaul of its fleet, optimising 150 ships over the coming years. “Back in 2019, we were the first shipping company to convert a large container ship to dual-fuel propulsion with the 'Brussels Express'. We are currently modernising five more ships to run on methanol and are examining additional options, particularly for newer generations of ships,” said **Silke Lehmköster**, Managing Director Fleet, Hapag-Lloyd.

### **Digitalisation: A booster for decarbonisation**

Yet, many shipowners remain hesitant when it comes to opting for a specific alternative fuel. The key challenge continues to be the limited availability of carbon-neutral fuels, said **Knut Ørbeck-Nilssen**, CEO of DNV Maritime: “Smart decisions and strategic investments NOW are vital to lay the groundwork for future emissions reductions.” In this situation it is essential to apply technologies that improve fuel efficiency, he added. “These technologies largely rely on digitalisation. Hence we will need to drive the digital transition of the industry to pave the way to net zero,” confirmed **Uwe Lauber**.

### **Europe: a powerhouse of high-tech shipbuilding**

Implementing these technologies is the least of the European shipbuilding industry’s challenges, affirmed **Alberto Maestrini**, Chairman of the Board of Directors at VARD and Head of FINCANTIERI’s Offshore division. All the industry should do is do what it does best: design and build ships, leveraging highly skilled engineers and blue collars together. “This exceptional mix has made Europe the leading powerhouse in high-tech shipbuilding niches. It will allow us to continue to stay ten years ahead of competition from low-cost countries,” Maestrini is convinced. **Magda Kopczyńska**, Director-General of DG Move at the EU Commission, reaffirmed the EU Commission’s support for the industry: “The objective to strengthen the sector’s sustainability, resilience, and competitiveness remains unchanged, and we will be working on further initiatives to that aim.”

The kick-off event gave a foretaste of the main themes of SMM 2024. The underlying message is clear: “If we want to achieve the maritime transformation, we need courageous investment decisions today. And we need a system that rewards this courage,” said HMC’s Business Unit Director for Maritime Exhibitions, **Claus Ulrich Selbach**: “SMM in Hamburg showcases all the technological innovations and solutions that are needed for a successful maritime transition.”

### **About SMM**

The leading international maritime trade fair takes place in Hamburg from 3 to 6 September 2024. Around 2,200 exhibiting companies and roughly 40,000 visitors from over 120 countries are expected to attend. Covering the entire value chain of the maritime industry on 90,000 m<sup>2</sup> in twelve exhibition halls, SMM is the world’s foremost platform for innovation and the latest technologies in the maritime sector that brings together business leaders from around the world. Themed “SMM – driving the maritime transition”, the 31st SMM focuses on the maritime energy transition and digital transformation. An attractive conference programme and a wide range of networking opportunities will supplement the exhibition. For the first time, the conferences will



take place on open stages inside the exhibition halls – free of charge, and accessible to all fair visitors.

**New: Networking platform access and HVV public transport ticket included**

SMM participants will benefit from two new features this year: Every trade fair visitor ticket purchased online doubles as a ticket for travelling to and from the fair on the Hamburg public transport system (HVV) throughout the HVV network. Furthermore, a free Networking Platform app allows visitors to identify new business contacts, network before, during and after the fair, and create their own fair schedule including appointments and shoulder programme events. To download, go to: [SMM Networking Platform - SMM \(smm-hamburg.de\)](https://www.smm-hamburg.de)

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Press contact: Nele Bruns, ph. +49 40 3569-2439

E-Mail: [nele.bruns@hamburg-messe.de](mailto:nele.bruns@hamburg-messe.de)