

**MINUTES OF THE
ECASBA PLENARY MEETING HELD AT
THE DANIELI HOTEL
VENICE
AT 9.00 a.m. ON TUESDAY, 9th OCTOBER 2012**

Present:

Mr. A. Belmar da Costa	Chairman
Mr. C. Papavassiliou	President FONASBA
Mr. B.J. Stokes FICS	Vice Chairman

In Attendance:

Mr. J.C. Williams FICS	General Manager
------------------------	-----------------

Mr. R. Garcia Piñero	Argentina	Mr. B. Szalma Jnr.	Hungary
Mr. J. Dulce	Argentina	Dr. Y. Sebba	Israel
Mr. G. Hernandez	Argentina	Mr. U. Masucci	Italy
Mr. P. Campbell	Argentina	Mr. G-E. Duci	Italy
Mr. S. Diaz Mathé	Argentina	Mr. V. Totorizzo	Italy
Mr. L. Russell	Australia	Mr. F. Carlini FICS	Italy
Mr. E. Vanfleteren	Belgium	Ms. G. Reghellin MICS	Italy
Mr. X. van Engelen	Belgium	Ms. L. Tropia	Italy
Mr. A. Zanin	Brazil	Ms. C. Carvallo	Italy
Mr. G. Gordon Findlay	Brazil	Mr. M. Furlanetto	Italy
Mr. W. Rocha Jnr.	Brazil	Mr. C. Bennett Lira	Mexico
Mr. B. Lettieri	Brazil	Mr. V. Banovic	Montenegro
Mr. M. Dos Santos	Brazil	Mr. A. Mantrach	Morocco
Capt. N. Hristov	Bulgaria	Mr. G. Wastell	Netherlands
Capt. J. Karmelić	Croatia	Mr. T. Lund	Norway
Mr. T.D. Paulsen	Denmark	Mr. K.F. Eriksen	Norway
Mr. A. Houtved FICS	Denmark	Mr. L. P. Storfjord	Norway
Mr. G.J. Heinonen	Finland	Mr. O. Burmester	Portugal
Mr. J. Vikström	Finland	Mr. M. Thoumas	Senegal
Mr. S. Lomborg	Finland	Mr. E. Bandelj	Slovenia
Mr. C. Bele	France	Mr. N. Warner	South Africa
Mr. C. Génibrel	France	Mr. J. Fernandez	Spain
Mr. A. Gourdon	France	Mrs. B. Blomqvist	Sweden
Dr. A. Geisler	Germany	Mr. K. Turkantos	Turkey
Mr. J. A. Foord FICS	Great Britain	Mrs. M. Collins	USA
Mr. B. Szalma	Hungary	Ms. M. White	INTERTANKO

Item

Action

1. President's Welcome, Chairman's Opening Address

The **President** welcomed all those present to Venice and to this first Plenary meeting of the 2012 Annual Meeting. He also extended a particular welcome to those delegates attending for the first time and to the Young Members.

The **Chairman** also welcomed delegates to the meeting, making particular mention of those representing non-European associations.

2. Minutes of the Last Meeting held Sydney, 11th October 2011

With no comments having been received, the minutes **were approved.**

3. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that were not otherwise covered in the agendum.

4. Working Group Presentations

The **Chairman** invited the three working group coordinators present to make short report on the activities of their Groups during the past year.

Mr. **Foord** (Short Sea & Environment) provided a written report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes. The **Chairman** then reported on current developments in the European Short Sea Network (ESN). A copy of his summary report is attached. Of particular concern was the decision by the Dutch government to cease funding the Netherlands centre after the retirement of the current coordinator. As one of the founding members of the ESN, and with the Netherlands being one of the most SS focussed countries in Europe, the impact of the closure will be significant. It was also ironic that the closure was announced after the ESN had secured additional Commission funding. It was agreed that as central government support was currently being restricted across the network, ECASBA member associations should do their utmost to support both SSS in general and the local centres specifically.

Mr. **Houtved** (Education and Training) then made a short presentation on the results of the education survey carried out amongst the FONASBA membership (copy attached).

In the detailed and extensive discussion that followed, a number of issues were identified including:

- There is an need for education in the agency and broking sectors and an opportunity for FONASBA to take the lead in publicising same amongst the wider membership, to coordinate and assist efforts to expand the coverage and quality of those programmes through the exchange of ideas
- Many of the increasing numbers of graduates who are entering the sector lack practical maritime knowledge
- The ongoing lack of awareness of the maritime sector amongst the general public and legislators is still causing issues with regard to recruitment and retention
- There is a shortage of suitably trained lecturers/teachers within the industry
- Companies are reducing their support for education programmes, either by restricting training budgets or through concerns about losing highly qualified people to competitors
- It is important to ensure courses are relevant to different levels within the industry.

Summarising the discussion, Mr, Houtved said it was clear there was considerable demand fro education within the ship agency and shipbroking sectors and FONASBA was the organisation to provide it. He therefore fully supported the proposal to elect a Vice President for Education to ensure that the issue was represented at the highest level.

Capt. **Karmeliç**, the nominated candidate for the Vice President for Education position, thanked Mr. **Houtved** for the preliminary information gained from the survey and said that if elected the survey form the base upon which he would build his ongoing work programme. The **President** and the **Chairman** endorsed the work undertaken by Mr. **Houtved** and the decision to make education one of FONASBA's core activities.

Mr. **Totorizzo** then gave a short report on the current status of European tax policy initiatives (copy attached). The meeting then discussed the invitation by the Trade Contact Group (TCG) to support a joint industry letter calling for the concept of centralised clearance of cargo at the first port of entry to the EU to be retained under the Union Customs Code. He said that whilst Centralised Clearance may be beneficial for some European importers, the VAT and import duty retention policies that are integral to the CC programme will be detrimental to the economies of many European countries, especially in the south. He had therefore recommended at the Advisory Panel meeting the previous day that ECASBA does not put its name to the TCG letter until the matter had been discussed at this Plenary meeting.

The **Chairman** therefore called on the meeting to vote by a show of hands on the proposal that **ECASBA abstains from supporting the joint industry letter from TCG calling for the retention of centralised clearance in the Union Customs Code**. The proposal was **approved unanimously**.

The **Chairman** thanked all the Working Group coordinators for their reports and for the work they have undertaken. He then reminded all those European associations present of the importance of the work carried out by these groups and the need for the membership to support their efforts by providing candidates for the groups and also both bringing issues to their notice and replying enthusiastically to any surveys or consultations they may circulate.

5. **Future of ECASBA Seminars**

As background for the discussion, the **Chairman** gave a brief overview of the last ECASBA seminar held in Brussels in June 2012. He said that overall the delegates thought the event was very positive and the discussions very active and enthusiastic. Once again however the attendance (26 persons including the Chairman and General Manager) was below expectations. A short discussion on the future of the ECASBA seminar programme had been held at the end of the June seminar and this had brought forward a number of suggestions including holding the events alternately in Brussels and an ECASBA member state, with part of the seminar being dedicated to issues of importance to the host association. The first association to volunteer was Germany, a proposal that had been enthusiastically supported by the Advisory Panel.

Mr. **Foord** said that he fully endorsed the proposal to take the seminar to other Member States as a means of increasing attendance and interest but said that consideration should also be given to expanding the range of subjects covered. Education, which the Commission sees mainly from the viewpoint of securing employment for returning seafarers, might perhaps be a suitable subject for the meeting in Germany.

Dr. **Geisler** said that ECASBA should endeavour to identify issues that affected as broad range of the members as possible in order to generate interest and suggested the obligatory use of English for pilotage operations. Mr. **Hristov** suggested highlighting the wide variation in statutory procedures across the Community.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the meeting gave its support to the proposal to hold the 2013 meeting in Germany and the **General Manager** was asked to liaise with Dr. **Geisler** with regard to the practicalities of the event.

JCW

Mr. **Wastell** said that there was a concern in the Netherlands about ECASBA's involvement in Brussels and also that the local association was not being kept advised of relevant developments. The **Chairman** said that ECASBA was fully engaged with all relevant Commission DG's on the issues of concern to the membership and all associations were kept fully up to date with developments. He added, however, that ECASBA could not be expected to have knowledge of every issue and so once again recommended any association that had specific issues to bring same to ECASBA as a matter of priority. The process went both ways, he reiterated, and the member associations must ensure they give as much input to the process as they receive.

With regard to ECASBA's involvement with the Commission, the **Chairman** also advised the meeting that following the June seminar, NAVES had generously offered to make their customs expert, Mr. Jan van Wesemael, available to ECASBA on a pro-bono basis to attend meetings of the Trade Contact Group and others and to ensure ECASBA was kept fully advised of relevant developments. He said the offer had been gratefully received and that Mr. Van Wesemael had already attended a number of meetings in his new capacity.

Mr. **Vanfleteren** said that NAVES fully supported ECASBA's current actions and was therefore pleased to have been able to offer Mr. van Wesemael's services. He added that NAVES felt the current working group structure was not best suited to the needs of ECASBA and suggested a review of the whole policy should be undertaken. The **Chairman** thanked Mr. **Vanfleteren** for his comments and said this would be one of the first priorities for the new Advisory Panel.

The **Vice Chairman** reminded all those present that they should ensure that all the information circulated by ECASBA is sent to their members, both to ensure they are aware of what ECASBA does and to stimulate discussion within the association and encourage feedback on relevant issues.

6. ECASBA 2020

Before beginning the discussion, the **Chairman** advised the meeting that ECASBA, as a committee of FONASBA rather than a separate organisation, was at a disadvantage compared to its European colleagues in that it did not have a President who could represent it at functions – for example conferences and similar – where a high-level presence was required. As an example, he said other European organisations, ECSA, ESPO etc., were represented at the opening of the recent European Port Policy conference by their Presidents, whilst ECASBA was not. This was not an issue at operational level, where the **General Manager** and himself would continue to represent ECASBA, but for “ceremonial” purposes at least, being able to call on the services of an “ECASBA President” would be beneficial for its profile and standing in Europe.

He said that a proposal to rectify this issue by nominating the Regional Vice President for Europe to assume the role as and when required had been discussed and endorsed by both the Advisory Panel and the FONASBA Executive Committee. He said that the ECASBA Chairman, supported by the Advisory Panel, would continue to exercise executive authority over the policy and activities of ECASBA and that the President would act in accordance with any delegated authority or instructions given by the Committee as may be required. The **General Manager** confirmed that as this was an honorary position only, and subject to oversight by the ECASBA Advisory Panel, there was no need to change the FONASBA Articles or By Laws, although for the sake of good order reference would be made to the position in the Governance Handbook.

JCW

On that basis the meeting was asked to approve the **proposal that as and when required by the Chairman of ECASBA, the Regional Vice President shall act as the President of ECASBA**. On a show of hands the proposal was **approved unanimously**.

The **Chairman** then opened the discussion on the future direction and shape of ECASBA by asking those present what they expected its members would be talking about, and how it would look and operate, at the start of the next decade.

The discussions were enthusiastic, extensive and wide-ranging but primarily concentrated on three main issues, that is enhancing recognition of the role of the ship agent and/or licensing by the authorities, the establishment of an ECASBA office in Brussels and improving communication, feedback and participation by the members in ECASBA’s activities.

On the issue of recognition/licensing, it was clear that there was very strong support for ECASBA (and indeed FONASBA) to take affirmative action to ensure that the ship agency profession was fully recognised by national and regional authorities as well as other sections of the maritime community. The meeting also fully supported the importance of ensuring that shipowners and charterers recognised the value to their operations of using a professional agent, rather than using cost as the primary criterion. The aim of raising entry standards for ship agents, and thus making it more difficult for unqualified individuals to enter the profession was also fully supported. A number of delegates were however less enthusiastic about the proposal to seek statutory recognition or licensing. Whilst recognising (but temporarily leaving aside) this may raise issues of competition law, concerns were expressed that such a move could bring with it unwanted constraints, restrictions and possibly additional compliance burdens.

The concept of ECASBA having its own office in Brussels was also well-supported but concerns over cost, and the specific role and responsibilities of the office in relation to FONASBA and other European organisations and institutions were raised.

The topic of increased participation by ECASBA member associations was not only a matter for ECASBA internally but also impacted on the wider campaigns to secure enhanced recognition of the ship agency profession and of ECASBA overall. As discussed on previous occasions, the active support of, and pro-action by, the individual associations both internally and externally, was vital to promote ECASBA and to support its activities. Having national associations working closely with their own administrations would compliment and support ECASBA’s own activities at Commission level and significantly enhance progress towards achieving these goals.

Summing up the discussions, the **Chairman** said that in the coming term, the Advisory Panel would be looking closely at the best options for action to secure increased recognition and/or licensing and also undertake a long-term study into the costs/benefits of having an ECASBA Brussels office. It was also clear, he said, that the associations represented at the meeting did support closer engagement with ECASBA – as evidenced by the enthusiastic discussions that had just taken place – but reminded the meeting that their support would require to be maintained after the meeting was over. **All associations must, he said, ensure that they participate in the ECASBA Working Groups, provide input to all consultations and requests for information and fully support ECASBA’s initiatives in their own Member States through engagement with authorities and administrations.** Without this support, he warned, ECASBA will make little progress on these vitally important issues.

ABdC
/AP

Assns.

In order to leave the afternoon session clear for the ECASBA Venice Seminar (item 7), the **Chairman** elected to take agenda items 8 and 9 at this time.

8. Any Other Business

Mr. **Houtved** said that issues still remained in Denmark over the issue of Schengen visas for seafarers and asked if this was a problem elsewhere in the zone. As it was clear from the responses that the regulations varied across Europe, Mr. **Houtved** said he would be issuing a questionnaire to the associations in the Schengen zone so that an overall view could be obtained and used for further discussions with the relevant national authorities.

AH

9. Date and Place of Next Meeting

The **Chairman** advised that the next Plenary Meeting of ECASBA would take place in October 2013 in Lima, with the date to be confirmed in due course.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chairman brought the first session of the meeting to a close.

ECASBA Venice Seminar

The afternoon session of the Plenary Meeting was given over to the seminar covering:

- the current state of play in relation to European Commission action on issues of relevance to the ship agency and ship broking professions
- a panel discussion on Europe’s future port policy options
- an update on customs developments and
- a panel discussion on the impact of the Special Emissions Control Areas on shipping in the North and Baltic Seas

Copies of the presentations given are available for download from the Member’s Area of the FONASBA website.

JCW/11.2012