
FONASBA AGENCY COMMITTEE – CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

Dear Members,

Dear colleagues,

As Chairman of the Agency Committee, I appreciate this opportunity to brief the Council on some of the key strategic challenges our profession is facing, and to outline the direction in which I believe FONASBA must position itself in the near future.

The role of the ship agent is undergoing profound change, and the speed at which technology is reshaping our landscape leaves no room for passive observation. We need clarity, unity, and leadership.

Over the past months, we have dedicated a significant part of our General Manager’s and Committee’s work to understanding the rapidly evolving ecosystem of third-party platforms. These platforms are already entering the operational and financial domains traditionally handled by agents, often without assuming the corresponding responsibilities — and, until now, they had not heard any reaction from us.

We have held several meetings with major players in this field, including HarborLab, SmartShip, Marcura / DA-Desk, ENCLERC, Digital Solutions, Baltic (KYC), GSTS, and Oceana, among others. I have also observed how, for example, ASBA in the U.S. has dramatically changed its approach toward TPPs. Initially, they tried to impose fines and reject their presence, and now they are embracing technology and doing their best to better showcase the role of ship agents.

These conversations were not merely exploratory; they were part of a deliberate strategy to assess how the sectors are positioning themselves and, more importantly, how we as FONASBA can better understand the reality of ship agents and how we should respond institutionally.

The consensus among many Execom’ members is clear: these platforms are not going away. In fact, they are gaining influence at a pace that risks outpacing our institutional capacity to set fair rules that protect the role of the agent. Many operate across multiple jurisdictions; in fact, that is their core strength; handling enormous amounts of data and controlling billions of dollars worldwide. At the same time, they use agents’ commercial and confidential data without proper authorization, and they redefine business relationships through digital means, often without accountability to local regulations or authorities. So far there is not a worldwide POLICE that will STOP them.

Although they have to behave properly against BANK nationals’ authorities, and in many countries LAW which enforce them to show minimal COMPLIANCE of their actions if they do not want to be seized. Traceability of payments, KYC, and many boundaries to fight Money laundering, narcotics and other illegal business are carefully growing, and that is the only reason they have approach us. We cannot be naïve thinking they respect neither like FONASBA or our bylaws, in the contrary, they need to be Formal and legal, and they think they can achieve that only by sharing a photo a dinner or a webinar with us. They need to pass all COMPLIANCE daily exams, and they do not study or care about our role, they are only growing by (very good) selling and focus on the needs of their clients.

We cannot remain neutral or reactive. The boundaries between agents and platforms must be clearly defined, and FONASBA must lead this conversation globally, not follow it.

Compliance is the language everyone speaks today, and FONASBA must set the tune, not dance to someone else's rhythm. As FONASBA, we cannot intervene in the daily battles each agent faces to maintain or increase their market share. We cannot be present in the day-to-day work of every agent to help them deliver competitive PDAs, provide outstanding services, achieve remarkable performance savings for their clients, or avoid extra costs through their professional and opportunistic advice.

FONASBA is not SUPERMAN; we cannot bring the past back or make everyone more comfortable by changing the reality they are facing.

FONASBA can only play in the institutional ring. And we are not alone. We should deepen our strategic cooperation with owners' or charterers' chambers, shipping-oriented chambers, and authorities at the global, regional, or national level. Within a single unique strategy that can be leverage through our international net with proven local presence in every country.

All the work described above has been carried out successfully for many years, with tangible results, such as the inclusion of FQS agency nomination suggestions in the new GENCON contracts and in some tenders. However, as we can see, what we have achieved so far is no longer sufficient.

As you have already heard me say, we need to develop our own digital institutional capacity. I'm not suggesting FONASBA should become a technology provider. But we must set the standard frameworks and the rules that will shape the digital ecosystem in which agents operate — always from an institutional standpoint. If we do not occupy this space, others will, and they will do so driven by commercial interests, not institutional principles.

This requires close coordination with national associations, intelligence sharing, and a clear policy statement from Execom' and during the AGM that empowers us to act with unity and purpose. FONASBA's leadership must be proactive and decisive.

My suggestion remains the same as the one presented during the last Execom' meeting in Athens; with one major difference: today, we have already implemented the new FQS certification platform in Argentina. The results, even at this early stage, have impressed us greatly. Interestingly, the first positive impact was not related to the certificates themselves. Simply by presenting the idea of online certification, we approached the local banking chamber, which is now very interested in using our data to properly fulfil their compliance obligations. We have also started discussions with Customs to provide our certified platform to advance in the same direction, to be recognized as trusted operators, differentiating ship agents from freight forwarders and other parties providing services in foreign trade.

Let me present a 6-minute demonstration of the customized FONASBA platform, which is ready to certify and control the entire FQS process, replacing the current system. Actual process is a simple JOKE and will not help FONASBA to move even one step, claiming for quality recognition on behalf of the members of their members the ship agents worldwide.

FONASBA has the legitimacy, the global reach, and the expertise to lead. What we need now is determination and alignment. I strongly believe that the Agency Committee, with the full support of Execom, can play a decisive role in ensuring that our profession remains both relevant and respected in the years to come.

Thank you.



FONASBA 2025 ANNUAL MEETING

Istanbul, 17th October 2025

Julio J Delfino

Ship Agent Committee Chair