

European Maritime Pilots' Association
47TH Annual General Meeting

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS
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Good afternoon. Thank you once again for the kind invitation to address your meeting.

I've been asked to discuss what we might expect over the next 20 years when it comes to the maritime industry and our profession. I have no crystal ball, but based on nearly 40 years as a pilot, I have some thoughts about the future and how we can face the challenges of the coming years.

As for what the future holds, the size of ships – length, beam and draft – is growing quickly. This will continue. As all of us who work with our governments on dredging funds know, navigational channels do not grow at nearly the same rate as ships. As a result, port authorities will continue to ask pilots to “ride the tide” and accept smaller underkeel clearances, as well as expect pilots to maneuver massive vessels within meters of fixed structures and in confined waterways. This trend of ship growth outpacing channel expansion will put ever more pressure on pilots and on our skills.

I also see a future in which ships will operate with even smaller crews. While it is hard to imagine smaller crews than we have today, I have little doubt that shipowners and some administrations will continue to push the limits of the definition of “minimum safe manning levels.” The continuing decrease in crew size will, unfortunately, be accompanied by an even further reduction in seafarer competence. This is not a reflection on today's seafarers, but on an industry that under-pays and under-trains crews. This, too, will put greater pressure on pilots and leads directly to my next point.

I envision a future in which shipping interests and some governments will believe that all navigation problems can be resolved by technology. This trend will further solidify the industry's unwillingness to value people – their own and most especially pilots. The devaluation of the role of seafarers is already leading certain sectors of the industry and some administrations to push for ever more shore-side control of ships. This obsession with “remote control” navigation will get worse.

Many in industry oppose the idea that a licensed mariner on the bridge of the ship must continue to be at the center of decision-making, especially in areas, like compulsory pilotage waters, where navigational challenges are at their greatest. Some will continue to argue that high tech “vessel traffic management systems” should exert more control and replace traditional shipboard mariner judgments and functions. This drive is being led today by a few European nations who are anxious to wrest control of ships from Masters and Pilots and vest it in desk-top navigators. The international forum at which this ill-advised drive will likely be carried out will not be, as you would expect, IMO, but rather IALA. The delegations attending IALA, and IALA itself, have no expertise or competence on shipboard matters. This, however, has not...and will not...deter efforts to strip navigational and shiphandling responsibilities from actual navigators and shiphandlers. In addition, there is, and will likely continue to be, a decidedly anti-pilot faction attending IALA.

I also foresee an increasing intolerance of any errors, even those without injury or pollution. Business leaders facing the “just-in-time” realities of our economy will not care that ships are

getting larger while navigational channels are getting correspondingly narrower and shallower. Facing pressure from these business interests, governments – who have not invested sufficiently in dredging – will nonetheless demand error-free maritime movement of cargo. The inability of government officials to recognize that ships have neither wheels nor rails but are subjected to the unpredictable forces of nature, will be a major concern in the future.

Finally, in the coming years I see an even greater desire by shipowners...who want to bring in the largest ships possible, fully loaded, and on their terms and schedule...to further improve their bottom line by trying to dispense with pilots altogether. They will not want a professional mariner, not under their direct control, exercising independent judgment. They will want leeway to pressure their masters to move ships based on economics and dollars and cents, not necessarily safety and common sense. As I said earlier, they will point to new navigation technologies and apply greater pressure to governments to allow their own crews to conduct pilotage in constrained waters.

This is a pessimistic view of the future, but I am not disheartened. These are precisely the type of challenges that IMPA was founded to confront. In order to tackle these threats we must:

- Remember who and what we are
- Recognize there are interests looking to eliminate or at least marginalize pilots;
- Actively engage local, regional, national and international authorities;
- Protect pilotage from destructive market forces;
- Continually work at improving the piloting profession; and
- Work together to present a unified public front.

I'll briefly address each of these strategies and approaches.

We need to remember who we are and why we formed ourselves into local, national, regional, and international associations. We are pilots; Independent professionals who board ships, stand on the bridge, work with...but never become subservient to...the bridge team, and direct the navigation of ships into and out of our ports. Our citizens and the authorities that issue our licenses count on us to keep commerce moving, but also to keep the maritime environment safe. This is our job and this is who we are. We must never allow anyone to diminish our vital role in navigation safety, nor should we allow uninformed or dishonest interests to relegate us to mere observers, monitors, or managers. I am always struck that I have to remind people of this and of what my role is as IMPA President.

I represent pilots. I don't represent pilot providers or businesses that sell pilot services. I don't speak on behalf of commercial companies in which pilots are simply replaceable employees. I don't represent groups of "pilot users" and I certainly will not help these people devise schemes to exempt their vessels from compulsory pilotage services.

In addition to knowing who we are, we must recognize that there are committed opponents of pilotage who are bent on getting rid of us. In an ideal world, to keep our profession strong and effective pilotage requirements in place, we would only need to carry out our pilotage assignments professionally and to build upon our navigational and training practices. Unfortunately, we live in the **real** world where individuals, companies, and organizations – to advance their own business interests and agendas – will seek to weaken or even remove pilotage standards. There are enemies of pilotage out there who are working hard and spending a lot of money. We can never forget this.

To maintain effective pilotage and protect our profession, we must not only maintain the highest levels of professionalism, but we must also engage at the local, national and international levels.

It is vital that we forge close working relationships with the policy-makers in our capitals and our ports. We have to tell our story and educate key people about the importance of modern, efficient, and effective compulsory pilotage systems. The marine industry, however, is international in nature, so we cannot limit our engagement to local port authorities or national governments. We have to be active in the international arena. As professional maritime pilots, we must have an effective and unified voice in the international arena. Since 1971, this voice has been IMPA.

Over the past four decades, IMPA has made substantial contributions to IMO's efforts to improve navigation safety, security, and pollution prevention. We have also led efforts at IMO to advance pilot safety, primarily through improvements to pilot transfer regulations. IMPA must continue to stand up to forces at IMO seeking to use international instruments to lower compulsory pilotage standards. The adoption of IMO Assembly Resolution A.960 in December 2003 was a major achievement in this regard. Through A.960, IMO wisely rejected international harmonization of pilotage. The most effective pilotage systems are tailored to meet the unique local requirements of the waterways. Attempts to standardize pilotage are misguided and inappropriate, whether this is attempted through international regulations or by some private sector marketing tool aimed at international standardization of pilotage.

IMO is not the only international forum where we must engage. As I said earlier, it has become clear over the past several years that there are some delegations attending IALA meetings that do not have the best interests of pilots at heart. You are all familiar with the so-called "Competent Pilotage Authority Forum" at IALA, so I won't go in to details. Suffice to say, IMPA will continue to oppose the efforts of this anti-pilot body.

Let me reiterate that international engagement, particularly at the IMO and IALA, will continue to be critical and must remain a high priority for pilots and for IMPA.

It is not enough, however, to simply be engaged policy makers; this engagement must be informed and focused. We have an interest in, and must ensure that the regulatory systems that govern pilotage and the qualification and licensing of pilots are comprehensive and effectively enforced. It has long been the position of IMPA that compulsory pilotage must be the subject of strict government regulation and cannot be left to the mercy of destructive market forces.

We must continually remind government officials charged with oversight responsibilities that marine pilotage is not simply a business. Compulsory pilotage is navigation safety regulation and a pilot's primary responsibility must be to protect the public interests. In that respect, the principal customer of the pilot's service is not the ship or the shipowner but rather the public.

An effective regulatory system must ensure that pilots are protected from the economic pressures shipping companies face in the movement of goods and people. The pilot must be free to exercise independent judgment and be protected against pressures from ship or terminal operators that are contrary to navigational safety. One of the most effective means to make sure pilots are not unduly affected by the economic pressures associated with commercial shipping is to ensure pilots operate under a regulatory system in which they are not forced to compete against one another.

A pilot who must compete with another pilot for an assignment knows that his or her livelihood depends on acting not in the public interest, but in the interest of the person who controls the selection of the pilot. When this happens, the underlying safety purpose of compulsory pilotage is frustrated. To prevent this, governments should pursue comprehensive economic regulation and close oversight of pilots, rather than leaving pilotage to the whims of open market forces.

I've focused mostly on challenges we have and will face, but we should never forget that piloting is a great job. We provide a valuable public service and get to do something that very few individuals in the world can do. We're lucky to be working in a unique profession with such a rich tradition.

BUT, the piloting profession is not self-sustaining nor is it guaranteed. We – all of us – must constantly work to preserve it. We must always strive to be the very best, most professional pilots possible. We can't afford complacent or careless pilots or pilot operations. We must continually earn the respect and confidence of governments and the public.

We need to look after our own operations and the performance of our pilots. Our ability to maintain the trust and support of the public and to counter the external forces that threaten pilotage depends in large measure on the image of professionalism that pilots present every day. We, as a profession, cannot let our standards slip or forget that every pilot is a representative of the profession. Accidents are, unfortunately, inevitable and high profile marine casualties involving pilots obviously create stress on any pilotage system. Accidents also invite attacks by pilot opponents.

We need to continually ask ourselves some key questions. Can we do more to minimize mistakes and reduce the number of accidents? Are we training enough? Is it the right kind of training? Is the professionalism of our pilots what it should be?

If there are problems, WE need to solve them. If we don't, no matter how strong we are politically, other groups that lack the expertise or that don't have our best interests at heart will attempt to impose their own solutions.

I will end with a final thought that you've all heard from me before. It is critical to our future that we present a unified public front. We can express **to one another** disagreements about pilotage and policies. This is healthy. Publicly, however, we must remain unified. In the long run, no pilot group ever made itself more secure by criticizing other groups or by implying that other groups don't meet the same standards. Interests seeking to weaken pilotage will use what appear to be public disagreements among pilots to their own advantage – and to the detriment of our profession.

Regardless of what challenges the next 30 years bring, I am confident that if we remain united; fully cognizant of anti-pilot forces; willing to continually improve our operations; and engaged with appropriate national and international bodies; we will continue to be successful at protecting our profession and preserving pilotage standards.

Thank you.