

WISTA - Press (18.11.2010)

Shipping faces huge retrofit rush to meet IMO deadline for clean ballast water systems

Shipping globally will be hard pressed to meet the target set by the International Maritime Organization for equipping ships to cleanse harmful ballast water, the WISTA International Conference in Athens heard.

Tom Kennedy, business development manager of OptiMarin SA, said that some 50,000 vessels would have to be modified in the next five years. Attending to an average of 30 a day looked "almost impossible" to achieve. The IMO has acted because of concerns about nature of the 10bn tons of ballast water carried each year. Many species of aquatic creatures and plants contained by the ballast are deemed damaging to the marine environment and human health.

OptiMarin SA, a Stavanger based supplier of treatment systems, was a Silver Sponsor of the WISTA Conference in Athens. Mr Kennedy spoke during the session Safeguarding the Environment: Innovations.

Mr Kennedy said that the Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments 2004 mandated that all ships that carry ballast water install a treatment system by 2016. So far 28 countries had contracted to the Convention, bringing in 26.5% of tonnage towards the aim of 35%. The convention looks likely to be fully ratified in early 2011.

With so many ships to be retrofitted, planning was crucial, said Mr Kennedy. By 2014 all ships with ballast water tank capacity of between 1,500 cu m and 5,000 cu m would have to go through the process, and by 2016 the remainder had to come into line. By 2012 all newbuildings must follow the rule.

Mr Kennedy said that so far there were 10 type-approved ballast water systems. By 2016 there might be as many as 20 or 25 seeking to participate in the market, but half might fall by the wayside because of the kind of chemical processes they might propose. The OptiMarin Ballast System, exceeding IMO standards, led the field, said Mr Kennedy, when the Princess Cruises ship Regal Princess became the first operating vessel to be fitted. Matson Navigation, Stolt Nielsen and Wagenborg were among other early adopters.

He said that the OptiMarin system involved ultra-violet inactivation of marine organisms, viruses and bacteria, without affecting the normal operation of a ship. Ballast water is treated both during ballasting and de-ballasting to ensure a dual effect.