

WISTA - Press (29.09.2010)

WISTA 2010 Conference Opens with news of Unprecedented Growth

The shipping industry's unique international network, WISTA, is on course for record growth as the association spreads its influence into powerful trading nations.

At the start of the WISTA International Conference 2010 in Athens, delegates heard that maritime professionals across the globe are working to establish new national associations aimed at enhancing knowledge and excellence throughout every level of shipping.

The 2010 Conference itself has set the tone by attracting 400 delegates, speakers and guests from a wide spectrum of shipping and its service sectors.

On its opening day, the gathering heard confirmation that the number of WISTA national associations has risen to 30, with the most recent associations to be formed based in Ghana, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. This brought membership by individuals to a record total of some 1,300 people, said WISTA International President Vera Chalkidis of Greece.

Mrs Chalkidis has made the expansion of WISTA into new regions a priority for her presidency. WISTA leaders are in close contact with potential members in China, Japan, India, the Middle East, Africa and elsewhere, encouraging formal establishment of WISTA chapters. WISTA Nigeria, one of the numerically largest associations, is in dialogue with other African nations, following its success in collaborating with Ghana to set up an association there.

In Europe, there is enthusiasm in Croatia, Austria and other nations new to the WISTA family. Welcoming delegates to Athens, Mrs Chalkidis said that WISTA was the home for professional, dynamic, open-minded women at management level in the maritime and trading sectors, people committed to excellence and transparency in their business life.

On home territory, Greece has provided by far the largest delegation for this year's Conference, while 26 delegates have flown from the United States, 20 from the Netherlands, 17 from Nigeria and 22 from London. Other nations are fielding strong representation. Newcomer Ghana has sent eight delegates.

From its formation in the early 1970s in London, the Women's International Shipping & Trading Association has been a respected force on the maritime scene, thanks to its emphasis on corporate social responsibility, high professional standards, education and mentoring, and enabling networking of a quality provided by no other forum. No other association brings together professionals from all sectors of the industry. In countries where women's professional activity may be restrained by cultural factors, it helps them maintain a sense of confidence that there can still be opportunities for advancement.

Greece's Minister of Maritime affairs, Islands and Fisheries, Mr. Yiannis Diamantidis, sent greetings to the Conference, praising the special contribution of women to the development of innovation in the shipping industry, and recognising the importance of training and education, especially as part of the campaign to attract young people into seafaring.