

# 'Don't shoot the shipping industry' over emissions, urge Greeks

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Despite backing IMO emissions targets, the Union of Greek Shipowners says owners should not carry the burden by themselves



THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY SAYS IT IS BEING UNJUSTIFIABLY CALLED UPON TO IMPLEMENT LEGISLATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL TARGETS.

SHIPOWNERS have been unfairly targeted by regulators in the name of drastically reducing emissions from the industry, the Union of Greek Shipowners has said.

Speaking at a press conference that effectively brought down the curtain on Posidonia 2018, UGS president Theodore Veniamis argued that the focus was misplaced and that shipbuilders and oil companies had been let off the hook.

“Although it is the most environmentally friendly mode of transport, [shipping] is being unjustifiably called upon to implement legislation and environmental targets, whose achievement depends primarily on other stakeholders,” Mr Veniamis said. “We cannot do miracles.”

The point was underlined at many bilateral meetings with International Maritime Organization secretary general Kitack Lim and European Union transport commissioner Violeta Bulc during Posidonia week, he said.

Greece’s shipowners have voiced support for the IMO’s recently determined decarbonisation targets. On Friday, Mr Veniamis reiterated that owners “do not have a problem” with the introduction of low-sulphur fuels.

But this came with provisos.

“Refineries need to supply ships with the new fuel wherever we trade,” Mr Veniamis said.

While many oil companies say they can provide 0.50% sulphur fuel from March 2020, they do not say whether the fuel will be compliant with safety requirements.

“There are liability and safety issues. It is not only a question of safety of life, there is an issue of potential damage to the ship and equipment.”

Despite its backing for the IMO strategy, the UGS said that it intends using “all the open channels of communication and formal consultation we have developed to promote realistic — and so feasible — proposals to address current environmental challenges.”

A sense of injustice still lingers. Mr Veniamis said: “Don’t shoot shipping. We are really just the taxi drivers. We just buy the ships.”

He added: “Imagine the European Commission making car drivers responsible for reducing engine emissions, instead of manufacturers and engine-makers. But in our industry, we never see institutions or commissioners come out and say that the ship is not to blame. We all pollute, but you will never see anything done about speed boats or motor yachts, because that would affect tourism.

“In shipping, regulators only look at us to solve a problem that is huge.”