

Don't turn a blind eye to 2020 problems, Greek owners urge IMO

The Union of Greek Shipowners has urged IMO members and other stakeholders to commit to 'attainable, workable and sustainable' solutions to the problems it sees riddling the 2020 global sulphur regulation. The owners' body warns of the risk of disruption to the bulk trades if its concerns are not addressed, while it has also taken another swipe at scrubbers, hinting at possible legal objections among other 'uncertainties'

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The world's largest national shipowners' association warns that upcoming IMO meeting is 'last chance' to address 'severe challenges' stemming from proposed sulphur regulation



GREEK SHIPOWNERS ARE CONCERNED THAT THE RED TAPE TAKING EFFECT IN JANUARY 2020 AS IMPOSED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MARITIME ORGANIZATION IS MISGUIDED AND NEEDS RETHINKING.

GREEK shipowners have called for “effective and sustainable” solutions from next week’s meeting of the International Maritime Organization’s Marine Environment Protection Committee.

They have branded it as a last chance to fix “gaps” in the new regulations.

“MEPC 74 is the ultimate opportunity to ensure a safe, smooth and consistent implementation of the 2020 0.5% global sulphur regulation and to effectively address the many and severe challenges stemming from it,” said Union of Greek Shipowners president Theodore Veniamis. “This last opportunity must not become a lost opportunity.”

According to the UGS, the world’s largest national shipowners’ association, there are a number of clear gaps in the 2020 sulphur regulation that threaten implementation and enforcement problems as well as “in some cases distortion of competition”.

“Nobody can turn a blind eye to them anymore,” it said.

Among the issues of most concern was worldwide availability of safe, compliant fuel that in the view of the UGS is far from assured.

But Greece’s premier industry body is also calling for “sound and practical” measures to deal with cases of non-compliance by vessels whenever these are due to reasons beyond their control.

It also took a swipe at exhaust gas cleaning systems, or scrubbers, saying that there remains a litany of environmental, operational, legal and other uncertainties related to their use and regulation.

It is by no means the first time that the UGS has registered its strong opposition to allowance of scrubbers as an alternative to burning compliant fuels, and the mention of legal uncertainties hints at a doubling down on the body’s objections to the systems, that it views as destabilising of fair competition in the tramp shipping markets where Greek owners are a major force.

One basis for the remark, Lloyd’s List understands from shipping sources, is a legal opinion from at least one international law office that recognition of the exemption for scrubbers might be challenged in the European Union on a number of grounds, including apparent freight market distortion.

The various concerns raised by the UGS amounted to “major issues which entail the risk of seriously disrupting international trade, if they remain unsettled,” it said.

Mr Veniamis argued that any adopted measures should be “attainable and suitable” for the entire shipping industry, but he also said that different needs of certain sectors should be acknowledged and respected.

“Bulk/tramp shipping represents more than 84% of world seaborne trade and any adopted measures should not jeopardise its sustainability,” he said. “For this sector, in particular, it is crucial that whatever measures are committed to become commitments for ships’ charterers also.”