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# Shipping warned not to ignore safety in sustainability push

*Industry leaders believe seafarer safety must not be ignored in the push for sustainable shipping. The safety of the new fuels is paramount but there is much work still to be done*

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Shipping is facing intense pressure to comply with decarbonisation targets but ‘the Greta Thunbergs of this world’ are likely to call for a shortening of timelines, a webinar discussion heard



THE ENVIRONMENTAL LOBBY HAS PICKED UP A HEAD OF STREAM DURING THE PANDEMIC AND SHIPPING WILL HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO RESPOND.

Source: CPC Collection / Alamy Stock Photo

SHIPPING’s move to decarbonisation should not be “at the expense of the safety of seafarers and vessels,” according to Intercargo president Dimitris Fafalios.

Speaking on a Capital Link webinar, he urged the industry to find a balance between decarbonisation and safety.

Focusing specifically on an expectation that vessel speed could be reduced to cut emissions, Mr Fafalios said dry bulk ships are traditionally low-powered. “If we drop the power even more, we will have safety issues.”

Intertanko chairman Paolo D’Amico agreed that safety becomes an issue if vessels are operated at or below certain levels.

“What comes first,” he asked, “emissions or the safety of the crew?”

InterManager president Mark O'Neil stressed that a multi-fuel future for shipping would bring new requirements on crew training.

"Training, crew availability, and competence will be even more of a challenge in future," he said. "Then you have the safety factors associated with handling fuel sources that are potentially more dangerous than existing fuels."

Mr Fafalios reiterated that "safety of the new fuels is paramount," cautioning that regulatory bodies including the International Maritime Organization and the International Association of Classification Societies have not yet fully developed safety criteria for many of the future fuels.

"There is an example in ammonia, which is highly toxic. Recently, one seafarer died and three are critical from ingesting ammonia on a liquefied petroleum gas carrier. Futureproofing is a wonderful word," he said, "but we have to put safety and reality ahead of the dream."

John Butler, chief executive of the World Shipping Council, said the most important message shipping could bring to the COP26 climate change meeting later this year is that the IMO must be "the home of the solutions".

He said the issue of sustainability in shipping cannot be solved if there is a "Balkanised regulatory world" where regional or national governments compete with their different regulations.

Mr Butler warned that regulatory competition brings with it commercial and trade disruption and "saps the energy and the will of the IMO member countries to do the job right."

But he called on the IMO to provide clear regulatory policy signals and to leave them in place long enough to enable the industry to react properly to them.

He said it was critical for the organisation to give "a clear idea of where we're trying to go and what the timelines are. We need innovation and investment, and neither of these respond well to uncertainty."

Mr O'Neil said it was "ridiculous" to stick to the IMO's 2050 decarbonisation timeline. "It will be far earlier than that because the Greta Thunbergs of this world will not allow it. We need to look at those timelines being shortened as opposed to querying whether we are going to meet them."

He said the environmental lobby has picked up a head of steam during the pandemic and shipping will have no choice but to respond.