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MARITIME SECURITY



Paris MoU: Two More Vessels Detained & Refused Access In The Region

M/V “FORWARD” – IMO 8231007 refused access to the Paris MoU region

The above-named vessel was detained in port Rostov-on-Don (Russian Federation) on 24 October 2019. This is the fourth detention in the Paris MoU region within the last 36 months. The ship flies the flag of Tanzania which is black on the current Paris MoU WGB list.

Therefore under the provisions of section 4 of the Paris MoU, Article 16 of EU Council Directive 2009/16/EC, the ship will be refused further access to any port and anchorage in the Paris MOU region, except a port and anchorage of the ship's flag State.

This refusal of access will become applicable immediately after the ship is authorized to leave this port and anchorage.

As this is the second refusal of access order the period of the refusal of access will be 12 months.

Your attention is drawn to the provisions of Section 4.4 of the Paris MOU, Article 21.6 of EU Council Directive 2009/16/EC1, which allow access to a specific port and anchorage in the event of force majeure or overriding safety considerations, or to reduce or minimize the risk of pollution or to have deficiencies rectified, provided that adequate measures to the satisfaction of the competent authority of such State have been implemented by the company or the master of the ship to ensure safe entry.

M/V ”MARIKI” – IMO 9104158 refused access to the Paris MoU region

The above named vessel was detained in port Monfalcone (Italy) on 30 October 2019. This is the third detention in the Paris MoU region within the last 36 months. The ship flies the flag of Moldova which is black on the current Paris MoU WGB list.

Therefore under the provisions of section 4 of the Paris MoU, Article 16 of EU Council Directive 2009/16/EC, the ship will be refused further access to any port and anchorage in the Paris MOU region, except a port and anchorage of the ship's flag State. This refusal of access will become applicable immediately after the ship is authorized to leave this port and anchorage.

As this is the first refusal of access order the period of the refusal of access will be 3 months.

Your attention is drawn to the provisions of Section 4.4 of the Paris MOU, Article 21.6 of EU Council Directive 2009/16/EC1, which allow access to a specific port and anchorage in the event of force majeure or overriding safety considerations, or to reduce or minimize the risk of pollution or to have deficiencies rectified, provided that adequate measures to the satisfaction of the competent authority of such State have been implemented by the company or the master of the ship to ensure safe entry.

Source: marineinsight.com; 8 November 2019

Singapore Maritime Security Response in Focus with Exercise Highcrest

- Prashanth Parameswaran

Earlier this month, Singapore staged another iteration of a complex, interagency maritime security exercise. The exercise, which was observed by top defense officials, is yet another sign of the city-state's wide-ranging efforts to manage a range of security challenges affecting it as well as the wider region.

In response to several challenges including terrorism, Singapore has been reinforcing its efforts abroad and at home to respond to them, including continuing to invest in capabilities, raising awareness, adjusting the way it conducts homeland defense and security operations, and using various means including drills to assess the responses of various agencies.

With respect to drills, one of the exercises in this regard has been Exercise Highcrest, a biennial exercise that is meant to test the ability of the Singapore Maritime Crisis Center (SMCC) and various agencies to plan and effectively manage a whole-of-government approach to simultaneous maritime security threats. This focus on coordination and comprehensiveness is in line with the concept called "Total Defense," a concept first introduced in 1984 initially set out to include five areas: military defense; civil defense; economic defense; social defense; and psychological defense.

The last iteration of Exercise Highcrest, held back in October 2017, involved about 300 personnel from 14 national agencies. The exercise had tested the agencies on a range of maritime terrorism scenarios, including a chemical attack on board a ferry and infiltration by sea.

Earlier this month, Singapore held the latest iteration of Exercise Highcrest. Exercise Highcrest 2019 was held from October 16 to October 22, with the focus of the

exercise being on dealing with threats such as terrorist infiltration by sea, attacks on vessels using small boats, and ferry hijacking.

According to Singapore's defense ministry (MINDEF), Exercise Highcrest 2019 featured personnel from a range of agencies, including the Republic of Singapore Navy, the Singapore Police Force, the Singapore Civil Defense Force, the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, Singapore Customs, and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.

As with the previous iteration, several top Singapore officials also witnessed Exercise Highcrest 2019. Per MINDEF, Senior Minister of State for Defense Heng Chee How and Senior Minister of State for Transport Lam Pin Min in particular visited and observed the exercise. The officials received a briefing at SMCC; sailed on the RSN Independence, one of the RSN's Independence-class littoral mission vessels where they viewed how the RSM coordinated assets to respond to a ferry attack by diverting maritime traffic and intercepting a small boat; and saw the enforcement of enhanced security measures and coordination with ferry operators at Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal.

Exercises are only one pathway through which Singapore has been looking to address its security challenges, and Exercise Highcrest is only one example of this. Nonetheless, such interactions and their outcomes will continue to be important to watch in order to assess how Singapore is looking to manage a range of threats and how successful it has been.

Source: [thediplomat.com](https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/exercise-highcrest-2019-showcases-singapores-coordination-and-response-capabilities/); 1 November 2019

Modi-Merkel meeting: Global terrorism, maritime security, trade and AI focus of India and Germany

- Huma Siddiqui

India and Germany have agreed to further boost their bilateral and multilateral cooperation in combating terrorism and extremism, enhancing trade and space cooperation as well as the use of technology like Artificial Intelligence in various areas.

At the end of the fifth Inter Governmental Consultations between the two leaders Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the two sides inked five declarations of intent and 11 agreements in different sectors including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Space, Civil Aviation and Education. During a joint briefing at New Delhi, Prime Minister Modi said that "We have vowed to build 'new India' by 2022 and expertise of technological, economic powerhouses like Germany will be useful for it." "India and Germany have resolved to intensify bilateral and multilateral cooperation to deal with the threats of terrorism and extremism," the Prime Minister added. And invited the German companies to invest in the Defence Industry Corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

With the focus on Strategic Cooperation, both countries have identified and stressed on seeking a deeper relationship in the field of new and advanced technology and in Artificial Intelligence, skills, education, cybersecurity. Also, new areas have been identified to further expand Indo-German relation. These include e-mobility, fuel cell technology, smart cities, and inland waterways, coastal management, cleaning of rivers and climate change.

On the agreements inked between the two countries, the visiting leader Ms Merkel said that the pacts are proof of the relationship between the two countries growing in areas of new and advanced technology. Also, AI and 5G are new technologies and both sides will work on them together.

The German leader has also offered to work in the Indian projects in the infrastructure sector. In a joint statement issued at the end of talks, India and Germany focussed on the fight against global terrorism and called for the finalisation and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in March 2020.

The two countries agreed to further intensify efforts for an early conclusion of India-European Union Free Trade Agreement. India expressed its appreciation of the European country's decision to reinstate its policy to grant investment guarantees for eligible direct investments by German companies in India as a means to deepen bilateral economic ties. During talks, both sides talked about the success of the 'Make in India Mittelstand' (MIIM) Programme which has helped facilitate over 135 German Mittelstand and family-owned companies with a declared investment of more than Euros 1.2 billion.

Military Cooperation

In accordance with the international, European and national rules, Germany has agreed to facilitate the export of military equipment as well as technology sharing with India. Under the Make in India initiative, the two sides sought deeper cooperation between the Defence Industries of both countries urging co-development and co-production.

In view of the shared stability and peace in the Indian Ocean, maritime projects especially submarine projects were encouraged and also the two sides sought stronger cooperation in the Defence Industry testing and certification. There will be regular Defence Dialogue once in every two years alternating in India and Germany as venues.

Source: financialexpress.com; 1 November 2019

Regional Maritime Security strategy coming

Maritime security must expand its scope beyond the traditional threats of illicit drugs and arms trafficking. It must also include economic enablers that contribute to the blue economy.

This is the view of Director of the Coastal Zone Management Unit, Dr Leo Brewster who says the marine space had great potential to boost Caribbean economies, through the facilitation of trade, exploration of oil and gas and the harvesting of living resources.

He was speaking at the start of a two-day workshop hosted by the Regional Security System (RSS) and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) on developing a Maritime Security Strategy for the RSS at the Radisson AquatICA Resort Barbados.

“Given the significant importance of the marine areas in economic development, and the diverse nature in which this domain can be leveraged for the attainment of national security, there is a need to achieve greater coherence and coordination across the myriad stakeholders and competing interests within the social, economic and environmental pillars in nation-states, and by extension the Caribbean region,” he said.

Dr Brewster suggested that this could be done through the adoption of an ocean governance framework and maritime security strategies to properly chart the way to manage maritime resources and delineate a path for improving coordination of maritime security cooperation. Meantime the Executive Director of the RSS, Captain Errington ‘Ricky’ Shurland has also stressed that development and security go “hand-in-hand”. He noted that there could be no sustainable development without security, sustainability and peace.

“Our maritime space is a source of economic development that needs to be secured for the benefit of generations to come. It is notable that maritime security is not simply about law enforcement and governance of a territorial sea or exclusive economic zone. It is about unlocking the growth potential of the blue economy,” he said.

Shurland added that the oceans had tremendous potential for boosting economic growth, employment and innovation as the blue economy encompasses ocean-based industries such as shipping, fisheries, renewable energies, maritime transportation, seaports, tourism and marine biotechnology as well as its natural assets, such as carbon dioxide absorption.

“Thus, an expanded blue economy will create greater demand for maritime security capabilities,” he said, noting that maritime security was viewed as the enabler of the blue economy through safeguarding navigation routes and protecting rights over valuable marine resources and activities within claimed zones of maritime jurisdiction.

The Executive Director also pointed out that the national and regional maritime security strategies would complement the work being done by states as they sought to develop the blue economy.

Meanwhile, Director of Projects at the CDB, Daniel Best, said the regional strategy, which was financed by the CDB to the tune of US\$338,000, would include a capacity building and training plan for the region to align assistance and programming from national, regional and international partners.

He added that the national and regional strategies would also assist with better coordination between the various organizations and actors responsible for the seas and oceans.

“For us in this sub-region, maritime security is an important regional public good, since our vast maritime domain and overlapping exclusive economic zones render it impossible for us to effectively protect and manage our marine space individually,” he said, noting that the common maritime space facilitated over 90 per cent of the movement of goods within the sub-region.

Source: loopnewsbarbados.com; 1 November 2019

Nine crew kidnapped from Norwegian ship

A Norwegian vessel owned by shipping firm JJ Ugland has been boarded by pirates while at anchor off the coast of West Africa. The ship’s owners released a statement about the incident off Benin, on Saturday (local time), saying nine crew members have been kidnapped.

The remaining crew of the MV Bonita notified local authorities, and the vessel later docked at the port city of Cotonou. The dry bulker was carrying a cargo of gypsum, a mineral commonly used as fertiliser, which was destined for Benin.

While piracy has decreased worldwide, West Africa’s Gulf of Guinea is a high-risk area for abductions and armed robbery, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a unit of the International Chamber of Commerce, said in a statement last month. The IMB hosts a live piracy and armed robbery map, which highlights known trouble spots.

Shippers have reported several abductions in the region in recent months, including eight crew members taken from a German-owned vessel off Cameroon in August, and 10 Turkish sailors off the coast of Nigeria in July.

“The Ugland Emergency Response Team are handling this situation as per contingency plans, and they are in contact with relevant authorities. ... The families of the crew members have been contacted and will be kept informed by Ugland,” the company said.

Source: thenewdaily.com.au; 4 November 2019



MARITIME FORCES



Philippine Coast Guard gets patrol boat from Japan

The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has received a 15-meter patrol boat and an x-ray inspection machine from the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines.

The handover ceremony was held at the PCG National Headquarters on November 11, 2019.

As explained, the patrol boat and the x-ray inspection machine are aimed at further enhancing maritime safety, maritime security, and maritime law enforcement, as well as marine environmental protection and maritime search and rescue of the country. With a capacity of up to 14 crew, the 15-meter patrol boat runs at 29 knots and is suitable for quick-response operations and retrieval missions. It is also capable of accosting alleged terrorists, intruders, and/or poachers within the Philippine territory.

The x-ray inspection machine, on the other hand, is compact and battery-operated equipment suitable for inspection in high or narrow places. It is controlled using a remote with a distance of up to 20 meters, which provides real-time inspection images.

Minister Masahiro Nakata of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Embassy of Japan, said that the nation is looking forward to boosting its strategic relations with the Philippines on evolving challenges in the future, specifically in protecting its territorial waters and marine resources.

“Our commitment to the Philippines is far from over. Rest assured that we will further support the operations of the PCG by providing high-quality assets and by instilling the latest maritime know-hows to its technical personnel,” Minister Nakata said.

“Our strong cooperation with Japan aids our efforts in preventing terror attacks, specifically kidnap for ransom within Philippine waters which, not only enhances maritime security, but also increases the number of economic undertakings in the region,” PCG Commandant Vice Admiral S Joel Garcia added.

Source: navaltoday.com; 12 November 2019

HHI Launched Third Daegu-Class FFX Batch II Frigate For ROK Navy

- Xavier Vavasseur

First ship of the class, ROKS Daegu, was built by DSME as well. It was launched in June 2016 and commissioned with the ROK Navy on March 6, 2018. Second ship of the class, ROKS Gyeongnam was launched in June this year.

A total of 8 frigates of this class, also known as the Incheon-class batch II or FFG-II , are set to be built by both DSME and Hyundai Heavy Industries, for the South Korean fleet.

The frigates are an improved version of the Incheon-class (FFX batch I). FFX Batch II frigates displace 2,800 tons, are 122 meters long, 14 meters wide and 34 meters high. They can accommodate a maritime helicopter.

They are fitted with a 16-cell Korean vertical launching system (K-VLS) to deploy K-SAAM (Korean Surface to Air Anti Missile), Hong Sang Eo (Red Shark) anti-submarine missile, and Haeryong tactical land attack cruise missiles. They are also fitted with torpedo launchers for anti-submarine warfare and eight SSM-700K Haeseong anti-ship missiles. All these missile systems are designed and produced by local company LIG Nex1. Powered by four MTU 12V 4000 M53B diesel engine and one Rolls-Royce MT30 gas turbines in a Combined diesel-electric and gas (CODLAG) arrangement, the frigate features a hybrid propulsion system to reduce underwater radiated noise. The class is capable of reaching speeds of 30 knots, according to DAPA.

The launch ceremony took place at HHI's Ulsan shipyard, and coincided with the ROK Navy's 74th anniversary. According to the ROK Navy, the new frigate features "advanced sonar and power systems to boost anti-submarine capabilities in coastal operations". The TASS, low frequency passive sonar system is used for detecting, identifying and tracking enemy submarines. Its hybrid propulsion system reduces underwater radiation noise, which greatly enhances the anti-submarine ability of the vessel. ROKS Seoul is set to be commissioned with the ROK Navy in early 2021. A program to build the third batch (FFX III) frigates which will displace 3,000 tons and feature a phased array radar is also underway.

Source: navalnews.com; 12 November 2019

Japan launches second lithium-ion battery powered submarine Toryu

Shipbuilder Kawasaki Heavy Industries has launched the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force's 12th Soryu-class diesel-electric submarine. Named Toryu (with pennant number SS 512), the boat is the second in the class to be fitted with lithium-ion batteries which store considerably more power than the lead-acid batteries installed on the previous ten Soryu-class submarines.

JS Oryu (SS-511), the first JMSDF sub with lithium-ion batteries was launched in October 2018 by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI). The 84-meter submarines are said to be the world's largest conventionally powered boats. They are also Japan's first submarines to be fitted with air-independent propulsion (AIP) systems that enable them to remain fully submerged for longer periods of time. The 2,950-ton submarines are manned by 65 sailors. Japan intends to build a total of 15 units in the class.

Source: navaltoday.com; 7 November 2019

USS Ronald Reagan trains with JMSDF in Philippine Sea

US Navy ships assigned to the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group trained with the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Escort Division 12 in the Philippine Sea between October 24 and November 2. "Conducting bilateral exercises with the JMSDF enables both navies to continue to strengthen the unique and seamless integration of our forces," said Capt. Steve H. DeMoss, commander, Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15. The bilateral exercise participants included Akizuki-class destroyer JS Fuyuzuki (DD 118), Ronald Reagan, the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruisers USS Antietam (CG 54) and USS Chancellorsville (CG 62). US Navy and JMSDF watch standers coordinated maneuvering operations, and tactical battle exercises that enhanced the ability of both navies to respond to maritime threats.

Rear Adm. George M. Wikoff, commander, Task Force 70, and DeMoss, were hosted aboard the Akizuki-class destroyer JS Fuyuzuki (DD 118) by Cmdr. Shusuke Kitaguchi, Fuyuzuki's commanding officer, and Capt. Kimihiro Ichiyanagi, commander, Escort Division 12. Ichiyanagi and several of his staff members embarked aboard the aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76), and stood operational watches with DESRON 15, integrated into the strike group's planning and operational staff.

Source: navaltoday.com; 5 November 2019

Marines Provide Embarked Security for Strait of Hormuz Transit

Marines and sailors from U.S. Central Command's Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team (FASTCENT) recently provided the MSC-chartered roro Liberty with an on-board security presence during a transit of the Strait of Hormuz, a regional flash point for tensions between Iran and the United States.

A FASTCENT unit boarded the U.S.-flagged Liberty on October 21. On October 24, after the transit, a U.S. Navy Seahawk helicopter lifted them off the ro/ro's deck.

According to the Navy, marines with FASTCENT have a history of deterring, detecting, mitigating, and defending naval and national assets against terrorism since the unit's activation in 1986.

"A strong U.S. presence in the Gulf region is both a deterrent to any potential adversaries who may have an interest in disrupting the maritime domain or using the seas for nefarious purposes, as well as a force to reassure allies, and partners of the United States' commitment to ensuring the free flow of commerce throughout the region," said Brigadier Gen. Matthew Trollinger, Commander of Task Force 51/5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade. The U.S. Navy is part of an allied effort to secure the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman for all traffic, and as always it provides additional security assurance for American shipping.

"The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps has and will continue to protect U.S. forces and interests in the region. This includes routine escorting and embarking on U.S. flagged vessels," said Vice Adm. Jim Malloy, Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/Commander, U.S. 5th Fleet. "We are not seeking conflict, but we will be prepared to defend ourselves and respond to attacks on U.S. forces and our interests." The Liberty is a Japanese-built, U.S.-flagged ro/ro operated by American Roll-On Roll-Off Carriers. In 2017, she was purchased from Wilhelmsen and flagged into the United States for Maritime Security Program (MSP) service. As of Monday, she was exiting the Gulf of Oman once more, eastbound and headed for Singapore.

Source: maritime-executive.com; 1 November 2019



SHIPPING, PORTS & OCEAN ECONOMY

What is the Blue Dot Network and is it really the West's response to China's Belt and Road project?

- Max Walden

Australia joined the United States and Japan in announcing the Blue Dot Network this week, a scheme some observers have billed as a rival to China's Belt and Road Initiative. The culmination of years of three-way cooperation, it was finally unveiled at a business forum in Bangkok by US officials. Chinese ascendency in the Asia-Pacific has come at a time where US President Donald Trump has abandoned the "pivot to Asia" of the Obama years. Despite its waning influence in the region, US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told an audience in Bangkok "the Indo-Pacific is the single-most consequential region for America's future". So what is the Blue Dot Network, why is Australia involved, and what has China made of all this so far?

What exactly is the Blue Dot Network?

Details are still scant following the announcement this week. The official release refers to the Blue Dot Network as "a multi-stakeholder initiative to bring together governments, the private sector and civil society to promote high-quality, trusted standards for global infrastructure development". While vague, it's essentially expected to serve as a globally recognised evaluation and certification system for roads, ports and bridges with a focus on the Indo-Pacific region — a "seal of approval", according to the US State Department. White House national security adviser Robert O'Brien likened it to the Michelin Guide — which provides restaurants around the world stars for excellence. While it has been reported on as the West's response to China's ambitious and controversial Belt and Road Initiative, the two appear to be fundamentally different.

Under Belt and Road, the Chinese Government and state-owned enterprises finance international projects by providing everything from concrete, steel, workers and cash — an approach labelled by some as debt-trap diplomacy. Mr Ross said it was about "supporting alternatives to predatory lending", by facilitating foreign investment in projects given a thumbs-up by the consortium. "If you don't have a trillion dollars to waste on concrete, it's a way to make a contribution," Jeffrey Wilson, director of the Perth USAAsia Centre, told the ABC. He likened it to "an episode of Utopia" — the ABC comedy series that follows a fictional government authority that oversees major infrastructure projects — whereby Australia, the US and Japan will provide technical expertise, rather than huge amounts of investment and capital.

Why has Australia joined in 'spearheading' it?

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs (DFAT) along with American and Japanese counterparts — who are all listed in official releases as "spearheading" the initiative — say the scheme will provide finance and greater transparency into poorer countries across the region. Officials have said it is about ensuring "principles-based" and "sustainable" investment in infrastructure. DFAT deputy secretary Richard Maude said amid the launch, the Australian Government is "looking forward to working closely with regional partners to develop the Blue Dot Network to take action" on promoting quality infrastructure and facilitating investment in the Indo-Pacific region.

The ABC contacted DFAT, seeking clarification about the initiative, its alleged response to China's Belt and Road Initiative — which Canberra has opted to not sign up to — but they did not respond by deadline. However, analysts have been quick to deduce the Blue Dot Network is likely about controlling regional power, as it reflects a shared Indo-Pacific strategy among states keen to offset China's rising power in the region.

For Australia, this "coalition of like-mindedness" is an opportunity to maintain Washington's engagement with Asia and deepen ties with Tokyo, according to Bates Gill, an expert of US-China relations at Macquarie University. "Australia wins because this is a small but important example of keeping America in and diversifying partnerships with important players in the region like Japan," he told the ABC. Mr Ross told reporters this week America had "no intention of vacating our military or geographical position". Mr Wilson added that the Blue Dot Network was about providing foreign companies, often reluctant to invest in developing countries due to concerns about corruption or climate change, the right information about which projects to invest in. "There's actually an extremely large amount of money wanting to do this," he told the ABC. "I'm sure our superannuation [providers] would love to invest in a long-term asset like a major road in Indonesia."

How has China responded and what next?

While the Western media and analysts have been quick to liken the Blue Dot Network to Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative, the launch hardly even registered in the Chinese media, nor was it raised during foreign affairs press briefings in Beijing. However, one opinion piece published by state-owned Global Times this week said the Blue Dot Network would be "doomed to fail" if the US sought to "divide the region" and "force other countries to take sides".

Relations with China — Australia's most important trading partner — have deteriorated in recent years amid accusations Beijing was meddling in domestic affairs and influence in the Pacific region. Beijing recently clapped back at Foreign Minister Marise Payne's criticism of China's human rights record. "[The Blue Dot

Network] should never be used as a stumbling block to 'rival' China and hinder China's cooperation with other regional members," argued the Global Times.

Meanwhile, another fiery editorial also published by the Global Times argued that forcing Asian countries to "serve the Star-Spangled Banner wholeheartedly" was an "insult to their wisdom and dignity". It concluded that the Indo-Pacific strategy, "will be eventually recorded as a shameful story in the history of international relations". However, US-China expert Bates Gill said despite the headlines, it was still too early to predict what the impact on regional dynamics could be, let alone understand the finer details of the Blue Dot Network's ambitions. "I think we'll have to wait and see what this consortium, the Blue Dot Network, actually achieves."

Source: abc.net.au; 9 November 2019

Maersk Tankers to Grow Its Managed Fleet by 11 Ships

Danish tanker owner and operator Maersk Tankers is set to add eleven tankers to the fleet under its management, following an agreement with BP Shipping and ICBC Financial Leasing.

The agreement involves three Suezmax, three MR and five Handy-sized vessels, all built in South Korea between 2016 and 2017.

Under the terms of the agreement, Maersk Tankers will take each vessel from the owner under a bareboat charter arrangement. It will then hire out the vessel to BP under a time charter deal for a period of three years.

As explained, Maersk Tankers will assume full responsibility for operational risks and the technical management of the vessels.

"With this agreement, we increase our fleet under management to 198 vessels from more than 30 different partners," Soren C. Meyer, Chief Asset Officer at Maersk Tankers, commented.

Maersk Tankers expects to take delivery of the first vessels in early 2020, with the remaining ones to be delivered throughout the year.

Source: worldmaritimenews.com; 21 November 2019

Maritime CEO Forum: First generation of double-hulled tankers set for the scrapheap

A huge swathe of the first generation of double hulled tanker fleet are coming up to their scrapping age in the next couple of years, and yet owners are reluctant to order

over the uncertain regulatory climate, delegates attending the Maritime CEO Forum in Hong Kong were told yesterday.

The annual by-invite-only event took place at the Foreign Correspondents' Club with more than 50 shipowners in the room for a high profile start to Hong Kong Maritime Week.

"Ships that will turn 21 or 22 in the next couple of years is a huge portion of the fleet – but demand is there, so you will get extreme volatility on the lack of fleet replacement. That is where we find it very interesting from an asset point of view," said William Fairclough, the new managing director of Wah Kwong Maritime Transport Holdings.

Despite the fleet facing a cut in capacity, shipowners are hesitant to order, concerned about whether new ships will be able to trade for their whole economic life.

"This is one of the hottest topics around," said Dr Martin Stopford, president of Clarkson Research Services. "There is no way to know whether diesel ships will be around in 2030 or 2040. Shipyards are desperate for orders and are ready to offer attractive deals but no deal is attractive enough."

Stopford went on to urge regulators to issue clear guidelines promptly, including possible phase-out plans like single hull tankers at the start of the century.

Fairclough said the next phase of tanker ordering would be dual fuelled, a costly endeavour. "There is a realisation that shipowners will not order ships unless with long term charters," the Wah Kwong boss said.

He warned that the mergers of Asia's top shipbuilders – CSSC and CSIC in China and Hyundai and Daewoo in South Korea – could see more "belligerent pricing".

The tanker panel was moderated by Nigel Anton from Standard Chartered and also featured Henrik Hartzell, managing director of Heidmar Far East and Sanjeev Verma, managing director of Landbridge Ship Management as panellists.

A full report from the session will feature in Maritime CEO magazine. The next forum takes place at the Fullerton Hotel in Singapore on March 17 next year.

Source: splash247.com; 19 November 2019

Oil Tanker Anchored on Asia's Busiest Shipping Route to Become Refueling Hub

- Serene Cheong and Jack Wittels

A Euronav NV-owned supertanker anchored along Asia's busiest shipping route is set to become a refueling hub as the company seeks to secure cheaper fuel for its fleet ahead of new industry rules.

The Oceania, one of the world's biggest oil carriers, will serve as a floating storage and distribution center for marine fuel in waters off Kuala Linggi International Port on Malaysia's west coast. The port will be Euronav's hub for low-sulfur fuel and marine services in the region, according to an agreement signed Tuesday with T.A.G. Marine Sdn Bhd., the port operator.

The ultra-large crude carrier with capacity of about 3 million barrels arrived off Malaysia in late-September laden with low-sulfur fuel after beginning her 12,400-mile (19,955-kilometer) journey from the Mediterranean Sea in August. Her presence in Asia will provide Euronav's fleet with a ready supply of shipping fuel ahead of the new IMO 2020 standards that take effect Jan. 1, which could prompt a scramble for low-sulfur barrels and push up prices.

While refueling activities are typically carried out from onshore terminals and tanks in bunker ports across Singapore, Malaysia and China, the Oceania will serve as a floating storage hub. The tanker has anchored off the port with 3 million barrels of 0.2% and 0.5% low-sulfur fuel oil, T.A.G. Marine said in a statement. Euronav also has another ULCC tanker, Europe, that's been at the anchorage area since 2013.

The port operator's agreement with Euronav is a shot in the arm for Kuala Linggi port, known as Sungai Linggi, as most vessels traversing the Malacca Strait typically choose to refuel in Singapore or Port Klang in Malaysia.

Source: [bloomberg.com](https://www.bloomberg.com); 12 November 2019

Autonomous Ships Timeline – Comparing Rolls-Royce, Kongsberg, Yara and More

- Jon Walker

Just as car companies are betting big that self-driving vehicles will change our roads, shipping companies are making a similar bet that automation will change how we move goods around the world. For autonomous ships, the open ocean may prove to be more fertile ground for the adoption of full automation than crowded city streets.

To understand where autonomous cargo shipping currently stands, where it is likely to go in the coming years, and what impact it will have, it is important to consider three major questions:

What value can unmanned shipping provide to make it worth the heavy investment to change the industry?

How does the industry plan to deploy these new autonomous shipping vessels?

When do the major shipping companies and ship manufacturers expect automated ships to be in widespread use?

This article will examine the official predictions from several major players in the industry about how soon they expect to see autonomous ships, as well as both internal and external analyses of just how significantly they will change the industry and world commerce. By next year the first ship designed to be autonomous is set to start plying the waters in Norway.

Before delving into the timeline estimates of autonomous boats from leading ship-building brands, we'll take a look at the underlying economic and safety factors most likely to drive adoption of this technology:

The Benefits of Autonomous Ships

Last year Mikael Makinen, president of Rolls-Royce Marine, declared that, "Autonomous shipping is the future of the maritime industry. As disruptive as the smart phone, the smart ship will revolutionize the landscape of ship design and operations"

Globalization and international commerce is built on seaborne trade because it is often the most cost effective way to move large volumes of goods from one country to another. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimated that in 2015, total seaborne trade volume surpassed 10 billion tons for the first time — roughly a four-fold increase since 1970.

Cargo ships are normally a much slower option than cargo planes or even trucks, so their core advantage is usually being a much lower cost option. This is why the shipping industry is always trying to find ways to bring down operating expenses. To keep international volume increasing, the industry needs to make shipping as cheap as possible. Bringing down the cost of transportation can make shipping new products across the world economically viable, opening new market opportunities.

Autonomous boats can obviously offer the advantage of reducing/eliminating the expense of salaries and benefits for crew members. This is more important for smaller vessels, where crew costs make up a bigger share of total costs, but less important on larger ships. For large ships, the other potential cost savings go beyond mere reductions in personnel costs.

1) Efficiencies of Ships Without a Crew

Once the need for having humans on board is eliminated, the entire vessel can be radically redesigned to improve efficiency in new ways. For example, systems once

needed to make the vessel livable for the crew can be removed entirely, simplifying the design.

The deckhouse that currently sits above the deck of ships, holding the crew and allowing them to steer the vessel, would no longer be required. This could open up more space for cargo, possibly making loading easier, or allow for a more aerodynamic profile.

When automation becomes viable, the industry isn't planning to just make the same cargo ships they currently do minus crew. They are planning on making a whole new class of vessels re-envisioned from the ground up.

It seems likely that crew reduction will occur before total crew replacement. Until robots become dexterous enough to fix engines or complete other routine onboard tasks, humans may need to be in the loop – even if just in the case of emergencies. Given the robotics applications for learning complex physical tasks (including surgery, factory assembly, and more), we might expect expect robotics crews to go along with autonomous vessels in the next decade ahead.

2) Reduced Human Error and Risk

Autonomy also holds the promise of reducing human error and therefore bringing down costs related to accidents and insurance. According to Allianz Global Corporate & Specialty, between 75% and 96% of all accidents in the shipping sector can be attributed to human error. These incidents rank as the top cause of liability loss.

The Costa Concordia disaster is perhaps the most famous example of how much damage human error can cause when dealing with massive ocean-going vessels. This isn't to say that machines would never make mistakes, but we might imagine that in time machines will make docking and navigation overall (just as automation plays a critical role for aircraft).

Safety standards for seaborne craft have likely not seen as much dialogue and innovation as self-driving cars or trucks. In our AI in Industry interview with Eran Shir of Nexar Inc (titled “When Will Autonomous Cars be Mainstream?”), Eran mentioned many of the current safety protocols and warnings in autonomous cars today, such as the “forward collision warning” (warning drivers of when a vehicle ahead of them has stopped suddenly, a common cause of accidents). If these same kinds of accident-detection use cases are explored for autonomous ships, we might imagine a world where self-driving boats are almost ubiquitously safer for people and cargo.

3) Reducing the Risks of Piracy

Meanwhile, without human crews to threaten or hold hostage, the issue of piracy along certain trade routes would also likely be reduced or mostly eliminated. Kidnapping crew members for ransom money is a main driving force behind modern

piracy. According to the State of Maritime Piracy report, last year there were 18 incidents of kidnapping for ransom off the coast of West Africa and 21 incidents in Asia.

The economic cost of Somali piracy was \$1.7 billion last year and it was as high as \$7 billion in 2010. Pirate attacks in Sulu and Celebes Seas has result in some merchants choosing to change their routes which can mean longer delivery times.

How Autonomous Ships Work

Compared to self-driving cars, autonomous ships face different challenges which make the technical requirements harder to meet in some ways but easier in others. For self-driving cars to produce a truly transformative paradigm shift, they need to be able to operate independently at almost all times. Autonomous vessels, by comparison, only need to operate without human input most of the time to significantly change that industry. In contrast to self-driving cars, the shipping industry doesn't envision requiring the onboard AI to fully control the vehicle in every circumstance – at least not for a long time.

The shipping industry's main goal from this technology isn't to completely remove humans from the decision making process. To see the advantages they hope to gain from this technology, they just need to eliminate the requirement that humans be physically present on the vessels at all times.

The vision put forward by companies like Rolls-Royce is to augment a mostly autonomous system with remote control. The onboard system would, for example, control the vessel during the long days at sea, which are relatively uneventful. Human operators would be called on to carry out higher level executive functions or deal with more difficult situations. When more difficult tasks are performed, like entering a port, the ship can be remotely operated by people on land.

According to Rolls-Royce's vision put forward last year, "There will be no single remote or autonomous ship solution but rather a hybrid of the two which will depend on the type and function of the vessel."

In the short term that means tugs that can be remotely operated from a nearby control center. In the long term, Rolls-Royce predicts a future in which a land-based control center staffed by just 7 to 14 people would be able monitor and control an entire fleet of large ocean-going ship around the world.

Timelines for Autonomous Boats to Hit the Water

Below we'll look at current projects and executive statements of major autonomous shipping firms, and compare their timelines for autonomous shipping adoption:

1) Rolls-Royce Marine – Short Runs by 2020, Ocean Going by 2025

Rolls-Royce leads the Advanced Autonomous Waterborne Applications Initiative (AAWA) which is a €6.6 million project funded by the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation to bring together ship designers, equipment makers, and universities to examine the future of autonomous ships.

According to the white paper produced by Rolls-Royce for the AAWA, “the technologies needed to make remote and autonomous ships a reality exist.” The necessary sensors, the communication equipment, the programming, etc. is all currently achievable.

The challenge is making the technology reliable and cost effective. Given the important safety concerns and financial investments involved in a single cargo ship, the technology will need extensive testing before being deployed.

The white paper also highlights that there are big legal, regulatory, and insurance issues. Even if the technology is perfected, companies aren’t going to use remote and autonomous ships unless countries change their laws to allow them to operate.

Despite some potential issues, Rolls-Royce is optimistic about the future of the technology. Oskar Levander, Vice President of Innovation-Marine has no doubt that autonomous ships will eventually transform the industry and claims that, “We will see a remote controlled ship in commercial use by the end of the decade.”

Levander believes autonomous ships will start as small vessels that operate in confined areas with a specific route, like a basic ferry. For legal and technical reasons, a well-defined, continuous back-and-forward run within a single country is where the first commercial applications of the technology will be used. For example, Rolls-Royce and Svitzer early this year demonstrated the first remote operation of a commercial vessel. It was a tug in Copenhagen harbour, Denmark controlled by a captain located on shore in a new state of the art control center.

This is an aspect of the shipping industry that should make it easier to steadily roll out remote and autonomous technology. Ship builders don’t need to first figure out how to make remote and autonomous ships operate under all possible conditions before they can start deploying them. There are plenty of shipping needs that only require a vessel to operate under very specific and limited conditions and still be economically viable.

Levander thinks the first remote controlled ocean-going vessel will emerge around 2025 and quickly become commonplace by 2030.

2) Kongsberg and Yara – 2020

Yara provides a perfect example of how we will see the technology most used in the very near future. Yara and Kongsberg plans to deploy the first autonomous and fully electric cargo ship in 2018. The vessel – christened YARA Birkeland – will start as a manned ship in 2018. The plan is to test the new vessel and slowly transfer more and

more responsibility to the AI system. Their goal is to have remote operation in 2019 and basically fully autonomous operations by 2020.

Since the YARA Birkeland will only travel a short, well-defined route from a facility in Brevik to a facility Larvik and back, it will simplify the task of preparing this one ship for autonomous operation. This is exactly the type of operation where the early autonomous ships will be put to use.

3) Japanese Consortium – 2025

Japan's most important ship building companies are betting on their country's technological expertise to improve their current world standing.

At the beginning of this year, the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transportation and Tourism announced a joint project between Mitsui O.S.K. Lines and Mitsui Engineering & Shipbuilding Co. to develop autonomous ships. The research consortium is bringing together companies, government agencies, and universities to create a technological concept for autonomous vessels.

The R&D effort is expected to cost hundreds of millions. The goal is shared expertise among several Japanese shipping companies to have autonomous ships by 2025.

We might imagine that autonomous ship adoption will be a function of a country's budget, and of the importance of ocean transport to its economy. Japan and the UK seem to be likely adopters if this holds.

In our previous interview with Accenture CTO Paul Daugherty (worth listening to for anyone interested in the economic impact of automation), Paul discussed the concept of "national absorptive capacity" – or the ability of a country to quickly adopt and leverage technology innovations. One of Accenture's 2016 reports on the impact of AI on the economy ranked Japan as being one of the nations most poised to benefit financially from AI – based in part on their national absorptive capacity. We'll see if this holds true for their developments in autonomous ships in the coming decade.

Concluding Thoughts on the Autonomous Sea Craft

Rolls-Royce and pretty much the entire Japanese shipping industry are investing millions into autonomous ship research and development. They feel confident in this bet because the actual technology to make such systems work effectively exists; the challenge now is refining it to produce the reliability and effectiveness to make it economically viable and safe enough to get the approval of regulators.

Many industry insiders expect the process to start in just the next few years, with remote and autonomous ships on short, defined routes by the end of the decade. They expect the technology to steadily improve until cargo ships are traveling the open ocean without crews (possibly between 2020 and 2025, based on today's claims and projections). Once the technology reaches maturity, some companies believe the cost savings will cause it to be adopted rather quickly on a broad scale.

This drive is not just to reduce labor costs and human error but to allow a real transformation in the industry. Without humans being physically aboard, ship design is open to new possibilities to increase efficiency – creating vessels purpose-built for shipping, without the decks, bathrooms, kitchens, and sleeping quarters required on today's vessels.

Long term, the implications extend well beyond the shipping industry. Bringing down the cost of transportation would not only reduce operating expenses for a whole range of industries but could create a variety of new market possibilities. Low value items that were not worth shipping before could become profitable.

Research suggests that containerization technology, which dramatically reduced shipping cost, was a main driver of globalization. Products with relatively low profit margins (possibly clothing, some types of food, and more) will enter far-away markets, bringing about heightened competition in sectors that previously had little.

It will likely be a decade before the impact is felt broadly, even if the technology develops at a rate some expect. Knowing if and when the technology will reach maturity should be fairly easy to follow and prepare for. Since the technology is predicted to soon roll out for simple routes and steadily expand to longer and more complicated routes, it should be easy in the next few years to gauge whether these predictions are on track.

The companies outside the shipbuilding industry which should be paying close attention in the short term are any which are constantly moving a modest amount of cargo a relatively short distance across or near waterways. Tugboats, ferries, and barges are the first uses of remote and autonomous ships are planned – and these are likely to be the applications where autonomous ships will add real value in just the next few years.

Source: emerj.com; 22 November 2019



Hydrogen fuel cells becoming viable in maritime sector

- John Snyder

Within five years, vessels using hydrogen-powered fuel cells and batteries will make up a significant segment of the coastal fleet, according to Hyon managing director Tomas Tronstad. Speaking at Riviera's Maritime Hybrid and Electric Conference in Bergen, Norway, Mr Tronstad said the business case for hydrogen was starting to gain momentum. "There is really a push by regulators, a push by state-owned operators using their purchasing power and a pull from (government) authorities offering co-funding. There is also a pull from operators because they want to be green and from companies such as ours that are offering a more viable solution."

Mr Tronstad's company, Hyon AS, jointly formed by Nel, Hexagon Composites and Power Cell, is collaborating on two hydrogen fuel-cell vessel projects aimed at producing zero emissions. One is Project ZEFF, a zero-emissions fast ferry and another, Project Seashuttle, is a zero-emissions coastal container ship with automated cargo handling. Both projects are among six that won backing under the Pilot-E initiative, a more than €100M (US\$110M) scheme involving Norway's Research Council, Innovation Norway and Enova. Pilot-E is aiming to speed up the development of zero-emissions technology. Norway already has regulations in place that require vessels operating in its fjords to be emissions free by 2026.

Seashuttle, which Mr Tronstad detailed at the conference, won €6M (US\$6.6M) of backing from the Norwegian Government to develop two zero-emissions, 200-container coastal freighters connecting Poland, Sweden and the Oslo fjord. Hyon's partners in the project are European multi-modal operator Samskip, logistics consultant FlowChange, technology firm Kongsberg Maritime, and Massterly, an autonomous vessel technology joint venture between Kongsberg Maritime and Wilhelmsen.

Hydrogen – a global business

"What is not generally known is that hydrogen is a giant, global business, with daily consumption and handling of about 70M tonnes for industrial processing," explained Mr Tronstad. He said what is new is its use for electricity storage and energy in transport. Mr Tronstad has a deep knowledge of fuel-cell development in the maritime environment, having served as project manager for the industry research project FellowSHIP, which began exploring the use of maritime batteries and fuel cells in 2003. The first prototype marine fuel cell was installed in Eidesvik Offshore's platform supply vessel Viking Lady in 2010.

Incorporating a high degree of autonomous technology, the Seashuttle vessels will be fitted with a diesel- or gas-electric propulsion, batteries and hydrogen fuel cells to maximise operational flexibility, providing perhaps as many as 40 different propulsion modes, said Mr Tronstad. The sizing of each propulsion system has not yet been determined, but testing is being conducted at Kongsberg Maritime's laboratory, simulating the generators, diesel generators and propellers in combination with a physical fuel cell and batteries.

Hyon will draw on its joint venture partners' respective areas of expertise in hydrogen production and storage, hydrogen fuel-cell stack and systems manufacturing and refuelling in developing the Seashuttle vessels. Mr Tronstad said the initial goal of the Seashuttle operation will be to produce zero emissions for 20% of the coastal route.

Europe's largest multi-modal transportation company, with a fleet of six vessels and 300 trucks, Samskip, wants to lead the way in Norway's sustainable shortsea shipping by using hydrogen fuel cells. To do so, however, the Seashuttle partners must overcome a number of challenges, pointed out Mr Tronstad. Topping the list were regulatory approvals, safety evaluations and devising a seamless transition between propulsion power modes. With various shipping initiatives underway to meet IMO's initial strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping by 50% by 2050, Mr Tronstad is optimistic that those challenges would be met.

Emissions regulations cause concern

Tightening emissions regulations and rapid changes in technology have created a level of uncertainty among vessel owners regarding what investments they should be making in their fleets in order to retain their value. "Owners are worried," said ABB vice president market development, marine and ports Jorulf Nergard, speaking at the conference in Bergen. "They want to know what the rules are. One thing that is certain," said Mr Nergard, "is that all the discussions are trending towards emissions free. The only question is, on what scale?" Mr Nergard pointed out that the push for battery-hybrid and fuel-cell propulsion is not necessarily about saving fuel, it is more about global regulations aimed at reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions and reducing damage to the environment.

"First, it was about reducing NOx and SOx," he told conference delegates. "Now, it is about limiting carbon to combat climate change." Mr Nergard, too, cited Norwegian government regulations that will create a zero-emissions vessel area within the country's fjords starting in 2026. This has led to a boom in orders for new ferries with battery-hybrid and hydrogen fuel-cell technology. "There are 50 ferries on order or under construction and could well be 100 in the next few years," he said. ABB is one of nine European companies working in a consortium to develop two

commercially operated zero-emissions, hydrogen fuel-cell vessels under a European Union-backed project.

Called Flagships, the project will develop a pushboat for operation on the Rhone River by France's Compagnie Fluvial de Transport (CFT) and a public ferry for operation by Norway's Norled. Both will utilise hydrogen produced by renewable energy. Others in the consortium are Norwegian design company LMG Marin, Danish fuel-cell technology firm Ballard Europe, French vessel energy monitoring and management company PersEE, Finnish research centre VTT and Norwegian industry cluster NCE Maritime CleanTech. Mr Nergard pointed out that a vessel built today will be in service in 10, 20 or perhaps even 30 years. He said owners need to ask, "How should it be equipped? What will its powertrain look like? The bottom line is that it needs to be flexible." Earlier this year, ABB launched Onboard Microgrid, a compact DC-based power distribution system for smaller vessels using batteries, fuels or a combination of the two. Designed for use in tugboats, ferries, and workboats, Onboard Microgrid is based on the same principles as ABB's power distribution system Onboard DC Grid for larger vessels, such as OSVs or construction support vessels.

Mr Nergard said the system allows for improved efficiency and load sharing between batteries, fuel cells, biodiesel or biogas-driven propulsion systems: "We can have a DC link and connect all of the producers of energy in the vessel. It opens up the possibilities for battery, fuel, diesel or combined."

Source: rivieramm.com; 5 November 2019

Marine Pollution Incident Management Preparedness: IMO^{Org} At The Helm

It takes many people doing lots of different things to ensure that the environment is protected following a marine pollution incident. The challenge is to involve the right people at the right time with the best-suited skills and accountabilities – and a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for managing the response to oil or any other marine pollution incident. By adopting international best practice in incident management, South Africa is proactively preparing to manage marine pollution incidents effectively, ensuring that the appropriate resources and stakeholders are mobilised quickly – and important and timeous decisions made.

The South African Interim Incident Management Organisation (IMO^{Org}), under the Department of Transport, plays a critical role in co-ordinating preparedness and response, utilising the internationally recognised Incident Management System

(IMS) which was introduced in 2015. Interim IMOrg Chairperson Mr Chueu Terrence Mabuela from the Department of Transport explains: “In identifying the potential impact of offshore oil and gas production, the critical issue of oil spills and their impact on the marine environment was raised. In the context of preliminary discussions which initially took place in 2014 during the Operation Phakisa ‘Oceans Economy’ collaboration sessions, it was clear that there was a need for a joint-government/industry response approach to marine pollution incidents in the maritime and oil & gas sectors.”

Over the past few years since the Interim IMOrg was constituted, clear advantages and synergies have been achieved in establishing a holistic approach towards managing oil spills in the marine environment. And preparedness is key. As part of this focus, the Third Joint Industry Government National Oil Spill Response Exercise will take place in Cape Town in November 2019, following a formal IMS National Training Course, endorsed by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

“South Africa is fortunate to be part of the ‘Global Initiative for West, Central and Southern Africa’ (GI WCAF), a project that sees the IMO collaborating with IPIECA – a global oil and gas industry association for environmental and social issues – to enhance the capacity of partner countries to prepare for and respond to marine oil spills,” notes Interim IMOrg CoChairperson Captain Ravi Naicker, the South African Maritime Safety Authority’s Senior Manager for Navigation, Security & Environment, whose commitment to sustainability is reflected in the drive to ensure the successful implementation of the IMS involving multiple stakeholders.

Informed by the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan (NOSCP), all relevant national government departments and authorities, local and municipal responders, pollution prevention, containment and clean-up organisations, as well as vessel and offshore installation operators need to be aware of their responsibilities in the case of an incident. Regular Oil Spill Response Exercises – initiated and managed by the Interim IMOrg utilising the IMS – bring together accountable designated representatives from the South African Department of Transport (DOT), Department of Environment, Forestry & Fisheries (DEFF), South African Maritime Safety Authority (SAMSA), Department of Minerals and Energy (DME), Transnet National Ports Authority (TNPA), Petroleum Agency South Africa (PASA), PetroSA, Oil Spill Response Limited (OSRL), Offshore Petroleum Association of South Africa (OPASA), Strategic Fuel Fund (SFF), South African Police Service (SAPS), National, Provincial and Local Disaster Management Centres, various environmental Conservation Agencies, as well as Non-Profit organisations such as the Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds (SANCCOB), Industry role players in emergency response, oil spill response and marine operators, amongst others.

Each exercise scenario is carefully created to ensure that response systems and processes are tested and accountable stakeholders are involved. Previous exercises

have entailed oil spill scenarios focussing on Table Bay in March 2018, Algoa Bay (November 2018) and with the upcoming November 2019 exercise focussed on the area off Mossel Bay. The Interim IMOrg, under the DOT, was constituted on 25 October 2017 following preparatory work done by the B1 Working Group under the Operation Phakisa ‘Oceans Economy’ initiative, initiated to fast track the implementation of the National Development Plan.

Establishing the internationally recognised IMS in South Africa as the primary marine pollution response co-ordination process is a key output for the IMOrg, in addition to providing advice, recommendations and support to the DOT and SAMSA as well as the appointed Incident Commander.

Source: [South African Interim Incident Management Organisation \(IMOrg\)](#); 5 November 2019

EU targets fragile West African fish stocks, despite protection laws

- Ifesinachi Okafor-Yarwood

Most of the large fishing vessels that operate in West Africa are from distant water fishing nations – such as countries in the European Union (EU) and China and Russia. To get permission to fish in West African waters they form agreements in exchange for a fee that is payable to the government.

But these agreements have been criticised for contributing to the over-exploitation of fish stocks in the region. Specifically affected are, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Cape Verde, Mauritania, Senegal and The Gambia.

So far, over half of the fisheries resources in waters off West Africa are already over-fished. In our recent paper, my colleague Dyhia Belhabib and I show that the EU's agreements with West African countries continue to target fragile fish stocks. This is despite the fact that the EU is bound by policies that are meant to protect fish stocks.

EU activities alone are not to blame for over-fishing in the region. The impact of trawling by other countries, like China, is well-documented. But, through its fisheries policies, the EU has a commitment to sustainable fishing. It also continues to enter into fresh agreements with countries, despite evidence of serious population declines in the species of interest.

Marine fisheries play a significant role in the food and economic security of millions of people in West Africa. If stocks are depleted, small-scale fishers that depend on them won't be able to make a proper income and many people will lose their main source of protein. Competition for depleting resources is already leading to conflict between fishers and foreign fishing vessels.

It is crucial that these natural resources are better protected. We propose that one way to do that is for countries to renegotiate their naively low royalties with the EU. And there needs to be more investment in marine enforcement.

What we found

The original objectives of the EU's Common Fisheries Policy was to preserve fish stocks, protect the marine environment, ensure the economic viability of European fleets and provide consumers with quality food.

In our paper we argue that the policy protects EU waters, but damages the marine environment of third countries to which it has now been extended.

We also argue that subsidies under the policy are a key driver of this over-exploitation of fisheries in third countries. For instance, these subsidies incentivise the construction of new vessels to allow boats to go farther and remain active at sea for longer, and even support the fuel costs for these more extensive activities.

And we highlight that abuse by EU vessels undermines local food security and provokes conflict with artisanal fishers. This is because demand in EU countries has led to EU vessels targeting fragile fish species such as the European anchovy, bigeye grunt, sardinellas, bigeye tuna, yellowfin tuna and swordfish.

Our study used a review of existing literature and policy documents. This included an analysis of catch data between the EU and countries with whom it has fishing partnership agreements in West Africa, between 2010 and 2014.

We then cross-referenced EU catches with the exploitation status of certain species extracted from the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. The categories we used were:

- Fully exploited: this means that there's no room to catch more of that fish species,
- Over-exploited: this means that too many are being caught and that numbers will decline, and
- Depleted: which means that the number of fish stock are at the lowest they've ever been.

We found that, of the species caught by EU vessels:

- Over 20% of the species in São Tomé and Príncipe were over-exploited; 10% of the species caught in Liberia are fully exploited. In Mauritania we found that 41% of the species caught are over-exploited and 5% are fully exploited while in Guinea-Bissau, 7% of the species are over-exploited and 21% are fully exploited.
- In The Gambia, 55% of species caught are over-exploited and in Cape Verde 28% of the species caught are over-exploited. In Côte d'Ivoire, 23% of species caught are over-exploited.

We also found that the EU selectively applies regulations when it comes to preventing illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. The EU issues warnings (yellow) or a complete ban in fish trade (red) to countries that are not making their fisheries more sustainable. This is when there are inadequate local provisions, like laws and enforcement measures.

We uncovered a trend. Yellow cards are issued to countries with whom the EU have a high level of trade, and a ban to countries where it has less fishing trade.

Guinea-Bissau, for example, has not received a warning despite evidence of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. Its maritime enforcement agencies aren't adequately equipped to monitor the activities of vessels operating in its waters.

Moving forward

We recommend that the EU review the implementation of the provisions of its Common Fisheries Policy, including the terms of their subsidies which have been identified as being harmful to sustainable fisheries. West African countries should also do far more to ensure that future and renewed fishing agreements are negotiated more robustly.

It is possible. For instance Guinea-Bissau was firm in its negotiations over a new agreement with the EU when its old one expired in 2017. After a year of negotiations, the EU offered a much better deal than previously proposed. In return for providing five years of access to 50 EU fishing vessels, the EU will pay Guinea Bissau €15.6 million per year. The previous agreement's rate was €9.2 million. They were also required to put more investment into effective marine governance and enforcement.

Source: theconversation.com; 6 November 2019

Bleaching Of Hawaii Reefs Less Severe Than Predicted

- Chad Blair

Widespread coral bleaching predicted by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration earlier this year "did impact reefs across Hawaii," says the state Department of Land and Natural Resources, beginning with warm ocean temperatures in the summer that extended into the fall.

But it was not as bad as forecast, yet widespread nonetheless.

Teams from the DLNR Division of Aquatic Resources, NOAA, The Nature Conservancy, the Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology and the Arizona State University Center for Global Discovery and Conservation Science conducted rapid assessments of coral health along coral reef tracts throughout the state over the past few months.

“Conditions for corals are now improving with sea surface temperatures beginning to drop,” said Gerry Davis with NOAA Marine Fisheries, in a press release Tuesday. Davis added: “While bleaching this year was not as devastating as the events seen across the Hawaiian Islands in 2014 and 2015, the DAR surveys, along with NOAA observations and reports from ocean users to the Hawaii Coral Bleaching Tracker, show there still was substantial bleaching found on all islands.” As much as half of live coral bleached in the most heavily affected areas, said DLNR. Cauliflower and rice corals were most impacted.

Source: civilbeat.org; 5 November 2019

GSOMIA survives as South Korea reverses decision to exit intel pact with Japan

- Reiji Yoshida and Satoshi Sugiyama

In a dramatic last-minute about-face, the South Korean presidential office announced Friday that it will reverse course on its earlier decision to end a key intelligence-sharing pact with Japan — just hours before the expected expiry of the deal. The announcement by Seoul, which saved the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) — at least for now — came in the face of strong and persistent pressure from the United States to keep it alive.

Washington demanded that Seoul renew the pact, which is widely regarded as a symbol of the military cooperation between South Korea, Japan and the U.S. against North Korea. Observers say Seoul's scrapping of the pact could have further escalated diplomatic disputes between South Korea and Japan, drawing the two countries into an even larger diplomatic row. Still, the wartime labor issue involving Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula, which Tokyo has prioritized most, remains unresolved.

Later in the day, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told reporters in Nagoya that Tokyo's priorities remain unchanged and that Seoul must "eliminate the current situation that violates international law." A key condition for Seoul is that South Korea can terminate GSOMIA at any time, the Yonhap news agency quoted Kim Yougeun, deputy director of the presidential Blue House's national security office, as saying at a news conference.

According to Yonhap, the presidential office of South Korea said it made the decision after the two countries closed the gap on some differences in their monthslong trade fight.

However in Nagoya, Motegi emphasized that the trade issue and the military pact are two separate things. Seoul probably reached the decision because it attaches much importance to cooperation between South Korea, Japan and the United States to cope with the North Korean military threat, Motegi said. Meanwhile, despite Motegi's comments, the Japanese trade ministry announced it will resume talks between export control officials of the two countries that have not taken place in over three years, a possible sign of progress in easing a trade dispute that further strained bilateral relations.

Yoichi Iida, the director-general of the trade control department at the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, insisted Friday evening the decision is not related to

the GSOMIA announcement. He also confirmed that South Korea had suspended a bilateral consultation with Japan in the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement process. Japan this summer hit South Korea with enhanced screening on three chemicals integral for semiconductor manufacturing as well as a diverse range of materials that could be used to make weapons. South Korea fought back, downgrading its trade status with Japan in retaliation and condemning the move as politically motivated. Iida said Japan is not planning to ease its tightened export control measures anytime soon. "Considering South Korea's notification on suspending the WTO process, we determined that South Korea is expressing its eagerness to improve its current export control problems."

On Friday, officials of the two countries reportedly continued behind-the-scenes talks over Seoul's planned withdrawal from the intelligence-sharing pact. If talks had broken down over GSOMIA, the two Asian countries would have lost a precious opportunity to improve their strained bilateral ties. Seoul announced in August it would scrap GSOMIA, a move that was widely seen as retaliation against Tokyo's introduction of the export control measures. Meanwhile, U.S. officials have repeatedly warned the scrapping of GSOMIA would weaken the trilateral military alliance and only benefit China and North Korea.

GSOMIA has allowed Tokyo and Seoul to share sensitive military secrets, including those concerning Pyongyang's ballistic missiles and nuclear development programs. The pact has streamlined communications between the three countries. The U.S. has a similar pact with each of Tokyo and Seoul. "If South Korea scraps (GSOMIA), it could send a wrong message to North Korea and other countries in the surrounding area," Defense Minister Taro Kono told a news conference on Friday before Seoul's surprise announcement.

The recent Japan-South Korea dispute started late last year when South Korea's Supreme Court ordered Japanese firms to pay compensation for wartime forced labor despite a 1965 pact that was concluded to settle all post-colonial compensation issues, including those for wartime labor. Tokyo has demanded Seoul take measures to avoid damage to Japanese firms. Japan introduced the new export control measures in July, which have been widely regarded as a response to Seoul's inaction on the wartime labor issue, despite Tokyo's denials. The Blue House had apparently believed that Washington would urge Japan to make concessions to improve ties with Seoul if it made the decision to withdraw from GSOMIA. But the U.S. instead started pressuring Seoul to renew GSOMIA, said Yuki Asaba, professor of Korean studies at Doshisha University in Kyoto.

After facing pressure from the U.S., the Blue House rushed to improve relations with Japan and tried to persuade it to pull back its export controls in exchange for Seoul's renewal of the pact. Tokyo, however, has consistently argued the two are separate issues and Seoul must first address the wartime labor issues if it ever wants to improve bilateral ties.

Source: japantimes.co.jp; 22 November 2019

India-Asean bilateral trade may double by 2025 to \$300 billion: Study

With India pulling out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), country's existing engagement with ASEAN is back in focus with an industry study suggesting that India's bilateral trade with the ASEAN economies would double by 2025 to \$300 billion from the current level of \$ 142 billion (2018). The study conducted by PHD Research Bureau, PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said that concentration of India's exports items to ASEAN economies is very high in the top 20 commodities that presents scope for further diversification of India's exports basket to such economies.

India's merchandize exports to ASEAN economies are in the tune of around \$38 billion, imports at \$59 billion and total trade at \$97 billion in 2018-19, said the study. In the services segment, India's exports to ASEAN economies stand at \$24 billion, imports at \$21 billion and total trade at \$ 45 billion in the recent times. Exploring synergies between manufacturing and services trade, facilitation of mobility of professionals and business visits between India and ASEAN, encouraging greater regulatory cooperation and exchange of best international practices, among others will strengthen the bilateral cooperation between India and ASEAN economies, said Dr D K Aggarwal, President, PHDCCI. There is immense potential for increasing India's exports to ASEAN economies considering the inherent advantages in various product categories, said Dr D K Aggarwal. India's trade relations with ASEAN have witnessed a shift during the pre and post ASEAN-India Free Trade Agreement (AIFTA).

During pre-AIFTA, India's merchandise exports to ASEAN economies had increased from \$ 3 billion in 2001 to \$ 18 billion in 2009 with a CAGR of around 22%. While, during post-AIFTA, India's merchandise exports to ASEAN economies increased from \$ 23 billion in 2010 to \$ 36 billion in 2018 with a CAGR of around 5%, said the study.

During pre-AIFTA, India's merchandise imports from ASEAN economies have increased from \$ 4 billion in 2001 to \$ 24 billion in 2009 with a CAGR of around 22%. While, during post-AIFTA India's merchandise imports from ASEAN economies increased from \$ 30 billion in 2010 to \$ 57 billion in 2018 with a CAGR of around 8%, said the study.

During pre-AIFTA, India's total merchandise trade with ASEAN economies has increased from \$ 8 billion in 2001 to \$ 42 billion in 2009 with a CAGR of around 20%. While, during post-AIFTA, India's total merchandise trade with ASEAN

economies has increased from \$ 53 billion in 2010 to \$ 93 billion in 2018 with a CAGR of around 7%, said the study.

It has been observed that the concentration of India's exports items to ASEAN economies is very high in the top 20 commodities with a share of around 85% in 2009 and 2018, said the study.

Going ahead, there is scope for further diversification of India's exports basket to ASEAN economies. Therefore, facilitation to exporters to diversify the composition of India's export basket with enhanced knowledge of markets will be crucial to strengthen India-ASEAN trade trajectory, it noted. According to the study, some of the measures for boosting India-ASEAN dynamic trade and investment relations include: Enhancing the facilitation to exporters, Significantly increase services trade, Undertaking continuous review of the ASEAN-India trade in goods agreement, harmonizing and simplifying the customs procedures, Promote greater private sector engagement and Support greater financial inclusion towards improving access to financial services.

Going ahead, there are huge trade and investment opportunities for enhancing India-ASEAN cooperation in sectors such as infrastructure and Fintech, culture and tourism, IT/ITES and e-commerce, education and skill development, healthcare and pharmaceuticals and agriculture and food processing, among others.

Source: business-standard.com; 12 November 2019

“You go alone, you’ll be bullied”: The need for solidarity is the key takeaway from the 35th ASEAN Summit

Editorial

“You go alone, you’ll be bullied,” Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed told business leaders at the 35th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok on Saturday. As regional leaders converged on Bangkok between November 1 and 4, 2019, the importance of unity and solidarity was a prominent overarching narrative.

Dominating the ASEAN summit’s agenda this year was the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the 16-nation free trade agreement set to establish a free trade zone encompassing 39% of total global output and almost half of the global population.

Recent tensions in the South China Sea, where a Chinese survey ship and Vietnamese coastguard vessels have been embroiled in a standoff at Vanguard Bank since July, also featured prominently in discussions.

Economic and diplomatic cooperation is key to meeting regional and global challenges Mahathir's comments gave voice to ASEAN's most pressing internal struggle. The 10-nation economic bloc has employed a "decision by consensus" approach to regional challenges. All 10-nations have had to give their express support to any action or statement the bloc produces. This has allowed external players an avenue to influence ASEAN decision-making. By preventing the emergence of a consensus, foreign governments have been able to limit ASEAN's effectiveness at responding to regional threats.

The alternative, as alluded to by Mahathir, is going it alone. However, individual ASEAN nations' voices are often drowned out and ignored when they strike out alone on the international stage.

The 35th ASEAN Summit was a showcase of ASEAN centrality

The summit was an illustration of ASEAN regional centrality and the merits of unity in international trade and diplomacy. RCEP negotiations, of which ASEAN nations make up 10 of the 16 participating nations (the others are China, Japan, Australia, South Korea, and New Zealand), are drawing to a close, albeit without India's participation.

Members have reportedly agreed on 14 of the 20 chapters. Negotiations on the legal framework are expected to be completed in February, suggesting the pact will be signed in 2020. The agreement's negotiation can be interpreted as a coordinated regional response to global economic threats. Talks on the RCEP have been ongoing since 2012; however, limited progress was made until the advent of the US-China trade war. As regional economies sought to mitigate the negative impacts of President Donald Trump's trade war, the RCEP and the bolstering of intra-regional trade emerged as a potential source of economic stability.

Beyond the RCEP, the summit also saw individual ASEAN nations express their desire for increased economic integration. Thai Commerce Minister Jurin Laksanawisit pushed for further integration in regional financial systems. He told reporters that ASEAN was working on a regulatory framework for cross-border payments and data protection.

This would facilitate the growth of the regional eCommerce sector. The Southeast Asian digital economy currently accounts for 7% of GDP, suggesting there is ample room for growth. In the US and the EU, the digital economy accounts for 35% and 27% respective GDPs.

Without a united front on the South China Sea issue, Chinese aggression will go unchecked. The most important area for ASEAN cooperation remains the South China Sea. 2019 has seen a marked increase in Chinese aggression. In July, China's Haiyang Dizhi 8, a survey ship, entered contested waters to survey oil stores off the coast of Vietnam, violating Vietnamese sovereignty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The Vietnamese coast guard met the ship at Vanguard bank, where the Vietnamese government are developing oil projects with the assistance of Russian energy company, Rosneft. The Chinese and Vietnamese vessels have been locked in a standoff ever since.

The Chinese government sees the South China Sea and its 190 trillion cubic feet of natural gas stores and 11 billion barrels of oil as an opportunity to reduce its dependence on foreign crude oil. However, the territory Beijing claims within its “nine-dash line” encroaches on Vietnamese, Philippine, Malaysian, Indonesia, and Bruneian waters. ASEAN nations are keen to push back against overt Chinese aggression and Beijing’s breach of international law. However, without a unified approach, individual nations will be vulnerable to Beijing’s bullying and economic threats.

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte underscored the importance of ASEAN in confronting Chinese aggression ahead of the ASEAN Summit. “ASEAN must... remain united. We must lead the way in building trust and confidence among all stakeholders,” he said. “We must use all the influence that we have, individually and collectively, to persuade parties to exercise self-restraint and avoid actions that may further complicate the situation.”

Both individual and collective influence have been on full display at the 35th ASEAN Summit. In addition to the calls for collective action, individual ASEAN nations and their backers have raised the South China Sea issue with China in sideline discussions.

On November 3, at a meeting between Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Chinese Premier, Li Keqiang, on the sidelines of the summit, Xuan Phuc reiterated the need for China to respect marine economic norms and international law. He reiterated Vietnam's willingness to protect its sovereignty, territories and maritime rights under international law.

On the same day, Narendra Modi, the Indian Prime Minister, met with ASEAN leaders at the 16th ASEAN-India Summit. During the discussions, Modi shared his concerns over Chinese aggression in the South China Sea, including its militarization of the region and disregard for international law. In a statement, Modi emphasized the importance of rules-based orders and welcomed the strengthening of India-ASEAN maritime cooperation. He acknowledged ASEAN's central role in India's East Asia-Pacific Action Policy and Vision.

ASEAN leaders welcomed India's implementation of its Act East Policy for actively supporting ASEAN's centrality as well as regional integration and community-building efforts.

A Code of Conduct will be essential for preventing conflict

The product of ASEAN unity on the South China Sea issue should be the establishment of a legally binding Code of Conduct (COC). An effective COC will have the backing of all 10 ASEAN member states and set out a clear set of rules and responsibilities for claimant states.

Through consensus, the bloc can push for a COC which protects ASEAN nations' rights to carry out military drills in the South China Sea with outside powers, permit nations to work with outside oil firms on joint development projects, protect freedom of navigation throughout the region, and protect the sovereign rights of individual nations.

The Chinese government has indicated its receptiveness to negotiations. However, there are concerns that Beijing has employed delaying tactics to buy time to engage in unlawful expansion activities and further militarize its outposts in the region.

Beijing's recent encroachment on Vietnamese sovereignty only serves to underscore the importance of ongoing COC negotiations. Former Filipino Foreign Affairs Secretary Albert del Rosario warned recently,

“absent a binding code of conduct, continued Chinese aggression and military activities will persistently push the existing entitlements under international law of Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam into more turbulent waters.” A COC is essential in preventing further diplomatic escalation and increased aggression from Beijing.

The 35th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok highlighted ASEAN’s position at the centre of regional geopolitical and economic solutions. It was a showcase of both the fruit of ASEAN solidarity, as well as the need for further cooperation. Despite its vulnerabilities, ASEAN’s decision making by consensus is a source of power for the bloc and will be of central importance in safeguarding nations’ sovereignty and resources in the face of increased Chinese aggression.

Source: aseantoday.com; 7 November 2019

Yemen’s Government Signs Peace Deal With Southern Rebels

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Yemen’s Saudi-backed government signed an agreement with southern separatists on Tuesday to end a power struggle in southern Yemen. Saudi Arabia’s crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, hailed the agreement as a step toward a wider political solution to end the multifaceted conflict.

The standoff had opened a new front in the four-year war and fractured a Saudi-led coalition that has been battling the Houthi movement in northern Yemen. The Iran-backed Houthis ousted the Saudi-backed government from the capital, Sana, in late 2014. Saudi Arabia’s envoy to Yemen told reporters that the agreement would allow the separatists and other southerners to join a new Yemeni cabinet and would place southern armed forces under the control of the Yemeni government.

“This agreement will open, God willing, broader talks between Yemeni parties to reach a political solution and end the war,” Prince Mohammed said in a televised signing ceremony in Riyadh.

President Trump praised the agreement on Twitter. “A very good start!” he said. “Please all work hard to get a final deal.”

Saudi Arabia has been trying to resolve the standoff in southern Yemen to refocus the coalition’s attention on fighting the Houthis in the north.

The separatist forces, supported by Riyadh’s main coalition partner, the United Arab Emirates, are part of the Sunni Muslim alliance that intervened in Yemen in March

2015 against the Houthis, who hold Sana and most big urban centers. But the main separatist political organization, the Southern Transitional Council, turned against the Saudi-backed government in August, seizing its interim seat in the southern port of Aden and trying to extend its reach in the south. The council advocates self-rule in the south and a say in Yemen's future.

The deal calls for the formation of a new cabinet within 30 days that would have equal representation for northerners and southerners. The Southern Transitional Council would also join any political talks to end the war. To pave the way for the deal, Emirati forces left Aden last month, handing control of the port city and other southern areas to Saudi Arabia.

The United Nations envoy Martin Griffiths, who is trying to restart talks to end a war that has pushed Yemen to the brink of famine, said the deal was an important step in peace efforts. "Listening to southern stakeholders is important to the political efforts to achieve peace in the country," he said in a tweet.

The ceremony was attended by the Emirates' de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed of Abu Dhabi; the Yemeni president, Abdu Rabbu Mansour Hadi; and the Southern Transitional Council leader, Aidarous al-Zubaidi.

The Aden crisis exposed a rift between Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, which started reducing its presence in Yemen in June as Western allies, including some that provide the coalition with arms and intelligence, pressed for an end to a war that has killed tens of thousands.

April Longley of the International Crisis Group said the agreement could be positive but it was too early to tell. "In a best-case scenario, it will put the lid on violence and open the way to more inclusive Yemeni negotiations in which southern separatists, who are an important component on the ground, are also present," she said.

Source: [nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com); 5 November 2019

China says ready to work with ASEAN for South China Sea peace

- Matthew Tostevin

China is ready to work with Southeast Asian countries for long term peace and stability in the South China Sea, Chinese premier Li Keqiang said on Sunday after meeting leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

China's sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea are rejected by several members of ASEAN, which have competing claims in the busy

waterway. At the summit in Bangkok, Li cited progress on a long-awaited South China Sea code of conduct, due for completion within three years.

"We are willing to work with ASEAN, under the consensus that had been reached, to sustain long term peace and stability in the South China Sea, according to the timetable set for three years," Li said in a statement.

A legally binding code has long been a goal for ASEAN members sparring over what they see as China's disregard of sovereign rights and its obstruction of their energy exploration and fishing.

Source: [reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com); 3 November 2019
