

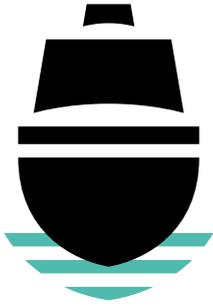
ICS LEADERSHIP INSIGHTS

Monthly insights from the International Chamber of Shipping's global leadership community



50 years of sea changes

Esben Poulsson reflects on a life in shipping



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DECISION MAKER: **ESBEN POULSSON**

Esben Poulsson blends East and West in Singapore

Multi-tasking ICS Chairman's passion for the sea has moulded his leadership style for 50 years

Front cover: Esben Poulsson at sea on *Thelassa Avra* (image: Esben Poulsson)

Below: *Thelassa Helas*, the first in a series of ten 13,806TEU Enesel container ships flagged and managed in Singapore. (image: Enesel)

Esben Poulsson remembers the exact date his maritime career began – 31 August, 1971 – and he has a stamp in his passport to prove it.

Although he had some casual shipping-related work before that, including three months at sea, aged 17, it is the moment when he arrived in Hong Kong that day that he counts as the start of his life's voyage. Now, as he approaches the 50th anniversary of that momentous arrival, he is still as passionate about shipping as he was then.

"That's because of my love of the sea", he told *ICS Leadership Insights*. "I am never happier than when I'm at sea." And passion is essential in shipping, he believes. "You can't teach it but if you don't have it, find something else to do". He has no plans to find something else to do and the long list of senior roles he holds is testament to that.

They have accumulated by choice and chance. Since 2010, his main role has been Chairman of Enesel, which manages a fleet of

large Singapore-flagged container vessels for the Greek Lemos shipping family.

Twice this portfolio of positions has led to potential conflicts of interest. In one case, he realised during a board meeting that the company was planning to explore an acquisition that another of his clients was also considering. "I immediately put my hand up and said, 'I cannot be involved in this discussion'. Any suggestion that you could be conflicted is not worth it", he said.

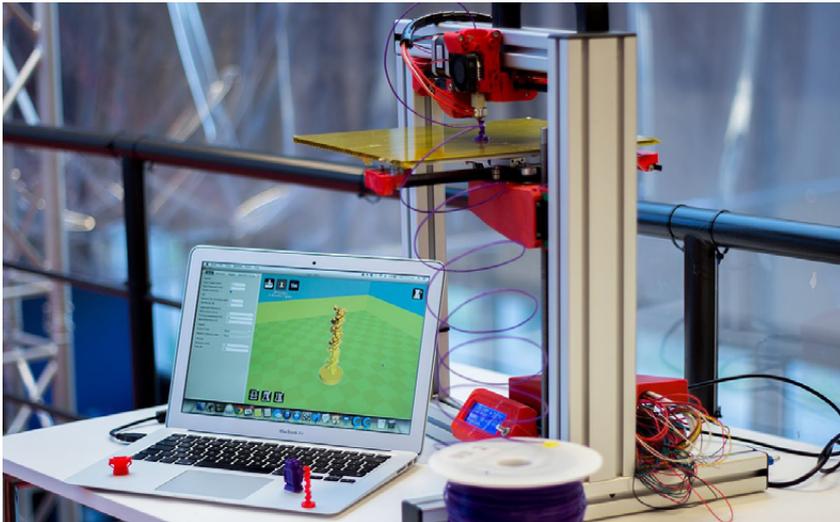
Go global, go local

As a Scandinavian living in Asia, he is aware of the different management styles in both regions. European management, "is very consensual [but] it is much more top-down in Asia", he said. To reconcile these very different approaches, Poulsson has adopted a slogan that he attributes to HSBC: 'go global, go local'. "I try to live by that. It's not for me to impose [changes] when I'm in a different country."

ESBEN POULSSON'S CURRENT ROLES

Chairman, International Chamber of Shipping; UK
Chairman, Enesel; Singapore
Chairman, Cambiaso Risso Asia; Singapore
Board Member, Nordic Shipholding; Denmark
Non Executive Chairman, Tamar Ship Management; Hong Kong
Board Member, Finnlines; Finland
Board Member, BW Epic Kosan Gas; Singapore
Board Member, Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore; Singapore
Senior Advisor to the Chairman, X-Press Feeders; Singapore
Advisory Panel Member, Singapore Maritime Foundation; Singapore
Vice President, The Mission to Seafarers; UK





Growing use of 3D printing could have a long-term impact on container volumes, Esben Poulsen predicts (image: Jonathan Juursema/Wikimedia)

“ [COVID] has given rise to a greater level of cooperation than I have ever seen ”

He described his own approach to management as “more carrot than stick” and recalled a situation where he had applied that to an Asian client’s hiring policy during a period of growth.

At the time, it offered indentures to aspiring new staff, providing training in return for a commitment to stay with the company for a period of time afterwards. “But I wasn’t interested in tying someone down for five years, even though we had financially supported them.” Instead, at the end of their training, they were offered a job if they were good enough “and they were free to go if they didn’t like it.” He wanted, he said, “a positive and pleasant atmosphere of mutual respect”.

He has seen a degree of mutual respect emerge across the industry as a result of the COVID pandemic as the industry faces up to challenges such as crew changes and vaccine distribution. For example, the ICS – a shipowners organisation – has been cooperating with the ITF – a trade union body – in an “extremely constructive two-way dialogue [about] what we can do together. [COVID] has given rise to a greater level of cooperation than I have ever seen”, he said.

More broadly, groups such as BIMCO, Intertanko, Intercargo and the World Shipping Council are holding regular meetings on delayed crew changes and what he sees as the biggest concern currently facing the industry: “seafarers being treated as they are supposed to be treated ... and governments stepping up and doing what they’re meant to be doing”.

ICS priority issues

Poulsen paid tribute to the ICS secretariat, which he said is achieving a great deal on that and other priority issues – such as new fuels and emissions, piracy, cyber security and more; “each deserves our best attention”, he said. And he compared ICS with an equivalent organisation for the airline industry, IATA, which

he said has more than 1,000 staff in 10 offices worldwide to represent 290 airlines. By contrast, ICS has 26 staff in one office, as well as one staff member in Hong Kong and another in Australia, and represents 80% of the world fleet.

Yet “shipping is a very individualistic type of business”, he said, and some shipowners do not appreciate the benefits that industry groups bring them through the work they do. Without them, “I suggest [the situations they address] would be much, much worse.”

IMO faces a similar issue, he suggested. Many business people “don’t really understand how it actually works”. He knows how they feel: “Before I got involved in association work, I could never really understand it”, he admitted.

A turning point for him in appreciating IMO’s practical impact came from the long debate about when the 0.5% sulphur cap would be introduced – 2020 or 2025 – which ended in October 2016 when MEPC 70 agreed it should be 1 January 2020. “The industry would probably have preferred 2025 ... [but] we got a decision and a date; at least it was a done deal.”

Now, the emissions focus has moved on, to CO₂ emissions, and perhaps the most important contribution ICS has made to IMO during his time in office has been its proposal for a levy on bunkers to raise funds for R&D into the next step in the ship fuelling developments: zero-carbon technologies.

The next 50 years

Those will usher in a very different way of designing ships and operating routines from those of the past 50 years and Poulsen predicted that the next five decades will be transformative. New fuels and their infrastructure, new technology and regulatory developments “will create massive changes”, he said.

Change will not be limited to ships themselves. Take 3D printing, for example: although the container sector is currently booming, “on a longer-term basis, you have to question what its effect will be”, he suggested.

Those forecasts reflect the broad view of the industry that his experiences have provided and he brings that approach to his ICS role. “As chairman, it is not my role to delve into the nitty-gritty”, he said. He does, however, provide a sounding board for shipowners and member associations – he has visited most of them during his terms of office – and offers a powerful voice beyond the industry, speaking regularly to the media and working with the ICS secretariat to prepare articles and commentaries.

When he is quoted in the media, he is often described as an ‘elder statesman’, he said but when he began, “I was always the youngest in the room. What happened?” His passion remains the same, however, and it is a two-way experience: “young people forget that people like me can learn just as much from them as they think they can learn from me.”

Emergency seafarer relief fund launched

The Seafarers International Relief Fund (SIRF) has received more than US\$300,000 in donations two weeks after its launch on 5 May by leading seafarer welfare charities who set a target goal of US\$1 million.

Kitack Lim, Secretary-General, IMO, welcomed the fund saying: “I am pleased to learn of the establishment of this industry-led emergency fund to assist seafarers and their families during these unprecedented times”.

ICS helped coordinate and bring together the leading international seafarer welfare organisations, [The Seafarers’ Charity](#) (formerly Seafarers UK) supported by [The Mission to Seafarers](#), [ISWAN](#), [Sailors’ Society](#), [Stella Maris](#), and other charities – that are leading this united appeal to the shipping industry to deliver urgent support to seafarers and their families in India, which has been identified as an initial focus.

Esben Poulsson, Chair of the International Chamber of Shipping, said: “I am calling on shipowners and all those engaged in the maritime sector to support this initiative and consider increasing your contribution to seafarer charities at this time. When faced with significant challenges the maritime community always come together – this is what we do.”

To learn more or make a donation [click here](#).



Seafarers after receiving their COVID-19 vaccine in Norfolk, Virginia, US, in May (image: Barbara (Bobbi) Shipley)

ICS’ Vaccination Roadmap to hasten global seafarer jobs

As the US, Netherlands and other nations begin to roll out vaccines to all seafarers, ICS has published a [Vaccination Roadmap framework](#), alongside other major maritime NGOs, to help more countries establish crew vaccination hubs across the world.

At the time of writing, 21 US states have begun vaccination programmes for

non-native crew. The Netherlands will launch its own vaccination programme mid-June for all seafarers, regardless of nationality, flying under the Dutch flag or aboard Dutch-owned or managed vessels.

ICS Secretary General Guy Platten stressed the essential role seafarers have played during the pandemic, noting they will soon deliver vac-

cinines by sea freight: “Seafarers must be prioritised for the vaccine to avoid the types of distribution delays we’ve already witnessed.”

The document can be used by shipping companies and their agents and representatives, including crew agencies, maritime administrations and national health authorities, in liaison with other authorities (such as immigration, border control and civil aviation) and seafarers, during the planning and rollout stages of the vaccination programme.

The roadmap allows governments, regions and companies responsible for port authorities to expedite putting procedures in place to create vaccine hubs, once they are ready to begin vaccine rollout to seafarers.

● See also *News Focus*, p5

Alang ship recycling yards hit hard by COVID-19

The pandemic is taking a toll on shipbreaking in India, said speakers at an ICS Leadership Insights Live event about ship recycling on 12 May.

Anil Sharma, Founder and CEO, Global Marketing Systems said crew change bans have meant his firm has “really struggled...[to get] ships from A to B”.

Chintan Kalthia, CEO, R.L Kalthia Ship Breaking, said ship breaking yards in Alang are facing: a shortage of workers after many returned home in the first wave, government redirecting oxygen from yards to hospitals

amid a nation-wide shortage and the impact of crew change bans.

“The number of ships coming to Alang has fallen due to crew change bans in Dubai and Singapore ports – two locations that send the most ships to India for recycling,” he said.

Kalthia added this has seen business in Alang drop below 50% in the last six to eight months, with ships for recycling going instead to Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Watch the [event here](#) and find future ICS Leadership Insights Live [here](#).

Ships to sound horns for seafarers on 25 June

ICS, along with industry and social partners, are encouraging ships in ports around the world to sound their horns at 12 noon local time on 25 June, in honour of the International Maritime Organization’s ‘[Day of the Seafarer](#)’.

The #ShoutOutForSeafarers campaign will call on governments to stop reimposing travel bans and to priori-

tise seafarers for vaccinations. Currently more than half of the international seafarer workforce is from developing nations that have limited vaccine supplies.

Companies taking part are encouraged to share videos of crews sounding their ship’s horns and share on social media on 25 June with the hashtags #ShoutOutFor-

Seafarers and #FairFuture-4Seafarers.

Guy Platten, ICS Secretary General, said: “Unfortunately, with the new variants and the dreadful outbreaks in India, seafarers are once again being forgotten. We are calling for ships at port across the globe to sound their horns on 25 of June to ensure that seafarers voices are heard.”

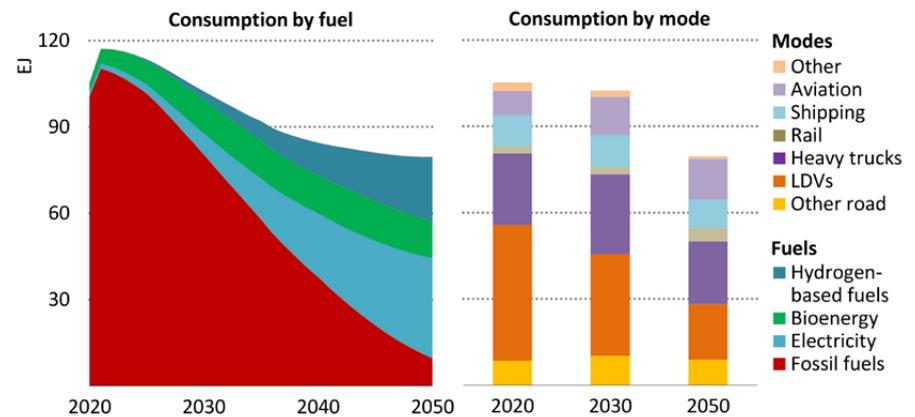
Shipping will miss 2050 emission goal

Shipping will be “one of the few transport modes that does not achieve zero emissions by 2050”, according to [a report](#) published by the International Energy Agency (IEA) on 18 May.

Titled *Net Zero by 2050 – A Roadmap for the Global Energy Sector*, the 222-page study urges an immediate mass roll out of all available clean and efficient technologies and a major push to accelerate innovation. It stresses there can be no more investment in fossil fuels “from today”.

This transformation will be difficult for the marine sector “due to a lack of available low-carbon options on the market and the long lifetime of vessels”, the report says. But it predicts a significant decrease in CO₂ emissions from around 830M tonnes in 2020 to 120M tonnes in 2050 – a reduction of 6% annually. IMO’s GHG reduction target is to halve emissions by 2050, compared with 2008.

“In shipping, energy efficiency improvements [will] significantly reduce energy needs (especially up to 2030)”, it predicts, thanks to short-



Global transport energy consumption trends to 2050 (source: IEA)

term measures such as slow steaming and wind-assistance. Longer-term, advanced biofuels and hydrogen-based fuels, such as ammonia, will increasingly displace oil until, by 2050, ammonia and hydrogen are likely to provide 60% of shipping’s energy consumption. Sustainable biofuels will add a further 20%, while “electricity plays a very minor role”, it says.

Meanwhile, ammonia and hydrogen fuel could be produced in industrial hubs located at the world’s 20 largest ports to supply both shipping and chemical and refining industries.

● IMO’s Marine Environment Protection Committee will discuss [a proposal from ICS](#) for a fund to develop decarbonisation technologies during its 76th meeting, 16-20 June.

IMO urges jabs for seafarers as vaccinations start

Vaccinating seafarers should be a priority, IMO Secretary-General Kitack Lim [told member states](#), urging them “to enable and accelerate the vaccination of seafarers”.

Although 58 IMO member states [have declared](#) seafarers to be key workers, very few have so far established vaccination programmes for them. They include Belgium, Canada, The Netherlands and the US, while others are understood to be following suit.

Belgium

In April, Belgium was the first European nation [to announce a scheme](#), with the first vaccinations for Belgian seafarers due to start on 26 May, as this issue of *ICS Leadership Insights* was published.

Wilfried Lemmens, Managing Director of the

Royal Belgian Shipowners’ Association, said that the single-dose Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine will be offered in Antwerp and Zeebrugge to Belgian nationals on ships of any flag. They will not be offered to other maritime personnel.

Canada

Foreign seafarers will be the focus of Canada’s scheme, said Lanna Hodgson, Secretary General of the International Shipowners Alliance of Canada. Domestic seafarers will be covered by the joint national and provincial vaccination programme. At the time of writing, details of the seafarer scheme were still to be finalised but she expected vaccinations to be offered through existing vaccination centres in all Canadian ports.

The Netherlands

From mid-June, The Netherlands will offer the Johnson & Johnson/Janssen vaccine to all seafarers “working on seagoing vessels flying the Dutch flag or managed from the Netherlands” [in a programme](#) coordinated by the Royal Association of Netherlands Shipowners (KVNR). At the time of writing, KVNR could not say whether the scheme will also apply to Netherlands Antilles ships and managers.

About 49,000 doses will be administered over the next few months at the country’s larger ports and at Schiphol Amsterdam Airport.

US

As this issue was published, vaccinations for foreign seafarers were available at 40

ports in 21 US states, according to the North American Maritime Ministry Association (NAMMA), which has [compiled information](#) about each port’s provider. NAMMA Executive Director Dr Jason Zuidema said in [a statement](#) that requirements for receiving vaccines differ from port to port. [In Florida](#), vaccines are available to anyone in the state “for the purpose of providing goods or services for the benefit of residents and visitors”.

Some countries are not planning to vaccinate seafarers, such as the UK. Speaking during [a webinar](#) on 11 May, UK Shipping Minister, Robert Courts was asked for his view on vaccines for seafarers. In reply, he referred only to the UK government’s programme to vaccinate its citizens.

COVID recovery prompts infrastructure plans

President Biden's American Jobs Plan has shone a spotlight on the potential impact that infrastructure spending can have on a nation's economy, especially in difficult times. [A White House summary](#) says the plan is an investment "that will create millions of good jobs, rebuild our country's infrastructure, and position the United States to out-compete China".

Chris Connor, President and CEO of the American Association of Port Authorities, stressed the need for the investment. Reflecting on the shipping delays that have plagued US ports, he told *ICS Leadership Insights*: "the long lack of investment in our national freight network is playing out in real time in front of us today".

President Biden plans to tackle this with an additional US\$17 billion for inland waterways, coastal ports, land ports of entry, and ferries, coupled with a Healthy Ports programme.

Investing out of a crisis

Many other regions are also planning infrastructure investments and Dr Patrick Verhoeven, Managing Director for Policy and Strategy at the International Association of Ports & Harbors, sees this as a sign of the times. "In periods of crisis, governments tend to turn to infrastructure as a good investment. We saw that in the 1930s", he reminded *ICS Leadership Insights*.

But there are important differences between the various schemes, he said. "In some countries, the government is providing funding ... and in others the government says this needs to come from the private sector".

An argument can be made for both models, he said. "On one hand, it's strategic [and] you could argue it's wise for a government to invest in it. On the other hand, it's commercial so, from that point of view, if a government starts funding, it distorts competition".

Europe, for example, has rules about state aid but they do not prevent investment in supporting infrastructure, so in late April the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO) [welcomed the European parliament's adoption](#) of a report by its Committee on Transport and Tourism that proposed including shipping in the EU's emission trading scheme. The revenues raised by it "must go towards investments to decarbonise the maritime sector", with a substantial part earmarked for "dedicated investments in alternative fuels infrastructure", ESPO said in its response.



President Biden's American Jobs Plan promises US\$17 billion will be spent on maritime infrastructure (image: The White House)

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In periods of crisis,
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Dr Patrick Verhoeven

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In the UK, where ports are not state-owned, the government's [National Infrastructure Strategy](#), published in November 2020 sets out how the government will support private sector investment and mentions a £200 million (US\$280 million) [Port Infrastructure Fund](#) "to ensure that ports across the UK have the necessary infrastructure in place for freight to continue to flow smoothly ... post-BREXIT".

Mark Simmonds, Director of Policy & External Affairs at the British Ports Association, is less upbeat about this funding. It is specifically for building infrastructure needed for new border checks "and that was not the sort of infrastructure we want to see", he said, because until now, "the direction of travel has been towards removing non-tariff trade barriers".

Australian vulnerabilities

On the other side of the globe, the Australian government published an [Infrastructure Priority List](#) in February followed in March by an interim report on [Vulnerable Supply Chains](#). Joshua Appleton, communications director at Ports Australia, told *ICS Leadership Insights* that "investment in the Australian ports industry remains constant and strong, whether that be from a state or private level".

He also welcomed a [Supply Chain Resilience Initiative](#) (SCRI) that was announced in October and backed by an Office of Supply Chain Resilience, announced [in the government's budget](#) on 11 May.

"Ports Australia hopes the considerations we called for in [our submission](#) [to the Vulnerable Supply Chains report] are realised by this new office", Appleton said. That submission included two proposals: one was to establish a national committee to monitor developing supply chain risks and the other was to consider implementing a trade community system to improve risk identification and planning.

Underlying the supply chain initiative is the same COVID-recovery motivation identified by Verhoeven. As the introduction to the SCRI online consultation noted, the experience "taught us that we need to be on the front foot and the SCRI will help to ensure Australia has access to essential goods and services in the face of external shocks".

Fuel strategy is vital for ports

Planning ahead for future fuel requirements presents a challenge for port infrastructure planners and the Chief Executive of Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority (MPA), Quah Ley Hoon, recognises that decisions about fuel supply infrastructure cannot be made in isolation. "What will the future ship be like? This can affect the type of bunkering we put in place", she said during a briefing ahead of April's Singapore Maritime Week.

For Singapore – the world's largest bunkering location – at least two projects are underway to prepare for future fuels, both of them focusing on ammonia. ABS, Singapore's Nanyang Technological University and the Ammonia Safety and Training Institute [are leading one study](#), looking at supply, bunkering and safety challenges, while [another study](#) is focused on ship-to-ship bunkering of 'green' ammonia at the Port of Singapore, involving Sumitomo Corp, AP Møller-Maersk and others.

Dr Patrick Verhoeven, Managing Director for Policy and Strategy at the International Association of Ports & Harbors, stressed the need for "joined-up thinking with the shipping lines" to understand what fuels they will want to use. "And you need the fuel providers [to advise on] what is going to be available, in what amounts and to what quality."

Green fuel production relies on renewable electricity to avoid CO₂ emissions during its manufacture and Mark Simmonds, Director of Policy & External Affairs at the British Ports Association, anticipates that much of the green fuel that will be needed in the future will be produced close to where it is used. Coupled with likely demands for more shore power connections and battery-charging installations, "we are fairly confident that in [any] decarbonisation scenario, there's going to be a need for a lot more power in ports," he told *ICS Leadership Insights*.

This will need considerably more substantial power supply infrastructure and, from a UK point of view, "I am not sure the government has got its head around that and what investment will be needed", he said.



The port of Melbourne has a development strategy extending to 2050 (image: Port of Melbourne)

Culture changes; connectivity drive long-term port strategy

Population shifts, cargo growth, e-commerce and online shopping are all strategic drivers for investment in America's supply chains, believes Chris Connor, President and CEO of the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA).

He made his remarks to the US Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Maritime, Freight, and Ports when it met on 11 May to look at 'Freight Mobility: Strengthening America's Supply Chains and Competitiveness'.

Although that hearing was not connected with President Biden's [American Jobs Plan](#), it "took on a whole new meaning" because of their shared emphasis on infrastructure planning, Connor told *ICS Leadership Insights*, and he believes his proposed US\$26.5 billion list of investments in ports by 2028 as part of "a robust national freight strategy" was received positively. AAPA had [previously detailed](#) some of this investment in 2018.

In the UK, there is a similar demand. Mark Simmonds, Director of Policy & External Affairs at the British Ports Association, pinpointed what he sees as a lack of a "strategic approach from government to port connectivity" which he said is essential if ports are to be competitive.

Long-term shore-side infrastructure planning would benefit from more coordination between the shipping and ports sectors, believes Dr Patrick Verhoeven, Managing Director for Policy and Strategy at the International Association of Ports & Harbors.

There is little interaction between shipowners and port planners, although "the OECD and some other institutions

have suggested we should have a dialogue about this", he said. In practice it could only happen at the level of an individual port and shipping operator, he believes, because of the different ownership structures and commercial drivers in the shipping and ports sectors.

He also pointed to the different timescales for ship and port investments: while a ship might be designed for an economic life of 20-25 years, port infrastructure is expected to be functional for perhaps 50 years.

Australia's Port of Melbourne Authority recognises the long-term nature of port investments. Its [2050 Port Development Strategy](#) lists the factors it took into account when developing the plan, such as the types and amount of cargo it expects in the years ahead; vessel numbers, types and sizes; landside transport, with a focus on rail, and the facilities, services and technology the port will need to make its operations safe and efficient for the long term.

But because of the timeframe involved, its framework "also seeks to provide adaptability and responsiveness to changing needs over time".

Wherever in the world infrastructure investment takes place, Connor's closing remarks to the subcommittee underline the importance of successful strategy: "Investments in our multimodal and port infrastructure is critical to meeting the current and growing needs of our supply chains. ... Robust, thoughtful investment is key to ensuring that we are successful in accomplishing this goal."



Singapore's combination of shipping operations and business services makes it a global leader, says one analysis (image: PSA)

Singapore's shipping sector has global status but faces COVID challenges

Automation is a key goal as Singapore looks to streamline operations for ship operators

Singapore seems to have everything: a huge port, the world's biggest bunkering operations, shipyards and an impressive set of shipping services, including law firms, brokers, banks and ship managers.

It is a combination that has earned it the top spot in all seven editions of the annual [International Shipping Centre Development Index](#), prepared by the Baltic Exchange and China's Xinhua state news agency, which takes account of all the services available in the main shipping centres. London has been in second or third place each year; this year's index is due to be published in July.

But Caroline Yang, President of the Singapore Shipping Association (SSA), does not see Singapore and London as competitors. They each have their own strengths, she told *ICS Leadership Insights*: London hosts many international shipping bodies and is strong in shipping services, while Singapore is strategically located, has a pro-business

government and has developed "a maritime eco-system with a wide spectrum of services", she said.

"I prefer to view them as complementary maritime clusters [with] possibilities of joint development and implementation of new international standards in areas such as electronic shipping and trade documents", she said.

That suggestion stems from one of SSA's current priorities. "The SSA has been promoting the adoption and acceptance of electronic bills of lading (eBLs). We see huge potential to significantly reduce administrative costs associated with printing, delivering and authenticating printed copies through the supply chain", she explained.

Her enthusiasm is shared by Singapore's government, which passed the Electronic Transactions (Amendment) Bill in February to recognise eBLs as equivalent to their paper versions, making Singapore the second country to

adopt the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law's Model Law on Electronic Transferable Records.

Speaking in April during Singapore Maritime Week (SMW), organised by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), Minister for Transport Ong Ye Kung launched the second phase of MPA's [digitalPORT@SG](#), which began in 2019 as a one-stop clearance platform for all vessel-related transactions. [This next stage](#) "will optimise port resources and enhance efficiency through artificial intelligence by facilitating just-in-time operations".

In the same vein, in February Singapore's port operator PSA and the Container Depot and Logistics Association launched [SmartBooking](#), which it describes as "an integrated one-stop booking platform for container depots, terminals, hauliers and logistics facilities across Singapore". It is part of Singapore's [National Artificial Intelligence Strategy](#) that its government expects to "transform our economy [by] fundamentally rethinking business models".

COVID-19's impact

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on Singapore's maritime activities. On 3 April 2020, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong [addressed the nation](#) as cases began to rise and announced the closure of most workplaces for a short period, including shipyards.

Many foreign workers went home and are now having difficulties returning, because of border controls in countries such as India and Bangladesh. This has had a significant effect in the ship repair sector, as Sembcorp Marine described in its [Q1 report](#), issued on 3 May. "The shortage of skilled workers has impacted the execution and scheduled completion of some of our projects", it said. Now, as the Singapore economy improves, this "has led to increased competition for foreign labour already here [and] the Group is actively sourcing skilled workers from other countries".

The MPA identified key roles in shipping and aviation that it would prioritise for vaccinations. On 18 January, it announced its Sea-Air Vaccination Exercise (SAVE) and promised vaccines to port side workers going onboard vessels and coming into contact with people from outside Singapore.

As part of the country's national efforts to arrest the sudden spike of COVID-19 cases, the MPA [issued a circular](#) on 6 May prohibiting crew changes for those with recent travel history to Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and



Singapore's shipyards rely on overseas workers but COVID-related travel restrictions have created a shortage of skilled labour (image: Ying Lim / Shutterstock.com)

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The shortage of skilled workers has impacted some of our projects
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Sri Lanka, although it will consider crew changes under [certain criteria](#). On 7 May, the 7th edition of the [Singapore Crew Change Guidebook](#) was published with references to the latest development. It was first issued on 1 June 2020 to provide "a safe and controlled framework to allow for crew change in Singapore, when ports around the world stopped crew changes", Yang said.

In late August 2020, MPA chief executive Quah Ley Hoon proposed a fund – the [SG Star Fund](#) – "to establish safe and scalable corridors for crew change by ensuring quality checks on quarantine, medical and swabbing facilities in crew-supplying countries", she said.

It has attracted support from many industry organisations and port authorities and, at the time of writing in mid-May, has attracted a total of Sing\$1.6 million (US\$ 1.2 million). It is now overseen by a taskforce and the CrewSafe audit programme. The taskforce has also been working to have the authorities help procure vaccines for seafarers, which Singapore [declared to be key-workers](#) last December.

Service sector

Singapore's service sector is large: an [online business directory](#) lists 72 companies offering ship management services of various types and an award presented during this year's Singapore International Maritime Awards (IMA) – which formed part of SMW – recognised their importance.

Although many SMW sessions took place online, some in-person events were held, including those awards, during which the 'Maritime Service Provider' award went to Singapore-based Synergy Group.

In his acceptance remarks, its Founder and CEO, Capt Rajesh Unni, referred to what he called "the Singapore shipping ecosystem" and recalled why he chose to set up his company in Singapore in 2006: "Singapore was the perfect location due to the high quality of education and maritime training, plus its world-renowned port and shipyard facilities", he said.

It is a sector that SSA encourages, especially companies developing innovative concepts. In 2020, the association introduced a new 'Startup' membership tier for nascent technology services providers and one of its first such members – ShipsFocus, a digitalisation consultancy – won the IMA's 'Outstanding Maritime R&D and Technology' award.

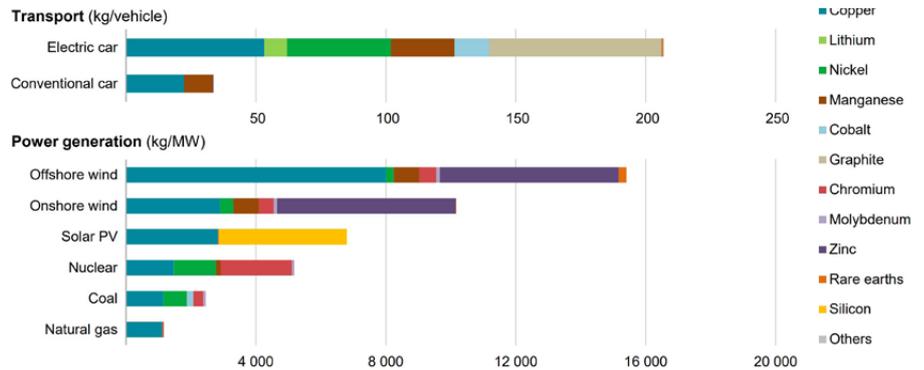
Yang explained SSA's encouragement of such companies, telling *ICS Leadership Insights* that the association "recognises the importance of nurturing a vibrant ecosystem of maritime innovation that will ... enhance Singapore as a leading international maritime centre".

Clean tech lifts rare mineral demand

Clean energy technologies require considerably more mineral inputs than those that run on fossil fuels, according to a report issued by the International Energy Agency (IEA) in May.

In a supporting commentary, IEA executive director Dr Fatih Birol said: “a typical electric car requires six times the mineral inputs of a conventional car, and an offshore wind plant requires 13 times more than a similarly sized gas-fired power plant”. These minerals include critical elements, such as copper, lithium, nickel, cobalt and rare earths.

He warned that “today’s supply and investment plans for many critical minerals fall well short of what is needed” and he noted that many of these minerals



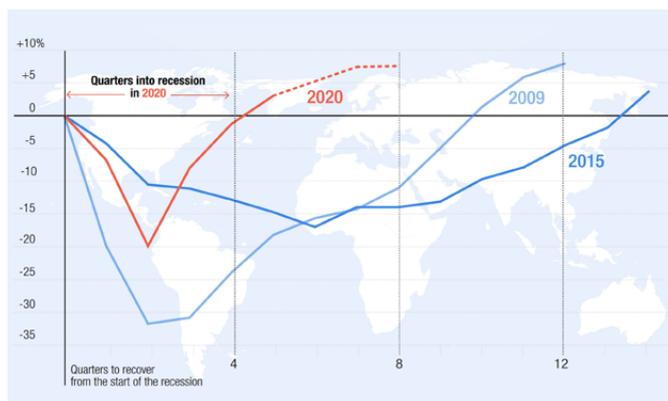
Minerals used in selected clean energy technologies (source: IEA)

come from a small number of producers.

But despite these concerns, Birol said there was no shortage of resources “and

there are sizeable opportunities for those who can produce minerals in a sustainable and responsible manner”.

Global trade recovers sharply from COVID-19 recession



Cumulative change in global trade from the start of each recession (source: UNCTAD, based on national statistics)

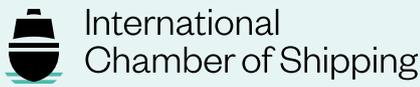
Global trade is recovering faster from the COVID-inspired recession than it did in 2009, following the global financial crisis, or 2015, after structural changes in East Asian economies and declines in commodity prices, according to UNCTAD’s latest [Global Trade Update](#), published on 19 May.

In a statement supporting the analysis, UNCTAD Economist Alessandro Nicita said that by the fifth quarter after the start of the current recession – Q1 2021 – global trade was

higher than pre-crisis levels.

By contrast, it took 13 quarters for global trade to recover after the 2015 recession and nine quarters to bounce back from the 2009 recession.

Looking ahead, the report predicts that the recovery will be uneven. “The economies of China and the US are expected to be the main drivers of global growth during 2021” while “COVID-19 is expected to continue disrupting the economies and trade of many developing countries”.



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