



The Shaping the Future of Shipping Summit

Forging Partnerships for Resilience

Tuesday 23 June, 2026
Rome, Italy



International
Chamber of Shipping



CONFITARMA
Confederazione Italiana Armatori
1901 125 2026

SUMMIT OUTCOMES

The **Shaping the Future of Shipping Summit**, hosted by the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and CONFITARMA, the Italian Confederation of Shipowners, convened over 160 high-level delegates from more than 30 countries from Europe, North America, and the Asia Pacific.

The Summit was held under the patronage of the European Commission in Italy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, the Ministry of Environment and Energy Security, the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of Civil Protection and Maritime Affairs.

The high-level Summit focused on supply chain diversification, security and initiatives to build more resilient and sustainable supply chains, exploring the emergence of regional economic corridors, such as the India, Middle East, Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and the partnerships that could be forged to help deliver economic security and growth.

Participants included Ministers, senior government officials, trade experts, senior CEOs and industry representatives, and senior representatives of intergovernmental institutions including the UN International Maritime Organization (IMO), the World Trade Organization (WTO), UN Food and Agriculture Organization, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), the Panama Canal Authority and the Federal Maritime Commission (FMC).

The discussion took place on Tuesday, 23 June 2026, under the Chatham House rule, in the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome, Italy.



SUMMARY OF KEY THEMES DISCUSSED

1. FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION IS THE CORNERSTONE OF GLOBAL TRADE

Throughout the Summit, participants highlighted the critical need for ships to be able to navigate freely through international waters without undue restrictions from other states, emphasising that freedom of navigation is the cornerstone of global trade. The need for stronger and clearer explanations of the principle of freedom of navigation and the role it plays in international trade was underscored as part of this discussion.

The world's commercial ships operate in accordance with a comprehensive regulatory framework governed by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and detailed Conventions adopted by the UN International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). Geopolitical tensions are having an increasing impact on shipping, redefining the rules of engagement and threatening global maritime governance.

Participants focused their discussions on how geopolitical instability continues to cause significant market disruptions, threatens freedom of navigation and most importantly endangers seafarer's lives. It was also the key risk multiplier

identified by senior maritime leaders in the [ICS Maritime Barometer 2025–2026 Report](#), launched at the Summit.

Discussions spotlighted the pivotal role of the IMO in global maritime governance and highlighted the reliance of the sector on a single global rulebook agreed via the IMO. Participants emphasised that legal certainty and predictability in the application of international conventions are essential to safeguarding trade flows and facilitating long-term investment decisions.

The ongoing challenges facing multilateralism were recognised and participants commented on the pivotal role of the international rules-based order by highlighting the risk to consumers worldwide if international rules are selectively applied or bypassed altogether. The discussion acknowledged that while 75% of global trade is still carried out under Most-Favoured Nation (MFN) rules, a stronger strategy is required to expand buy-in for multilateralism in the current geopolitical landscape.

Geopolitical instability is not a new phenomenon, shipping has long traversed these murky waters, but attendees agreed that freedom of navigation is critical to the health of the industry, with inter-regional trade/cooperation, and new emerging trade blocs indicating a continuing commitment to free trade.

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2. PROTECTING SEAFARERS DURING GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICTS

Safety and Security

A prevailing theme in the day's discussions was the critical issue of ensuring the safety and security of seafarers as geopolitical conflicts intensify in different parts of the world. Seafarers are integral to the maritime sector, without whom the industry would not be able to operate to effectively and efficiently deliver 90% of global trade, and they must be safeguarded against any threat.

Ministers, UN representatives, shipowners and industry leaders all called for the safe evacuation of the seafarers currently trapped in the Strait of Hormuz due to the ongoing conflict in the region. Participants stressed that seafarers should not be used as pawns in geopolitical conflicts and should be able to safely perform their jobs without any threat to life.

Recruitment and Retention

Seafarer recruitment and retention, as well as training, was also raised during the Summit. Participants called on governments, unions and industry to collectively work together to develop the training needed for seafarers to effectively use alternative fuels.

Simultaneously, there were calls from participants to actively promote a career at sea to safeguard the future of the industry. The operating environment for seafarers is increasingly challenging and complex; therefore a focus on recruitment and retention is essential to ensure that the industry continues to thrive.

3. RESILIENCE REQUIRES ADAPTABILITY AND COOPERATION, SHIFTING AWAY FROM TRADITIONAL METHODS TOWARDS PARTNERSHIP MODELS

Discussions focused on resilience, not just from a logistical efficiency perspective, but also highlighted the importance of flexibility, continuity and building trust across complex, interconnected systems.

The India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEC) was explored as an example of 'differentiation' by offering an alternative network of trade corridors, specialised logistics and digital integration. IMEC relies on interconnectivity and cooperation between rail, sea and ports, with all stakeholders needing to work together to ensure resilient supply chains. Participants highlighted that the model requires significant investment to deliver and interconnectedness is vital to achieving this. In

the context of building resilience globally while safeguarding national economic growth, a participant voiced that it was critical for new trade routes and networks to complement existing ones and not cannibalise them.

The discussion reflected on increasing trade-restrictive measures and uncertainty surrounding trade negotiations which make it difficult to plan ahead. It was noted that resilience means different things for different people and should be seen holistically. One participant stated that the enemy of resilience is short-term planning and for the industry to be resilient at the core it needs to foster longer-term relationships.

4. PROMOTING THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF SHIPPING

Discussions focused on the significance of shipping to the global economy and national economies. Participants emphasised the need to articulate this value beyond the shipping industry to ensure its value is recognised and factored into policymaking. The industry has proven time and time again its resilience in times of crisis to keep over 90% of world trade moving.

Comments brought forward during the Summit included the need to move away from the traditional approaches of engagement, and shift shipping to the forefront of public discourse and policymaking – 'It is time for people to listen to the industry'.

The Summit spotlighted the need for government, civil society and industry to engage in open dialogue and work hand in hand to ensure the resilience and efficiency of global supply chains. Participants called for a stronger and more cohesive approach to building a better understanding of our industry, engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to promote the economic contributions of shipping at global, regional and national levels, to ensure that the value of shipping is recognised.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Following the constructive and collaborative discussion in Rome, ICS, in conjunction with the Hong Kong Shipowners Association and the Transport and Logistics Bureau of Hong Kong SAR, will convene governments and industry at the third Hong Kong Global Trade Summit on the 15–16 November 2026. You can find more information about [last year's Global Trade Summit](#) on our website.

For more information about this event please contact ICS' Director of Communications and Public Affairs Tom Bartošák-Harlow (tom.bartosak-harlow@ics-shipping.org)

