

# TAKING SUSTAINABILITY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

**Michele Witthaus** reports on a trend towards collaborative port initiatives for sustainability

Port bodies have long fostered close co-operation between their members on environmental issues. Organisations such as the European Sea Ports Organisation (ESPO), the World Association for Waterborne Transport Infrastructure (PIANC) and the International Association of Ports and Harbors (IAPH) have worked together over the years to share best practices and consider emerging threats and opportunities. Now some of these alliances are being formalised, giving rise to new bodies, and they are being joined by newly formed groups with ambitious global lobbying agendas for ports and port services.

Launched in Antwerp in March 2018, the World Ports Sustainability Program (WPSP) grew out of the World Ports Climate Initiative (WPCI) that IAPH set up in 2008. The new programme is guided by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and aims to enhance and co-ordinate future sustainability efforts of ports worldwide while fostering international co-operation with partners in the supply chain. Its main areas of focus are resilient infrastructure, climate and energy, safety and security, community outreach and port-city dialogue, governance and ethics.

"In the first instance, we started updating and upgrading the climate tools that IAPH developed under WPCI," says Dr Patrick Verhoeven, managing director for policy and strategy at IAPH. "This has already resulted in a new audit tool on LNG bunkering that was presented in September this year. We are also in the process of updating the Environmental Ship Index project.

"The aim is to set out a number of priorities in terms of infrastructure, operations and governance and work with global institutional partners, including IMO, the World Bank and UNCTAD, to develop this agenda in concrete terms," he adds. A regional conference held in Africa last September resulted in a pan-African ports agenda as a regional WPSP project.

## FOUNDING PARTNERS

The five founding partners of WPSP are IAPH, the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), the Global Network of Cities and Ports (AIVP), PIANC and ESPO. Two structural partners have also joined: the International Cargo Handling



Coordination Association (ICHCA) and the International Association of Dredging Companies (IADC). The most recent addition to the organisation's membership roster is Ports Australia, which became a partner in September 2018.

WPSP complements a number of initiatives led by other organisations, such as the Port Call Optimisation Task Force of the International Harbour Masters' Association (IHMA), the Navigating a Changing Climate project of PIANC, and the Maritime Anti-Corruption Network. "We are also in close talks with our colleagues at ICHCA to set up a project on cybersecurity," says Dr Verhoeven.

The main focus for the coming year is on the SDGs, which form the basis of WPSP. "We are looking at ways to help port managers integrate these 17 goals in their corporate governance," says Dr Verhoeven. "Some ports have already started to adopt this systematic approach, including private ports that are driven by investors. With more and more port authorities in the world being corporatised, sustainability will become a key element of port governance."

Other ways in which WPSP hopes to encourage the sustainability efforts of ports include a series of awards and scholarships. Also, IAPH plans to produce the first World Ports Sustainability Report in autumn next year.

## CLIMATE COMPETITION

WPSP is not the only initiative announced this year that explicitly seeks to address global ports' sustainability issues. The World Ports Climate Action Program (WPCAP), launched in September 2018, is a co-operative venture between the ports of Hamburg, Barcelona, Antwerp, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Vancouver and Rotterdam.

■ Rotterdam is one of the seven-port strong team supporting the World Ports Climate Action Program

■ IAPH's Patrick Verhoeven is looking at ways to help port managers integrate sustainable development goals



■ Rotterdam's solar array will help it achieve its sustainability goals

