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National Maritime Conference: appropriate analysis must be followed by specific measures without delay

At the end of the 11th National Maritime Conference (NMC) in Friedrichshafen, the German Shipowners' Association (Verband Deutscher Reeder, VDR) came to the following positive conclusion, namely that: "In analysing the difficult situation of German maritime shipping, especially in the light of the general conditions regarding their competitiveness, the participants agreed that Chancellor Merkel was right in saying that we must fight. The issue now is to implement this into concrete political action without delay," said Alfred Hartmann, President of the German Shipowners' Association.

He said that it was of decisive importance for shipping companies to ensure that competitive conditions in Germany must be shaped in such a manner as to enable shipping companies operating from Germany to survive and further develop in the fierce international competition. Hartmann said that "it was undisputed that maritime shipping remains an industry characterised by steady growth," adding that: "In her speech, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel demonstrated once again how well she is acquainted with maritime topics. When she says that policymakers are obliged to ensure that reasonable framework conditions are in place, then this is a clear demand not only to secure but also to enhance the competitiveness of Germany as a maritime location. He added that "This is where Germany has considerable pent-up demand."

He said that in a European comparison, to some extent neighbouring states like Denmark or the Netherlands had substantially improved the framework conditions for their maritime shipping sector. "The sudden move for implementing insurance tax for shipmanagers was the key example at present to show how Germany was losing its lead: nowhere in Europe are insurance policies in connection with maritime shipping activities taxed as heavily as in Germany. Many states don't even know a tax of this kind," said the President of the German Shipowners' Association.

Hartmann also referred to the substantially more difficult access to capital by German shipping companies. The three most important shipping finance banks for the German fleet have withdrawn from the business. This makes it particularly difficult for German shipping companies to invest in sustainable and efficient ships." He said that unless any sustainable new concepts could be found for Germany, its share of the global maritime fleet and also for downstream services would decline significantly: "We plan to discuss these issues with the federal government in order to develop appropriate solutions," said Hartmann.

He indicated that the industry was obliged to take care of its succeeding generations especially in difficult times. "The high quality of shipping services offered from Germany remains



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key to the future viability and competitiveness of our maritime sector,” said the VDR President, adding: “The most important measure to secure vocational training and employment is to have sufficient operations with ships registered in Germany.”

Hartmann also affirmed that German shipping companies would make their contribution to environmental and climate protection: “Starting on 1 January next year, the end to the use of heavy oil in shipping will be initiated. However, we will need more, namely environmentally and climate-compatible new fuels for the future. In this context, the federal government’s programme to foster the use of LNG is a good but small start. A directive for financial support that is suitable for German shipping operating on an international scale will need to be found soon. If not, the good approach will not be successful.”

About the German Shipowners’ Association (VDR)

The German Shipowners' Association (Verband Deutscher Reeder, VDR) is responsible for representing the common business and social policy interests of German shipping companies at federal and state government level as well as in relation to European and international bodies. The VDR was established in 1907, and in 1994 it merged with the Association of German Coastal Shipowners. With a membership of around 220, the VDR represents the bulk of Germany’s merchant fleet. Further particulars are available at www.reederverband.de

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Printable photographs of President Alfred Hartmann: <https://www.reederverband.de/presse/pressefotos.html>