

United Nations praises InterManager's schools project

A pioneering project to involve schoolchildren in the shipping industry has been praised by the United Nations (UN) as a good example of how to educate young people about ocean life.

Adopt A Ship, promoted by InterManager, the international trade association for ship managers, was highlighted during the closing remarks made at the UN's recent capacity building event in New York, which brought together leaders of a wide range of UN programs.

The project partners schools, colleges and orphanages/shelters with a working ship to enable pupils to learn more about the world of international shipping and life at sea. More than 14,000 children worldwide participated in 2018 and InterManager expects some 40,000 to take part in 2019.

Summing up the findings of the two-day UN event, the meeting's co-chair, Juliette Babb-Riley, said: "Significant activities are already under way in many parts of the world to promote ocean literacy. Examples highlighted at the event are the programmes of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, the work of InterManager with schools about shipping, and the initiatives of the European Union, particularly on marine debris. Such activities should be welcomed and extended, and new activities should be identified and encouraged."

Adopt A Ship is based on the similar programme initiated in Cyprus by the Cyprus Shipping Chamber in 2006 with great success and has been widely supported by InterManager members, enabling the scheme to be extended to parts of Europe, the Far East, India and north America. It has been so successful that currently there is a waiting list of schools keen to link up with a ship.

The UN's multi-stakeholder dialogue and capacity-building partnership event was held from 24-

25 January 2019 at United Nations Headquarters in New York and was attended by Vice President George Hoyt on behalf of InterManager. Over the course of two days, 23 presentations were held by representatives of States, global and regional intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, including academia. Capacity-building is one of the UN's core objectives of the Regular Process. This event's was aimed at providing an opportunity to build awareness and collaboration with respect to capacity-building.

Mr Hoyt said: "This capacity building event was first time that InterManager has been highlighted by the United Nations as an example of implementing a solution they want others to consider for increasing ocean literacy. We are honoured to be recognised in this forum and appreciate the UN's positive comments about the Cyprus Shipping Chamber's innovative scheme which increases maritime awareness."

The UN meeting concluded: "There is a need to raise public awareness, in particular through 'ocean literacy'. Enhanced ocean literacy across all parts of society is necessary to underpin the provision of funds and resources for capacity-building. In addition, improved ocean literacy among policy-makers and other significant decision-makers is particularly needed as a basis for developing measures to achieve SDG 14. Increasing ocean literacy at the national level is a foundational element to enable capacity – and capability – building in the national marine science sector. There is a need to step up ocean literacy particularly for children to ensure a better understanding and management in coastal communities."

Adopt A Ship is proving so popular that there is currently a shortage of ships, with some vessels having to correspond with two schools to ensure pupils are not disappointed. The project also organises presentations for participating schools as well as visits to shipping companies and vessels where possible.

Schools are given a world map and pins to enable students to track their vessel's progress across international waters. Pupils communicate via their teacher with the Master and crew over

email. They discuss a wide range of topics, depending on their age. Questions vary from discussions about the employment opportunities that exist in the shipping industry to curiosity about how seafarers live, what they eat and whether they have seen marine creatures such as sharks and whales.

For further information see the Adopt-A-Ship section on the InterManager website: www.intermanager.org/adopt-a-ship

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