

## PANAMA AIMS TO FURTHER REDUCE AGE OF FLEET DETENTIONS

**P**anama's Ship Registry has gone through a series of reforms and customer incentives, which have served to increase tonnage and the number of ships, maintaining the register's leadership as the world's largest merchant marine fleet. Quality has also been improved with moves to delete substandard ships.

As at November 6 last year, the Panama flag accounted for 21.6% of the world's total merchant fleet with 8,676 vessels totaling 205.78m gt. The fleet has reduced its average age to 17.7 years down from 18 years. 'The goal is to reduce the age of our fleet to 17 years - 16 years by the end of 2010,' said Panama's head of the Ship Registry Alfonso Castillero.

Of the total Panamanian fleet, 1,539 vessels are newbuildings totalling 43m gt of which 364 vessels were registered during the first six months of 2009. Some 259 additional vessels under construction will be delivered



**Alfonso Castillero**

before the end of 2010. All of them have already filed for registration under the Panamanian flag.

The growth of 10% in tonnage during the last months 'was possible thanks to the inscription of newbuildings, the friendly

procedures recently implemented and the aggressive discounts and simplified procedures established in the Law 57 of Merchant Marine passed on August 6, 2008,' said Castillero.

Eighteen months ago the Panama Register took drastic measures to regain its position in the Paris MoU Grey list after its demotion to Black list status. Vessels over 20 years of age were requested to submit to inspections before calling at ports within the Paris MoU region, and it was announced that those over 20 years of age detained twice would automatically be cancelled.

Detentions fell dramatically from 8% in January of this year to 5% at the end of October. Average detention rate fell to a 6% for the period of January to September 2009, down from 9% in 2007 and 8% in 2008. The measures, brought the cancellation of 73 vessels, with another '101 vessels in legal process to be cancelled,' said Castillero.

## BELIZE REGISTRY JUMPS IN SIZE

**I**n his first year as director general of the International Merchant Marine Registry of Belize (IMMARBE), Capt. Encarnacion Samaniego has succeeded in boosting registration under the flag by 33% to 837 vessels totalling 1.7m gt. The November 2009 total was up from 772 vessels and 1.4m gt one year before.

Moves to improve quality have also been undertaken. Since October 2009, IMMARBE is certified to ISO-9001-2008 and it has also requested an IMO voluntary audit which will take place in October 2010.

'We want to maintain quality, this is very important to the registry, keep our QualShip 21 performance of four consecutive years and improve the rate of detentions in worldwide Port State Control,' said Samaniego. To that effect, vessels that have been detained two consecutive times in a year because of negligence of substandard provisions will be



**Capt. Encarnacion Samaniego**

deleted from the registry, he added.

IMMARBE has also reduced the number of non-IACs Registered Organisations that carry out inspections and certifications on its behalf from 18 to 10, simultaneously permitting

them to inspect only vessels less than 7,500gt. At the same time it has increased its number of inspectors around the world to 200. Moreover, the age of the fleet has decreased to 18 years in 2009, compared to 20 years in 2008, thanks to 42 newbuilds registered in 2009. Eastern Europe is the main customer of Belize registry with almost 50% of tonnage, while China accounts for 25%.

A new merchant marine law that will grant incentives and create the registration of naval mortgages in Belize is under preparation, expected to be approved by the Belize government in the first quarter of 2010. Also on IMMARBE's agenda is the ratification by the Belize Congress of the ILO Maritime Labour Convention, in Q1 2010, thereby guaranteeing seafarers working on Belize-flagged vessels the 'decent work conditions' required by the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 when it enters into force.



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