Green Shipping

High-level discussion on sustainability takes place at world congress

The World GreenPort Congress 2017 held in Amsterdam in early October saw more than 180 participants come together to explore current and emerging sustainability issues for the seaport sector, with notable contributions from Australia, reports PAULA WALLACE

NOW in its 12th year, the congress presented several Australian experts discussing developments in emissions accounting and the relevance of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to the port sector.

Over the two-day Congress, key topics included: port-city integration, the importance of partnerships, waste management, responsible and transparent supply chains, clean (renewable) energy transitions, the circular economy and bio-based industries.

To identify and track sustainability issues in the port sector, tools such as materiality assessments, the SDGs and the Global Reporting Initiative were also presented by several leading ports.

"The event was also an ideal forum for insights into new technical work, including alternative fuels and technologies including onshore power supply, LNG, hydrogen and wind propulsion," said Jason Sprott from Queensland-based Sprott Planning & Environment.

Australia's Kris Fumberger from RightShip presented a paper entitled 'Maritime Emissions Portal: Creating Visibility & Accountability'; while Mr Sprott presented a framework for assessment of the SDGs and key issues for ports to consider as part of their overall business strategy.

Mr Sprott also facilitated a congress working session that explored the key sustainability issues for ports in conjunction with a number of international industry figures.

"The workshop built upon a pre-conference survey from all participants, which identified the top 10 port sustainability issues for ports," Mr Sprott told Daily Cargo News.

The 'top ten' identified by survey participants included air quality/emissions; landside traffic impacts; energy consumption; protection of biodiversity and habitats; ability to secure project approvals/permits; climate change and adaptation; community interface (port-city issues); responsible supply chain management/influence; management of waste; and energy supply and transition.

"We finished the week with a tour of the Port of Amsterdam, including a waterside trip to the construction of a new sealock at the entrance of the North Sea Canal at IJmuiden that will provide access to the Amsterdam port region," said Mr Sprott.

"The new lock will be 500m long, 70m wide and 18m deep, making it the world's largest."

SDGs and ports

The United Nations released its 17 Sustainable Development Goals in September 2015. The Goals were a revision of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the UN in 2000 with the primary objective to reduce poverty.

The more broadly focused SDGs, were agreed on by all UN member states, comprising of 193 countries including Australia, and are due to be reviewed in 2030.

"The UN recommends businesses evaluate their activities and determine potential alignment with these goals," explains Mr Sprott, adding that not all SDGs are materially significant to every business.

"Businesses are clearly not expected to address all 17 goals and 169 targets."

Rather, he said, each port business should undertake an assessment to determine the relevance to their business based on a wide range of factors such as: the economic ('catchment/hinterland') and environmental setting; spatial setting within the urban/regional area; key business drivers, the operational nature of the port business; and the ownership structure of the business.

SDGs are widely considered the next stage in the evolution of corporate strategy development and sustainability reporting, and Mr Sprott notes that leading companies are starting to demonstrate alignment of business strategies against the SDGs in Annual Reports.

In Australia, the Monash Sustainable Development Institute is leading the effort to develop sustainable solutions and offer technical advice on the SDGs, with the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Further afield, the Port of Gothenburg and Port of Antwerp are leading the way in SDG work, both incorporating SDG assessment into strategy development and corporate reporting.

"Many ports throughout the EU have commenced, or are preparing to integrate SDG into strategy development and corporate reporting," said Mr Sprott.

In the Australian finance sector, a global industry, our four big banks are now reporting against the SDGs, whilst in the logistics sector, Brambles this year began reporting on SDGs in its sustainability report. Mr Sprott says its integration

The Port of Amsterdam hosted this year's World GreenPort Congress.

of SDGs with corporate strategies is "impressive".

The determination of relevant SDGs will be variable at each port and will be specific to each business model. While every SDG should be considered, Mr Sprott suggests that it may be useful to classify and therefore prioritise the SDGs in accordance with relevance to the port in general terms.

For instance, this could be as simple as classifying the 'relevance' of the SDGS to the port sector into three groups: core SDGs, secondary SDGs and case-specific SDGs.

Mr Sprott suggests that ports could consider the following 'core' SDGs as a starting point for discussion: Good health and well-being (SDG 3); Affordable and clean energy (SDG 7); Industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9); Sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11); Responsible construction and consumption (SDG 12); Climate action (SDG 13); Life below water (SDG 14) and Partnerships (SDG 17).

Sprott's company has developed an assessment framework to assist ports understand the SDGs and the relevance to their business and corporate strategy.

The framework comprises five key steps that guide companies on assessment of business operations and how to align with the SDGs by determining the opportunities, corresponding actions and development pathways.

"Using the SDG platform, ports will be able to 'test' their business strategies and actions against a globally recognised and agreed sustainability framework," said Mr Sprott.

"Put simply, 'what can businesses do locally – to contribute globally'?"

1	2	3	4	5
Assessment of Business & Operations	Assess Existing Alignment of Business Strategies	Determine Opportunities & Actions	Develop Pathway / Roadmap	Communication
Relevance	Alignment	Opportunities	Roadmap	Communicate

Key steps in Sprott Planning & Environment's Port Sector/UN SDG Assessment Framework. Image: Sprott Planning & Environment

Emissions Portal at pilot stage

"The MEP will provide an industry-first interactive overview of ship emissions, providing stakeholders with a tool to benchmark emissions or vessels and generate a baseline for improvement over time.

"With more than half the world's population now living in cities, the ability to track emissions from shipping will empower the maritime industry and its regulators to make informed decisions to create healthier, more resilient cities," said AUSMEPA in a statement.

The MEP represents a significant undertaking, requiring a collaborative approach from both Australian and international ports and their stakeholders.

"Although we have some international ports that have expressed interest in trialling the MEP, AUSMEPA are currently looking for Australian pilot ports who are interesting in participating in the trial and exploring how this tool can be tailored to suit their own strategic objectives," said Mr Fumberger.

AUSMEPA plans to scale the MEP to a global audience through its international group of Marine Environment Protection Associations. The outcome will be an internationally-delivered project with global impact and reach.

Having engaged with Oceaneering Port Vision to build the MEP, AUSMEPA is to keep working with Australian maritime industry bodies to roll out the portal from 2018.
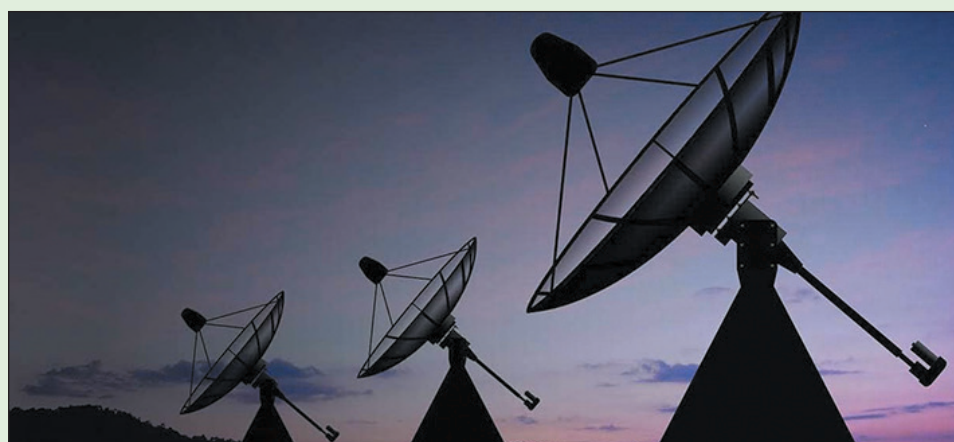
Through satellite tracking and a big-data approach, the MEP will connect over 3,000 ports worldwide.