



**36th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**27 MAY 2025**

**OPEN SESSION**

**Address by Mr. Themis Papadopoulos**

**President**

- **President of the Republic**
- **President of the House of Representatives**
- **Ministers**
- **Members of Parliament and Party Representatives**
- **Excellencies**
- **Distinguished Guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to our 36th Annual General Meeting.

Before we begin I would like to extend our sincere thanks to our Members who are sponsoring this year's Annual General Meeting. Your support is greatly appreciated.

We feel particularly privileged for having once again here with us today, the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Nikos Christodoulides and the President of the House of Representatives, Mrs. Annita Demetriou.

Mr President,

We would like to extend our sincere gratitude for your positive comments about the Cyprus Shipping Chamber and for your personal commitment to continue supporting the shipping industry. The Chamber has been a close ally and contributor to successive governments for more than 35 years and you have our enduring commitment that we will continue to work hand in hand with your Government and our Shipping Minister Marina Hadjimanolis, and as always our common goal is to continue to grow both the resident industry and our Flag and to strengthen Cyprus's place amongst shipping's elite.

Madame President,

We would also like to extend our heartfelt appreciation for your supportive address on behalf of the House. We take your words as a clear indication of your personal interest, as well as the importance that Parliament places on shipping as one of the main pillars of the Cyprus economy. I know that we can always count on your support and that of the House to provide the necessary frameworks for shipping to continue to thrive in Cyprus.

Dear Guests,

2024 continued to mark a period of turbulence and change driven by persistent geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty and increasing regulatory pressures. Many of these global challenges continue to cast a shadow over our industry today and will likely continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, shipping in Cyprus has once again demonstrated its strength and endurance. It remains one of the oldest and most vital pillars of our modern economy with strong prospects for continued growth. Beyond its economic contribution the industry plays a crucial role in sustaining society and supporting other sectors as it is responsible for transporting 98% of essential goods and raw materials to our country.

As of the beginning of 2025, the Chamber's Member-Companies collectively own and manage a fleet exceeding 2,800 ocean-going vessels, representing more than 108 million gross tons. The broader shipping sector continues to contribute approximately 7% to Cyprus's GDP, a steady contribution that reflects both our operational excellence and the solid foundations of the maritime cluster.

Building on the proven strength of our industry, this is the moment to address the challenges ahead.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking at the national landscape, significant developments have taken place over the past year that directly impact the shipping sector. These include the adoption of the EU Directive on the OECD Pillar II rules, ongoing discussions on the Cyprus Tax Reform, the implementation of the EU Foreign Direct Investment Regulation and the Social Insurance framework for EU seafarers serving on Cyprus-flagged vessels. Throughout these processes, the Chamber has remained actively engaged, closely monitoring developments and advocating for policies that safeguard the competitiveness and sustainability of Cyprus shipping.

In this context, and in your esteemed presence, we take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to maintaining close cooperation with both the executive and the legislative powers as well as our industry association partners. Our shared goal is to

shape policies that both support the sustainable growth of our industry and serve broader national interests.

To this end, we look forward to continuing the work of the dedicated Working Group on Pillar II, aiming to identify and introduce targeted compensatory measures that will help mitigate adverse effects on the affected shipping entities, ensuring that Cyprus remains a competitive, attractive, and resilient maritime hub.

The Chamber has also presented comprehensive proposals to the Ministry of Finance concerning the implementation of the EU Foreign Direct Investment Regulation. Our goal is to ensure that this pivotal regulation achieves a harmonious balance between safeguarding national security and bolstering investor confidence through the introduction of a realistic and viable screening control mechanism which will work positively in attracting further investment. These two objectives are not mutually exclusive. In fact they complement each other and must be thoughtfully aligned to preserve and enhance Cyprus's standing as a leading international business and shipping hub.

Additionally, the Chamber is actively collaborating with the relevant Ministries to explore the introduction of a reduced-rate State Aid Scheme for EU seafarers working on Cyprus-flagged vessels. This initiative is fully in line with EU regulations and practices already embraced by other Member States. By providing this support, it will boost clarity and competitiveness for ship owners operating under the Cyprus flag, further solidifying Cyprus's position as the maritime jurisdiction of choice.

We are confident that the Government fully appreciates the importance of our ongoing partnership and the mutual benefits it brings. With a shared commitment to progress, we are certain that through continued dialogue and cooperation we will find innovative solutions to these critical issues.

Dear Shipping Minister,

With sincere appreciation for the genuine care and commitment you have consistently shown to our industry and in the spirit of continued collaboration, I wish to underscore the importance of finalising the required pending Notifications which will fully implement the Cyprus Shipping Company with Limited Liability law, NEPE. It is

equally important to make good progress with the implementation of the One Stop Shipping Centre at your Ministry, by enhancing its spectrum of services and promoting further its key role as an intermediary gateway between various public sector departments and shipping companies. Lastly, the looming matter of social security of Cyprus-flagged ships is one that has potential to cause significant harm to our flag and it is only through the careful coordination with other Ministries will we be able to achieve a workable solution that protects our national register.

These reforms are crucial steps that will not only offer a modern, adaptable framework but also send a strong message of the Government's commitment to the long-term future of shipping in Cyprus

The Chamber remains fully committed to working hand in hand with the Shipping Deputy Ministry, ensuring that our collective efforts remain aligned in both vision and action. It is vital that we continue to value the resilience and progress we have made as it is this spirit of collaboration and proactive thinking that will propel our industry to even greater heights. We are certain that our continued success will be driven by our shared dedication to evolve, adapt and advance together.

Dear Guests,

Earlier this year, following extensive deliberations and global collaboration at the International Maritime Organisation, a truly historic milestone was reached: the adoption of a mid-term greenhouse gas reduction measure. This marks a defining moment for global shipping as we now stand to become the first industry with binding global targets to reduce emissions by 2050, a development that reflects both the ambition and responsibility placed upon us.

Whilst we cautiously welcome this important breakthrough, we must also acknowledge the serious complexities surrounding its practical implementation, particularly in light of emerging regional regulations, including those introduced by the European Union. The decision reached at MEPC must be matched by regulatory consistency and realism and the Chamber, in close collaboration with European Community Shipowners Association, will be doing whatever it can to ensure that the EU maintains its commitment to remove regional regulations once the global IMO framework is in place.

We will need the support and contribution of all stakeholders in the value chain not least from fuel suppliers, shipyards, engine makers, Class Societies and other regulators, and in time re-training and re-skilling of our crews where necessary.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The year 2024 also brought with it continued geopolitical challenges with the ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East continuing to provide logistical and regulatory challenges and even more so the recent seemingly endless and random tariff announcements coming out of the US administration have provided a backdrop of continuing uncertainty. The Chamber will continue to closely monitor developments and keep Members well updated, however their unpredictable nature makes it is very challenging to provide meaningful advice and even more challenging for Member-Companies to make future decisions. The specific uncertainty involving USTR measures aimed at Chinese owners, operators and ship builders creates a particularly challenging problem given the scale of Chinese ship building and the size of the Chinese presence in shipping overall. I do not think it is a surprise to say that there are probably more twists left in this tale and we must all remain vigilant and flexible to navigate these very much man-made problems. As always, the Chamber is a staunch advocate for free trade and open borders and it is our clear and unwavering view that protectionist policies and politically driven interference are unwelcome and make us all poorer.

The Chamber remains firmly committed to advocating for safe trading routes and the protection of our seafarers, who continue to play a vital role in sustaining international trade and ensuring the uninterrupted flow of goods worldwide. We continue working tirelessly to address these challenges and uphold the principles of free, fair and safe maritime transport.

In this respect, one bright moment has been the release of the “Galaxy Leader” crew in November 2024 after 14 months in captivity by Houthis rebels, an ordeal no seafarer or any human being should ever have to endure.

Dear Friends,

As I bring my address to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation to my fellow Board Members for their continued trust and support throughout my term as President of the Chamber. It has been a great honour to serve alongside such dedicated individuals whose expertise and knowledge have been invaluable to the Chamber's work.

I also wish to warmly congratulate the newly elected President and Board of Directors. I have every confidence that they will continue to lead the Chamber with vision and determination. My sincere thanks as well to all those who stood as candidates in this year's election, your willingness to contribute to the Chamber's future is both valued and commendable.

A heartfelt thank you goes to all our Business Associates whose cooperation and professionalism continues to play a key role in our shared success.

Above all I express my deep gratitude to all our Members. Your continued engagement, trust and commitment are the driving force behind the Chamber's work.

My sincere thanks go to the Chamber's Secretariat for their high professionalism and dedication towards achieving the Chamber's vision and goals. I feel confident in the recent promotions of Alex and Sophoclis to their new positions, as well as the rest of the team, and I know we are in very safe and capable hands.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Last but certainly not least, as many of you know, Thomas Kazakos, the Chamber's former Director General, completed an exceptional 33-year career with the Chamber before leaving us last month to undertake his new role as Secretary General of the International Chamber of Shipping.

Allow me to take you on a brief journey down memory lane. Thomas joined the Chamber in 1992 as an in-house Legal Advisor and just three years later, was appointed Director General, a role he held with distinction for an impressive 30-year period. Throughout this journey he became a driving force behind many of the

Chamber's most defining achievements, earning the respect of colleagues and stakeholders alike through his visionary leadership and deep-rooted commitment to the advancement of Cyprus shipping.

Throughout those years, Thomas emerged as the principal advocate for our industry representing us with unwavering professionalism and integrity. In 2024 he became the first individual officially registered in Cyprus's Lobbyists Registry under the Independent Anti-Corruption Authority, a testament to his dedication to transparent and constructive policy engagement. Beyond our borders he also represented the Chamber with distinction in key international bodies such as the ICS, ECSA, EMSA and others, strengthening Cyprus's voice on the global stage.

Thomas served under six Presidents of the Republic of Cyprus, twelve Transport Ministers, three Shipping Deputy Ministers, worked in partnership with eight Chamber Presidents, dozens of Board Members and has been involved in eighteen Maritime Cyprus Conferences. He has been instrumental in positioning the Chamber as a trusted advisor to the Government and played a huge role in shaping national policy for shipping.

He has also been instrumental in Cyprus' efforts in securing EU approval for our tonnage tax system, a framework that was so successful that it became the blueprint for the EU State Aid schemes for shipping.

He now takes on an even bigger challenge as he will soon be appointed as Secretary General of the ICS. At next month's AGM in Athens, after a very successful tenure as ICS Secretary General, Guy Platten will be handing over to Thomas, making him the first Cypriot and non-UK citizen to hold this position. We feel tremendous pride that Thomas has been appointed to this incredibly important position at such a crucial time for shipping. It is of course testament to him personally, but I also feel that it shows the high esteem that Cyprus is held internationally among its peers.

As he takes on his new global role it is only fitting that before this distinguished audience we express our deepest gratitude. On behalf of the Board of Directors and, Members of the Cyprus Shipping Chamber, it is my pleasure to present Thomas with a commemorative award in recognition of all his hard work and contributions over the past 33 years.



Thomas, we thank you for everything and wish you every success and fulfilment in the journey ahead and I am sure you know that we are by your side to offer our support and close co-operation and you have our very best wishes for your new life in London.

Thank you all for honouring us with your presence here today and I now invite Thomas to the stage.