

# We need all hands on deck

Jeanine Drummond examines efforts to ensure a more gender diverse landscape in the international maritime sector

## GENDER EQUALITY IN THE

maritime industry is under the spotlight. Forums and conferences around the world are shining a light on the subject and for this year's World Maritime Day the International Maritime Organization is putting its weight into empowering women in maritime.

Gender equality has never had so much attention across our maritime community. And this attention is making a difference. Last year, the IMO approved an application from the Women's International Shipping and Trading Association for consultative status. This gives WISTA an active voice on the global stage: attending IMO meetings, representing its views at international fora, as well as promoting, enhancing and advancing women's positions in the shipping industry.

Women represent only 2% of the world's 1.2 million seafarers — and 94% of these female seafarers work in the cruise industry. The IMO wants to reverse this long-term under representation of women in our maritime industry.

## WHAT DOES GENDER EQUALITY MEAN?

People have different views of what gender equality in maritime means; many often jump to 50/50 representation in every sector and role. This is not necessarily the case. Gender equality for maritime should mean allowing all people to choose maritime as a career option, through accessible education, entry level position opportunities and career advancement, no matter which sector or role. The challenge is to ensure these opportunities are there in the first place, and then making sure that everyone is aware and encouraged to participate.

This needs to happen through a commitment to providing alternative recruitment processes: mentoring, coaching, education, visible role models, offering additional opportunities for skills/experience building, as well as publicising women's roles in maritime through the media and other channels.



Jeanine Drummond, Jeanne Grasso (Blank Rome/Wista Exco), Dr Noura Al Dhaheri (Maqta Gateway – Abu Dhabi Ports), Guimara Tunon Guerra (Panama Maritime Authority), Siv Gaalaas (Ministry of Trade, Industry & Fisheries Norway) at IMO FAL Special Event – Women in Ports and Facilitation April 2019

## BUILDING A CONSENSUS

At the World Maritime University's Third International Women's Conference this year, WMU president Dr Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry struck an optimistic note.

"The sun is shining on women for 365 days in 2019. We must capture this exceptional momentum and ride this historic wave to make a real impact in an industry that is still largely male dominated."

In a video message, IMO Secretary General, Kitack Lim said, "The maritime world needs all hands on deck, both male and female, to continue to carry the world's goods in a clean, safe and efficient manner".

Keynote speaker, Grete Faremo, UN under-secretary general & UNOPS executive director added, "Without the maritime community, the world would not be what it is today. It is simply too important to leave to men only".

After two days of discussion, a set of action points were drafted that outlined the implementation of gender-responsive policies and programs in the industry, including: creating and enforcing gender-responsive policies; ensuring equal employment opportunities and pay; emphasising gender equality as a business case; securing priority funding for gender research; establishing mentoring programs; promoting role models; engaging with children in education to raise awareness

of maritime career opportunities; and updating statistics on women professionals in all sea-related activities.

## COLLABORATION AND COMMITMENT

Earlier this year, the IAPH Women's Forum launched an online mentoring program for women working in their member ports. This program is an example of a collaborative approach to encouraging women in our industry. Across a number of other maritime events this year, common themes have emerged. Specifically, collaboration across the whole sector and within organisations as well as finding ways to bring gender equality policies into the real world culture of our organisations. And like selling any idea, we need to increase the visibility and improve perception of the maritime industry as a career option to all.

## WHAT DOES INDUSTRY NEED TO DO?

We need to attract and retain skilled and experienced women to our industry, provide them opportunities to develop their careers and provide organisational frameworks that put our written policies into tangible action.

As World Maritime Day approaches, let's all act to make a difference in our workplaces. The work of gender diversity is not women's alone; it's up to us all to create a sustainable future. ■