Baltic and International Maritime Conference (BIMCO)

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Creation and aims

The decision on the establishment of the Conference was accepted in summer 1905 at the Meeting of Representatives of tramp shipping companies of Belgium, Great Britain, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Italy, Norway, Russia, and Sweden. The founders of the Organization aimed to establish minimum freight rates for shipping timber from Sweden, German and Russian ports. The biggest European shipowners decided to develop coordinated policy and practice in the field of tramp shipping. Initially the name of the organization was the Baltic and White Sea Maritime Conference.

By the mid-twenties, shipowners of other regions and continents had become members of the Conference (e.g. United States Shipping Board Merchant Fleet Corporation) and the activities of the Organization went further than the limits of Baltic and White Sea shipping. In this connection, at the General Meeting in May 1927, a decision was taken to rename it the Baltic and International Maritime Conference (BIMCO).

BIMCO is a non-governmental organization. Its legal status is determined by the law of Denmark.

The objects of the Conference are: a) to unite shipowners and other persons and organizations connected with the shipping industry, in order to consider and, if expedient, take action on all matters affecting the industry; b) to communicate to members instances of unfair charges and claims, freight speculation and other objectionable practices, and any other useful information affecting shipping; c) to prepare and improve charter-parties and other shipping documents; d) to issue as approved documents for the use of shipowners forms of shipping documents, and to adopt as approved documents for the like use forms of shipping documents which have been issued by kindred organizations or agreed by representative of the parties concerned; e) to meet, correspond, and negotiate with charterers, shippers, merchants, receivers, shipowners and others engaged in the industry, and with representatives or associations of any such persons, as to any matter connected with the industry; f) to become a member of any association, committee or other body having similar objects to the Conference; g) to cooperate with, support the action and
policy of, and take concerted action with, any other organizations working in the interests of the shipping industry; h) to take such steps in the interests of the shipping industry as may from time to time appear desirable.

The organization should not take any steps or undertake measures inconsistent with the spirit of the Rules.

At the UNCTAD V Conference (May-June 1979) the BIMCO representative underlined the growing authority of the Organization in decision making concerning commercial and legal problems in the shipping industry: ‘In BIMCO, where the tonnage entered by shipping companies, both private and state-owned, aggregates about 42 per cent of the world tonnage, we now have members in more than 90 countries and it has been a particular pleasure to witness how, during recent years, companies from countries without old shipping traditions are increasingly making use of our services.’*

Membership

Rule 5 of the Rules provides for three categories of membership:

Owner-members, i.e. members owning or managing ships. In 1980 950 shipowners were members of BIMCO. Any owner-member may be elected in the organs of BIMCO. He has the right to vote at the General Meetings. In accordance with Rule 24 the number of votes of a member depends on the amount of his contribution: with the minimum contribution he has one vote, with the maximum contribution four votes. No owner-member is entitled to vote at any General Meeting unless all contributions and calls due from him have been paid.

Broker-members are members who are shipbrokers or chartering agents. In 1980 over 1739 broker-members adhered to the Organization.

In addition to his application, a broker-member must sign an undertaking in the form prescribed by the Executive Committee to be bound by the Rules of the Conference.

The branch houses of broker-members may be accepted as separate broker-members provided that a separate application is made in respect of each branch office wishing to be so accepted.

Club-members, i.e. protected and indemnity associations, freight, demurrage and defence associations, shipping federations, and other combinations of shipowners. In 1979 51 clubs from 91 countries were members of BIMCO.

Broker-members and club-members do not have the right to vote at General Meetings of BIMCO.

All members are entitled to the services, advisory and otherwise, of the