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CESA & EMEC New Years' Reception 2009

KEYNOTE SPEECH – Mr. JAAKKO ESKOLA – PRESIDENT of EMEC

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Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen – Welcome to CESA and EMEC's annual New Year reception. I would like to thank you all of you for being here: all those in Brussels attending this event after many, long and often heavy working hours and all those who have travelled from outside Brussels to join us here in these beautiful surroundings.

I think it is safe to say, thank you to all those involved who have put in the effort to make this evening a success. It just goes to show what can be achieved through successful cooperation between EMEC and CESA

Main body of the speech

It has become apparent over the last six months that our industry has sailed into what we could appropriately call an 'economic storm'. Nobody in the industry is sure of which course this storm is going to take or can predict the effects it will have for either the marine equipment industry or the shipbuilding sector. Of course, these views do not just represent my own but also takes into account the position of many SME's and companies with a large portfolio in Europe and/or Asia.

In the long term the economic 'storm' will have an impact on the marine equipment industry, however due to the innovative nature of the European equipment sector not only in its own right but also in terms of the contribution it can make in reducing a vessels impact on the climate and delivering cleaner ships that can help the EU meet its short/medium term environmental goals, there could be ways to navigate safely through it.

However much impact the current crisis will have upon the industry today it is another crisis which is around the corner that will make this one look inferior. That is to say an environmental and climate crisis. It is now in the midst of the aforementioned storm that we should take a leaf out of the EU's book. Before Christmas the EU under the French presidency agreed an ambitious deal to combat global warming. Therefore investment should now be made in this time of recession to maintain and develop a technological edge to safeguard the threat the maritime sector faces from overseas markets and to face up to the climate crisis that could happen in the future. When the 'storm' finally does abate, the European marine



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equipment sector will be internationally well placed to deal with the important upcoming challenges.

Innovation is one of the primary driving forces of our industry. To maintain this force and remain a world leader especially when it comes to the production of marine equipment we must ensure that a number of multiplying factors do not hinder our growth in the future. We must ensure that there is better regulation and mutual recognition through classification, ensuring fair practices and value for money when introducing products onto the market.

The most immediate problem for the industry is the lack of financing from the banks. If banks are not willing to do business with the shipyards then the lack of credit will filter through to the marine equipment industry. This will have a knock on effect throughout the supply chain. In the coming months it is a priority to urge the banks to keep financing the sector convincing them that the sun has not set on our industry (just yet).

The marine equipment industry has always been renowned, at business level, for being able to come up with solutions to complex problems submitted by our colleagues from the shipyards and/or ship-owners and bring added value to those solutions. Its role has been steadily increasing over the past 20 years.

It is at this particular time that the marine equipment industry should get this recognised also at international level both by its business partners – I refer e.g. to the meetings taking place among ship-owners, shipyards and classification societies (tripartite); and by regulators – I refer to the processes taking place e.g. in IMO, OECD, UN in particular in order to help the maritime industry as a whole weather out this economic ‘storm’.

At European level, on the one hand, I would like to thank to our colleagues of CESA (and other associations like ECSA) for the good cooperation and the increased activity we are developing on different policy areas which show also an increased recognition of the added value of marine equipment industry; on the other hand I would like to thank the European regulators and in particular the European Commission, for their increased attention to the added value the sector develops in terms of employment, technology, safety and turnover etc. which it is taking into consideration in their actions and plans.

In times of crisis and economic downturn the role of public policies becomes even more relevant and the commitment of the EU vis-à-vis maritime activities through its policies and in particular through the Integrated Maritime Policy is very welcome.

In this context EMEC recognises the European Maritime Day (20th May) as an excellent platform not only to celebrate Europe’s maritime dimension but also to discuss and put forward ideas, plans and visions for the future of the maritime cluster. We are glad that the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission have all together decided to create such a platform and we look forward to participate in this year’s events in Rome.

We also welcome the initiative, highly supported by EMEC, under the Czech Presidency, for a workshop on maritime policy, with special focus on maritime clusters, addressed to landlocked countries on 27 April 2009 in Prague. European Marine Equipment suppliers, are one of the few stakeholders in the maritime sector based also on land-locked countries.



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We recognise the efforts made by VP Verheugen and its Directorate General, to ensure a future to the manufacturing industry in Europe and a role to the many SMEs struggling to keep also our sector competitive. We are confident that LeaderSHIP represents 'the' opportunity to redefine the targets and objectives of an integrated shipbuilding policy in which we trust the marine equipment industry and its increased role and horizontal issues will be duly included.

EMEC looks forward to cooperating closer with the Commission and our colleagues in CESA for a successful follow-up to the experience of LeaderSHIP 2015, starting from the High Level Meeting to be held before the summer.

Conclusions

As a result of the present situation, EMEC intends to support the maritime industry with its sectoral capacity of bringing forward solutions, through an increased positive cooperation with industry partners and regulators. Through this cooperation we can together bring added value to solutions to help the maritime industry as a whole weather out this economic 'storm' (and restore a safe and secure environment).



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