

Paints & Coatings

AkzoNobel chief puts his name to COP 15

AkzoNobel Chief Executive Hans Wijers recently threw his weight behind 'The Copenhagen Communiqué on Climate Change' by adding his name to those of hundreds of other global business leaders who called on world leaders to close a deal on climate change when they met in Copenhagen in December.

The move by the CEO of International Paint's parent company is significant for several reasons. Firstly, Mr Wijers is agreeing with key points of the Communiqué, including the statement that global economic development cannot be sustained in the longer term unless the climate is stabilised. Secondly, the document points out that

the right economic backdrop is required if industry leaders are expected to invest billions of dollars in low carbon products, services, technologies and infrastructure.

And thirdly, Mr Wijers is aware that international shipping has found itself in the environmental spotlight recently amid criticism that it has not done enough to limit its emissions. Yet various technologies already exist today to cut shipping's emissions by very significant margins. One of these is hull coatings, a sector in which AkzoNobel's subsidiary, International Paint, is market leader.

As the Communiqué states: "The problem of climate change is solvable – many of the technologies required are available today while others can be developed if the right incentives are in place." Earlier this year, when the IMO's Marine Environment Protection Committee held its 59th meeting in London, there was disappointment that more emphasis was not placed on the role that hull coatings are playing in cutting fuel consumption and reducing emissions. In the Second IMO Study on Greenhouse Gas Emissions, hull coatings merit barely a mention.

Dr Julian Hunter is just one of those disappointed. "Modern foul release coatings can make a huge difference right now to ships' fuel consumption and therefore their emissions," says Dr Hunter, who heads International Paint's Regulatory Affairs Division and attends IMO meetings on a regular basis. "We can demonstrate some remarkable fuel savings figures verified by some of the world's leading blue-chip owners," he says. "Savings typically lie in the range of 6 – 9% as compared with conventional hull coatings," Hunter continues, "and that's a significant benefit."

Leading owners and charterers are already investing in latest foul release coatings and are reporting startling cuts in fuel consumption and corresponding emissions of CO₂. However, in an overall shipping context, the number of companies choosing to invest in the latest generation of coatings is still quite small.

AkzoNobel's Mr Wijers says "I'm right behind Julian Hunter. We need to get the message across ... we have the technology today. I really do hope that our leaders can reach a robust deal in Copenhagen and that those in shipping take note of the technologies that are already available today."



AkzoNobel Chief Executive Hans Wijers – agrees with key points of the Communiqué