

16 December 2013

Time for action on unsubstantiated shipping surcharges says GSF

Shippers in Africa, Asia, the Indian sub-continent and South America are calling for urgent action on unsubstantiated shipping charges and surcharges.

Shippers are demanding greater transparency in shipping charges, including terminal handling charges and a plethora of surcharges they do not believe reflect the real costs of the alleged 'services' provided.

The Global Shippers' Forum (GSF) has welcomed the recent intervention by the Sri Lankan government in introducing reforms to ensure fair trading practices. In response to protracted lobbying by the Sri Lanka Shippers' Council to address unfair trade practices prevailing in the shipping industry in Sri Lanka over many years, the government acted to strengthen the powers of the Director General of Merchant Shipping to deal with anti-competitive practices, unfair charges and to create greater transparency into shipping charges.

Chris Welsh, Secretary-General of the Global Shippers' Forum said:

"The proposed Sri Lanka reforms are likely to be a catalyst for wider demands, especially in the developing world, for greater regulatory oversight of liner shipping and shipping charging practices where anti-trust exemptions remain in place.

"In the absence of effective competition in many regions of the world, there is a growing belief that tougher controls on liner shipping are needed to regulate carrier practices relating to freight tariffs to provide much needed transparency into shipping charges and surcharges"

Chris Welsh added:

"The GSF favours a market-led and fair competition approach to ensure open and competitive ocean transportation markets. However, in the absence of open and competitive markets it is increasingly likely that shippers will demand new regulatory agencies, or at least regulatory oversight, of tariffs and charges to ensure they are fair and equitable.

"I hope that a resolution of these long-standing grievances can be achieved before it comes to that, but momentum is building for a regulatory approach."

The GSF will give further consideration to the issue at its up-coming Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, USA, on 10-11 March 2014.

Notes for editors

The Global Shippers' Forum (GSF) is the global voice for shippers, created in 2006 as the successor to the Tripartite Shippers' Group, first organised in 1994. Like the

Tripartite Shippers' Group, the GSF represents the interests of various national and regional shippers' organisations in Asia, Europe, North and South America and Africa. The GSF is focused on the impact of commercial developments in the international freight transportation industry and the policy decisions of governments and international organisations that affect shippers and receivers of freight. The GSF was formally incorporated and registered as a non-governmental organisation in the United Kingdom in June 2011.