



Young Professionals in Shipping Network's Marija Pospisil, Tabitha Logan and Su Yin Anand believe shipping needs greater promotion as a pillar of HK's economy. Photo: Warton Li

# HK MARITIME FUTURE NEEDS DIRECTION, SAY EXPERTS

**Group issues government wake-up call, saying increasing costs and lack of talent threaten the city's shipping industry in the face of competition**

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A blueprint setting out the future direction of Hong Kong's maritime industry should be prepared and the government should then commit to implementing the plan if Hong Kong is to stave-off competition from other regional shipping sectors, says a group of shipping directors.

The proposal, which includes signing more double tax agreements with potential trading partners, tax incentives for companies planning to incorporate in Hong Kong, and subsidised training, was made by the directors of the Young Professionals in Shipping Network (YPSN).

"The government needs to first commit to a plan for the industry," said Su Yin Anand, one of the group's three directors. "After

that, an independent ministry for transport covering maritime, logistics, and aviation should be set up to focus on developing these industries.

"Further plans can be made once this basic infrastructure is in place."

Anand, a maritime solicitor, said increasing costs and lack of talent were among the challenges facing Hong Kong's maritime

sector. Another was lack of government support in promoting the city as a transport hub.

"This has resulted in Hong Kong being eclipsed by the likes of Singapore, Shenzhen and Shanghai."

A co-founder of the group, Tabitha Logan, a shipping company executive director, said the government had recently begun to take note of the maritime sector in Hong Kong.

The group's third director, Marija Pospisil, senior maritime claims insurer, said to attract and retain the best talents to the sector, both locally and from abroad, more effort should be made to promote shipping as one of the pillars of Hong Kong's economy.

Transport sector legislator Frankie Yick Chi-ming agreed with the young professionals, but said government and the maritime industry was waiting for a

series of reports to appear before acting. "Tweaking" rather than a revamp of the maritime industry was needed, he said.

Hong Kong owners, operators and managers already control about 10 per cent of the world's merchant tonnage, while the Hong Kong shipping register is the world's fourth-largest with ships totalling 80 million gross tonnes flying the Bauhinia flag.

The reports due to be released include a study on ways to develop Hong Kong as an international maritime centre being carried out by consultant BMT Asia Pacific. The firm is conducting two other studies - a Hong Kong 2030 port master plan, and Hong Kong's role as a regional distribution centre.

The maritime centre report was submitted to the Transport and Housing Bureau last week

while the other two are expected to be lodged with the Port Development Council and Trade Development Council later this year. While there has been concern the reports could gather dust on office shelves, insiders said government is keen to implement proposed ideas.

The young professionals said it was too early to say if there had been a change in government's attitude to the maritime sector since Leung Chun-ying became chief executive "though there have been positive indications".

Leung is a shipping industry supporter instrumental in setting up a maritime law course at City University. He has attended a raft of shipping events since becoming leader, something his predecessors rarely did, including the opening of the new Maritime Museum in Central last week.

