

## **Baltic Chairman's Cocktail Party Speech - 9 May 2018**

Ladies and gentlemen, It is a great pleasure to be here with you all tonight and my very great privilege to be here welcoming you all to the Baltic Exchange Chairman's Cocktail Party. I wish a very warm welcome to all the members of The Baltic Exchange and also to our guests. This is the night of the year when we come together to network, catch up with old friends and I hope also, that many new friendships will be struck up tonight.

It is also appropriate to mention absent friends. Of course when we gather together we will always think of old friends who have passed on or are not able to join us. I was not planning to mention anyone by name as each of us will have their own special memories but I must mention my friend and one of my mentors at the Baltic, Colm Nolan, who has only recently been admitted to hospital and is in a bad way – no one here will have more friends in this business than Colm and all our thoughts are with him.

On a happier note, this evening gives me the opportunity to thank many people, who have made generous contributions to The Baltic: Starting of course with all our wonderful staff and everyone who worked hard to make this evening such a great success and of especially our new Chief Executive Mark Jackson, he is as you all know hard-working intelligent and industrious. Moving swiftly on there is the Chairmen of our Index Council, Stefan Albertijn and the Chairman of our Membership committee, Colm Nolan.

I would also like to thank all the various council and committee members and panellists and any of you who have contributed to the Baltic; it is your generous provision of your time, your wisdom and professionalism that makes us what we are.

Earlier in the year a number of Baltic members joined me at the Lord Mayors Big Curry Lunch a fund raising event for the Soldiers charity, this was opened by General Sir Mike Jackson, who reminded us of our commitment to support the servicemen who all too often pay a high price for our freedom. Last year ten of us went – this year there were around thirty five and with additional generous support our visible contribution to the total raised was well over £5,000.

I'm sure you will all be pleased to learn that we discharged our civic duty and did our bit and I thank everyone who helped, for their generosity, and enthusiasm both at the Guildhall and also at the various after parties in the surrounding hostelries but most of all I want to thank David Beard, for his support, enthusiasm and typical generosity of spirit.

Curry – it's lovely stuff, delicious nutritious and infinitely well suited to eating with a healthy dose of beer. I consulted Colm about its health giving properties and he, has kindly agreed that there should be a Baltic Curry Night and this will be held on Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup> of November and we commend it to all of you who stand in need of sustenance and have a few pounds to spare for those Charities dear to all our hearts.

I must also thank our outgoing Chairman, Lambros Varnavides, who continues to be a force on the Baltic Council, in particular for his work in the formation of the Baltic Charitable Foundation. Through this we will continue to support deserving causes, as well as making provision for our historic membership commitments. In particular we are actively supporting a new partner – the National Coastwatch Institution and of course continuing our enduring relationship with the Salcombe Lifeboat. Lambros continues to be a great presence at the Baltic, not least in our newly decorated members bar, where his patrician features survey the Baltic's members from the wall, where he has recently replaced Guy Campbell.

This reminds me of Guy's memorable speech here some years ago where he extolled the virtues of a liquid lunch and looked forward to a new era for the Baltic. Perhaps he was foretelling us of the Baltic's sale, which Lambros went on to describe as a deal where everyone was a winner, In any event this brings me neatly to my Baltic progress report for this evening:

When the Singapore Exchange purchased the Baltic Exchange it made a commitment to ensure that the ethos of the Baltic would not change and it made a commitment to invest in new products and services to enhance our membership, many of our friends and colleagues from SGX are here tonight so do look out for them and say hello.

My **first** report is of the modernisation of the Baltic Code. The phrase "Our word our bond" guides the actions of every Baltic Exchange member. In the new version we have updated the code to make it more applicable to a world where regulatory compliance is increasingly important. It will reflect the language of compliance and it will also include sections on fairness & competition, anti-bribery & corruption and benchmarking.

Additionally it will make provision for equality and inclusion which has been one of my particular requests, for we are proud of our tradition but we must also look to a future that is bright for all.

We want the new code to make being a Baltic Exchange member more important than ever before. We want our business partners to ask whether or not a potential partner is a Baltic Exchange member. We want to spread our high standards across the freight markets. We aim to release the new Code later this year.

**Secondly**, we have launched an escrow service for sale and purchase transactions. Available for use where the buyer of the vessel is a Baltic Exchange member, this service builds on the Baltic Exchange's trusted position in the marketplace. The service will be run by the Baltic Exchange's Asia office in Singapore and subject to the Singapore Exchange's detailed compliance and money laundering procedures. We hope it will be a trusted and competitive offering and feel that the Baltic is ideally suited to making this new provision.

**Thirdly**, we plan to launch a container index in collaboration with the digital container freight platform Freightos. By using the Baltic Exchange's experience in auditing benchmarks and its global reputation, we hope to play a leading role in mitigating risk in the global supply chain, in the many areas where it is impacted on by container freight volatility.

Elsewhere, our disputes resolution service continues to be well used and in the first four months of this year alone has already helped members recover \$1.4m in unpaid fees and commissions, additionally our Expert Witness members provide independent and informed views on a wide range of maritime related disputes. I would encourage those lawyers and arbitrators present here tonight to make use of their expertise.

My final bit of housekeeping is to announce the winners of the Bradley Cup, this is presented every year in memory of our old friend David Bradley, to the member company which has been most successful in a range of sporting and quiz competitions. They've proven that they can sail, hit a tennis ball and could be Mastermind contestants and this year's winners are.....Howe Robinson!

I'm greatly enjoyed serving as The Baltic Chairman, although the year seems to be melting away and a centuries old institution is not easy to make ones mark on, I have no doubt that each successive Baltic Chairman has hoped to do just that. We live in interesting times and it seems that changes are inevitably coming but for the most part, I feel that we owe a duty of care to the Baltic, we stand on the shoulders of those who went before us, so although we must evolve and modernise, our first duty is to them and the proud tradition they have passed down to us.

I hope that we all remember that whilst we are no longer the shareholders of the Baltic, we are its members. Although many of us have had a windfall from the share sale, membership has never really been about the money. Let us therefore uphold the traditions of our long and distinguished membership and continue to grow as a beacon shining across the globe for trades increase, integrity and fairness.

In conclusion, as this is a networking opportunity, please everyone look around and if you don't know someone standing nearby, then please make a point of saying hello in a moment and introducing your selves. If you see a silver haired and steely eyed old cove don't be shy – he knows more about shipping than you and might just give you his wise council, if you see a youngster they might be a rising star with just a little of your help - and if they're a spotty sort with spikey gelled up hair, giggling as they fiddle with their mobile phone, they're probably about to take over your companies digital strategy.....

I think that's probably enough from me now, I hope you all have a wonderful evening, thank you for listening and now let's raise our glasses together in our proud toast – to the Baltic Exchange!