



Salami tactics: Turkey's method of ship recycling (left) is safer and better for the environment than Indian Ocean methods

A better way to scrap

After the failure of the Netherlands' Ecodock, does the 'Mediterranean method' show the way ahead for sustainable ship recycling?

Turkey is at the forefront of efforts to draw up a new IMO ship recycling convention that will address both environmentalists' concerns about ship pollution and those of ship breakers, who want a practical regime that is enforceable worldwide.

Members of Turkey's IMO delegation told *Fairplay* they were hopeful the outstanding issues would soon be resolved so that the draft Convention could be approved by the IMO ship recycling committee in October, and then ratified by member countries in May 2009.

Dimitris Ayvatoglu of Leyal Ship

Recycling explained that under the Basel Convention ships destined for scrapping may be defined as 'wastes'.

"Some countries and owners find this difficult to understand; what has changed from yesterday when a ship was still trading and was allowed to freely travel across the oceans with the same hazardous materials onboard?"

Ayvatoglu asked.

Hence the need for greater legislative transparency and better defined roles and responsibilities among the various stakeholders, including port states, recycling states, flag states, owners and

'Oil companies have to be seen to comply with their green credentials'

Oktay Sunata

others. Another loophole in the current legislation is that ships sent for scrapping can avoid the Basel Convention if owners 'sell on' an ageing vessel and re-flag to a so-called flag of convenience, hiding the fact that it is destined for scrapping.

This transition stage is not defined or addressed in the Basel Convention.

"Under the new IMO convention, a signatory nation can impose its will through its Port State Control," said Ayvatoglu. "Documents, procedures, etc since the very beginning of the ship's life will be checked and if a ship is not compliant with the IMO convention, it may be detained."

"When the IMO convention is ratified it will be the main instrument applicable to ships destined for recycling, instead of the Basel Convention," he explained. The new Convention will also state which materials should not be used in ship construction.

A still contentious issue is that, under the current proposals, each signatory state will be allowed to set up its own licensing scheme according to the provi-

sions of the Convention. NGOs are pushing for an ISO certification, so that there is an independent body to monitor the standard of government and commercial licences.

The ship breaking centres that have the most difficulty complying with environmental and safety regulations are in the Indian Ocean, notably in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

Unlike the Med, said Oktay Sunata of the Turkish Ship Recyclers Association, these coasts have a tidal range of many metres where there is no clearly defined interface between land and sea – just a muddy intertidal zone with no easy access for cranes or emergency vehicles.

Brute force and low-tech equipment are used to manage the hazardous materials and dismantle ships and, as the tide comes in, onboard pollutants wash

Ayvatoğlu: “In future, if an old ship is not IMO-compliant, it will be detained”

unchecked into the water. There is little or no hazardous material management and workers operate in unsafe conditions, said Ayvatoğlu and Sunata.

“Aliaga is the only place in Turkey where recycling can take place and ship breakers need to apply for a licence to operate here,” Sunata said.

“Yards operate at high health, safety and environmental standards and waste management is a first priority for the yards. There are inspections by the competent national authorities, both announced and unannounced, regarding working conditions and environmental and safety controls,” he explained (see box below).

The downside of this is that sound environmental and safety controls cost money. Many of the breaking yards in Aliaga were idle when *Fairplay* visited, because they pay less than half, and sometimes less than a third, of what



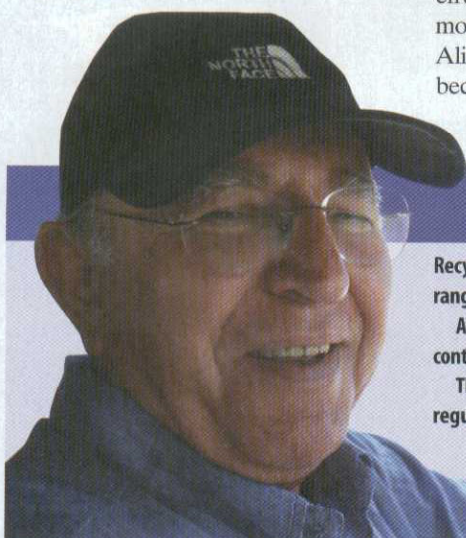
Photos: Jan Newton

owners of retired ships can command in India and Bangladesh.

Is Aliaga not afraid that it is being priced out of the market by breakers who can undercut it because of their indifference to environmental concerns or worker health and safety?

“I have a dream,” said Sunata, “that some big companies and governments are going to be put in a very bad position if they don’t follow the IMO convention, if they send their ships to non-compliant breakers for financial reasons. For example, if the big oil companies send their old tankers to those countries they will not be able to say that they’re green. I believe they will have to be seen to as complying with their green credentials.”

Aliaga has even had exploratory talks with owners in the US, which hitherto has scrapped its ships at home. “They are considering us,” said Sunata, “but for the moment scrapping is still a contentious political issue over there.” ■



Salami ship recycling

Recycling manager Sunata (left) said that, due to the absence of a tidal range, Turkish breakers are able to dismantle in ways that do not pollute.

At Aliaga, ships are winched gradually ashore onto hard surfaces with controlled drainage and sliced “like salami”.

The entire Turkish ship recycling industry in Turkey abides by tight regulations regarding containment and treatment of contaminants, said Ayvatoğlu (above right), and the disposal of materials is carefully controlled by the Turkish Ministry of Environment.