

Successful Premiere for SMM Offshore Dialogue

The first SMM Offshore Dialogue, held on the occasion of SMM 2010 at the Hamburg Fair site, concluded on Thursday 9th September. It showed very clearly that the offshore industry needs forums such as the SMM Offshore Dialogue to meet the varied requirements of the market. It was a workshop event, bringing together some 400 industry experts from business, politics and research for two days, to discuss the existing and future potentials and challenges for offshore oil and gas production, for deep sea mining, and for offshore wind energy.

Dr. Manfred Schubert, Ministerial Director at the Federal Economics Ministry said in a warning note during his address at the opening of the Offshore Dialogue that the events in the Gulf of Mexico have shown the tremendous technological challenges which the offshore industry has to face.

John Westwood, Chairman of Douglas-Westwood Ltd., a UK based energy consultant, forecasts continuous growth for the offshore market in the next five years, both directly off the coast and further out to sea. He predicts global investments totalling about EUR250 billion, adding that there is more oil below the seabed than anywhere else. By the middle of this decade, he expects it to be the main source of petroleum to cover global demand.

The first part of the workshop was the Oil & Gas Dialogue, where the experts discussed the development and design of special-purpose ships for offshore oil and gas production. Drilling and production platforms and research and tender vessels have to meet high safety and environmental standards, to fulfil the economic requirements, and to withstand extreme environmental conditions. One of the focal areas of this Dialogue was oil and gas production from ice-covered areas. This is regarded as a key area by the session chairman, Dr. Walter Kühnlein, managing director of German consulting company Sea2ice and chairman of the German Association for Marine Technology. He notes that 20 to 30% of all new oil and gas finds are expected in areas which are ice-covered at least for part of the year.

Dr. Sup Hong, Principal Researcher at the Maritime & Ocean Engineering Research Institute in Ansan, South Korea, gave workshop participants an overview of the existing resources and potentials for marine minerals. He reported that polymetallic nodules, massive seabed sulphide deposits and cobalt-rich manganese crusts are the most frequently found marine minerals. They contain eight of the most important metals - copper, nickel, cobalt, manganese, lead, zinc, gold, silver and platinum. Diamonds are also among the natural resources which can be found on the seabed. Peter Heinrichs, COO of Aker Wirth GmbH from Erkelenz, a subsidiary of the international technology company Aker Solutions, gave information on deep sea diamond mining. He likewise referred to the advanced mining technologies used there.

Jan Willem van Bloois, Managing Director of IHC Merwede from the Netherlands, an industrial group specialising in the construction of equipment and special-purpose ships for the offshore market, underlined the future importance of deep sea mining for shipbuilding.

The Session Chairman for the last part of the workshop, the Offshore Wind Energy Dialogue, was Thorsten Herdan, managing director of the Power Systems Division of the German Engineering Federation and Vice-President of the German Wind Energy Foundation. He believes the offshore wind market gives enormous growth potential for the maritime industry.

Nils P. Olschner, marketing manager at the North German shipyard Abeking & Rasmussen, then described the opportunities and challenges posed by the offshore wind industry for German shipbuilding. He reminded delegates never to forget that offshore wind farms also need servicing after they have been built. The construction of service vessels is just as important.