

# Keeping maritime moving

As IADC nears its 50th anniversary, **Lisa Maher** interviewed its secretary-general, *René Kolman*, about its celebrations, communications, and concerns

**W**ith a degree in economics and an innate interest in ports and maritime trade, Secretary-General René Kolman joined the International Association of Dredging Companies (IADC), based in The Hague, the Netherlands, back in 2008 from a landscape contractors' trade association.

"A totally different focus," he noted. "IADC is much more outward-looking. Here I deal with large companies, and CEOs who know exactly what they are talking about. I always need to be aware of their interests,

preoccupations, and concerns."

In addition, he liaises with EuDA ("a political lobbying association"), CEDA ("a professional development association"), and other groups active in or supportive of the industry.

Without dredging, trade and tourism would be constrained to ports with naturally deep draughts. Hence, as the umbrella organisation for 10 dredging companies plus about 90 associates and one observer, "IADC's members' combined resources carry out 80% of the world's open market in global dredging", and keep trade flowing.

For 50 years, these unsung maritime facilitators have offered services for ports and harbours, coastal development and protection, land reclamation, offshore energy for oil and gas and wind farms, remediation of contaminated industrial sites, and beach nourishment and cruise ship harbours for recreation and tourism.

Since its beginnings in the 19th century, and particularly over the past five decades, companies have adopted the latest equipment and technology while adapting to changing markets and demands, whether those be rising sea levels or safety concerns, environmental constraints, or subsea pipelaying.

## IADC at 50

Anniversary celebrations started at IADC back in January, but there are plenty more to come over the course of 2015:

- the actual anniversary on 21 May;
- the 50th Seminar on Dredging and Reclamation in Delft, the Netherlands, in June;
- the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Hong Kong in October;

- 'From Birth to Boom: Asian Maritime Megastructures' – now would be a good time to call in any favours from an IADC member company – this one-day conference in Hong Kong on 23 October 2015 is limited to 150 invited guests, members, and sponsors. The programme is made up of presentations and discussions of which many concern Hong Kong's Airport Core Projects – especially the Chek Lap Kok island, Hong Kong land reclamation, and the design for a third runway to extend the airport. For many of the current generation's engineers, "it's the cradle of the present dredging industry" said Kolman. Featuring keynote speaker Robert D Kaplan, the papers and ensuing discussions are sure to be stimulating and informative.
- publication of *Beyond Sand and Sea* – project descriptions and photographs on 50 iconic projects that have been carried out over the past 50 years;
- plus competitions, special editions of *Terra et Aqua*, IADC's quarterly journal, and an equipment-focused webinar: '50 years of dredging' – IADC's social media followers (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or YouTube) can get more details there.

## The 50th seminar

Part of IADC's remit is education, both of professionals and the wider world, so it's appropriate that its 'Seminar on Dredging and Reclamation' celebrates its 50th edition this year in Delft, the Netherlands. Venues alternate between the Delft UNESCO-IHE venue and various locations around the world – Middle East, Far East, Africa, and America.

This 50th seminar will take place at



Lisa Maher

A special year  
– René Kolman

UNESCO-IHE in June, ending with a special lecture on 26 June.

A further part of its educational remit is the eight-year-old Young Management Days (YMD) programme. “Many company employees are technicians,” said Kolman, “but they need more than just their own focused specialism – they need a broader world view, a bigger picture. YMD attendees broaden their views and meet colleagues they will collaborate with and compete against on many projects for the rest of their careers.”

The three-day programme is supported by two lecturers from the London School of Economics and is aimed at 20–25 year-old ‘youngsters’ (those under 40. It “looks at short-, mid-, and long-term influences and drivers on the dredging market” said Kolman. “Those drivers can include the IMF recovery fund, jobs, other funding, population movement from rural to coastal urban centres, overcrowding, reclamation, sea level rising, and land protection. The course is intended to show these younger technicians the bigger picture that will affect the work they do and the projects that will need to take place.

Those drivers are something Kolman and his colleagues are always conscious of, with a need to look ahead for issues that will have an impact on the industry.

“For example, the lecturers need to encourage the students to think about the impact the move to much larger vessels will have,” Kolman continued. “Trade numbers will go down for smaller vessels. What will that mean for ports? What will that therefore mean to dredging? Are ports or contractors ready for what that means?”

“Or, take dredging and the Arctic – how will that affect trade patterns? Which particular ports will be affected? Which companies are ready to offer specialist vessels, equipment, services for extreme offshore conditions?”

“Or offshore and renewables,” he added. “There’s still a lot of work to be done, contracts to come along. Dredging companies can compete with established service providers because they have a USP – they can do all the associated work, not just one part. They are a full service provider and some of them can also bid for EPC contracts.”

## Finally...

Looking to Asia, which is the location of both the AGM and the one-day conference later in 2015, Kolman noted, “We know that

this is Asia’s century but there’s still opportunity for European and non-Asian contractors – but for how long? While the Chinese don’t currently have the same expertise and skills for complex projects, they are acquiring it, so within the next few decades the Chinese contractors will become competitors for projects outside China. I doubt if China will open its own market – we see it as closed.”

However, there is much to look forward to, in his personal opinion. “Population changes are likely to drive many projects in Asia and the Middle East, so real estate/reclamation will become more likely for those with coastlines. Look at Garuda, or Penang. I think there are more of these projects to come, for example, in front of Manila Bay. Flood protection is increasingly important as sea levels rise. For example, Vietnam doesn’t have enough protection within the delta area, so works are needed there.

“As an industry, we continually evolve and adapt. We are competent, capable, and environmentally conscious. We signal to the



By invitation only...

market, ‘We can take care of business – and the environment.’” **DPC**

» [www.iadc-dredging.com](http://www.iadc-dredging.com)

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## » About IADC

The International Association of Dredging Companies is the global umbrella organisation for contractors in the private dredging industry, dedicated to not only promoting the skills, integrity, and reliability of its members, but the dredging industry in general.

Its mission is:

- to inform the world about the fundamental need for dredging and the economic, social, technological, and environmental benefits thereof
- to improve the international business climate for the private dredging industry
- to promote fair contract conditions and fair competition within the dredging markets
- to promote worldwide the Standards of Professional Conduct that form the basis for all members’ operations
- to promote the industry as an innovative industry with attractive career opportunities.

In order to fulfil IADC’s mission IADC assumes five important roles:

- **Guardian** – IADC aims to serve as a quality label
- **Advocate** – IADC represents the common interests of its members at supra-governmental and legislative bodies, international non-governmental organisations, international conferences, and exhibitions
- **Facilitator** – IADC seeks to establish dynamic co-operation amongst parties involved in dredging
- **Educator** – IADC promotes the field of dredging as a career choice
- **Information provider** – IADC publishes and supports the publication of literature and audio-visual materials pertinent to dredging, aimed at a variety of target groups.

The work of IADC is accomplished through working groups of experts drawn from member companies and through its secretariat. Its annual general meeting forms the legislative body of the association, which is governed by a board of directors with representatives of different member companies.

In addition, the secretariat provides the staff for MUNIS (a mutual insurance company that insures some EUR9 billion (USD9.7 billion) worth of equipment for the four main Dutch/Belgian dredging companies), and co-ordinates activities on behalf of the Site Investigation Bureau.