

CMA CGM welcomes 13,800-TEU flagship CHRISTOPHE COLOMB



picture courtesy CMA CGM

French container line CMA CGM has welcomed and named its new flagship, the 13,800-TEU CHRISTOPHE COLOMB, which is now France's largest container ship.

The vessel, which was delivered from the South Korean shipyard last November, was christened on Monday this week at Terminal de France in Le Havre by godmother Christine Lagarde, France's Minister of Economic Affairs, Industry and Employment. The vessel is the first of a series of eight similar ships, all named after great explorers.

CMA CGM said in its welcoming statement that these very large ships will enable the group to improve CMA CGM's competitiveness and are a symbol of the recovery in international trade.

Given the difficulties experienced by the French carrier over the past 18 to 24 months, the arrival of the first of a new series of VLCS ships – very large container ships – certainly acts as some sort of symbol.

Christophe Colomb is 365m in length and has a beam of 51m and has an operational range of 45,000 kilometres. She is one of the new generation vessels fitted with the latest environmental technology, including an electronic injection engine which is said to significantly reduce bunker fuel and oil consumption while enabling the ship to operate at what is dubbed 'ecospeed', with reduced carbon emissions. The ship has double-hull protected bunker tanks and **a fast oil recovery system aimed at preventing marine pollution.**

As with several recently introduced Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) container ships of a similar capacity, Christophe Colomb has been designed with her accommodation and bridge situated forward of the centre of the vessel instead of aft, with the engine room and stacks set back in the conventional position near the stern. This is said to improve visibility for those on the bridge while increasing the number of containers that can be loaded.

CMA CGM intends deploying Christophe Colomb on its FAL 5 (French Asia Line) service between Europe and Asia, which was launched earlier in July. She will call at the ports of Ningbo, Shanghai, Yantian, Tanjung Pelepas, Port Kelang, Le Havre, Hamburg, Rotterdam and Zeebrugge.

"The vessel was christened at a time when CMA CGM Group has confirmed the sharp recovery in its business since the beginning of the year," the company said in a statement on Monday. "Over the first quarter of 2010, volumes carried rose 21 percent compared with the year-earlier period, while EBITDA stood at USD 380 million,

up USD 640 million year-on-year and in line with first-quarter 2008. Quarterly revenue was up by 29 percent to USD 3.2 billion. Second-quarter results will exceed first-quarter figures.”

CMA CGM said the entry into service of these ‘giants of the seas’ is a major, critically important factor for the Group and its future. “Today’s christening is the symbol of a new momentum.” The ship flies the French tricolour.

In a related matter Jacques Saade, Chairman of the CMA CGM Board announced that the proposed investment by Qatar Holding had been ruled out. He described the conditions set by the Qatar royal family’s investment division as being “too hard” and added that another possible investor, the US Colony Capital had also withdrawn from the bidding.

Saade expressed confidence that CMA CGM would be able to complete its recapitalization by the end of this July with the help of the French government-backed Strategic Investment Fund, as well as another as-yet unnamed investor.

CMA CGM faces an estimated USD 5.3 billion of debt during 2010.

http://www.ports.co.za/news/news_2010_07_14_01.php