PCS in Action: from Development to Implementation

IPCSA/CIP Webinar Summary

On 23 March, the Secretariat of the Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP) of the Organization of American States and the International Port Community Systems Association (IPCSA) jointly presented a webinar entitled PCS in Action: from Development to Implementation.

Due to the positive feedback and interest expressed, the partners will run the session again on 20 April; all of the same speakers will present their views once again, and this second date will also provide another opportunity for attendees to consider and submit their questions to the panel.

The webinar, focused on how to develop and implement a Port Community System (PCS), was the first in a series of webinars which will take place during 2021.

Speakers were Jorge Durán, Chief of the Secretariat, CIP; Hans Rook, Chairman, IPCSA; John Mein, Executive Coordinator, PROCOMEX, Brazil; Gadi Benmoshe, CIO, Israel Ports Development and Assets Company; and Keevan Gipson, Port Analyst, Port St Maarten.

Opening remarks

Jorge Durán described the importance of and benefits from CIP's new alliance with IPCSA for CIP members. "Our members in the Americas/Caribbean are in the process of digitalisation – brought about by unforeseen forces like the pandemic or already as part of modernisation processes like the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA) and the need to do paperless and digital processes," he said. "All our ports are trying to become digital and move to the next generation. We are very happy to be organising this event with IPCSA – we believe this alliance will be of benefit to both our organisations."

Hans Rook noted that during the pandemic, more and more ports have realised the necessity of moving from paper-based to digitalised information. Today it is no longer a case of 'whether' a PCS should be installed at a port but 'when', he said. "I am very happy that the Inter-American Committee on Ports and IPCSA have found each other," he said. "IPCSA especially focuses on Single Window, PCS operators and port authorities to support and promote trade facilitation. IPCSA and its members play a vital role in trade facilitation."

Various ports in the CIP region have started very modestly with a Maritime Single Window 'to have that paperless magic wand that opens doors everywhere', said **Jorge Durán**. "Everyone wants a PCS, to be part of the same platform in order to become more efficient and save time and money and therefore be much more competitive."

Necessary Elements for PCS Development

John Mein, Executive Coordinator, PROCOMEX, Brazil explained PROCOMEX's vison to improve Brazil's competitiveness, aiming to optimise and digitalise port and logistics operations through its PCS project. "In Brazil the advantage is the size but the challenge is the size – we have over 50 ports," he said.

The 42-month project to develop and implement a pilot version of the PCS is focusing on the ports of Santos, Suape, Rio de Janeiro and Itajaí, which between them represent 23% of the volume handled in Brazil's ports. "The objective is to decrease the amount of time it takes to export by one day, and to import by two days," he said.

The new PCS is being co-created with members of the community, he emphasised. He explained the process of getting all aspects of port operations and government agencies

onboard through the creation of national and local governance groups, which also ensures that local and national policies are integrated and the rive decisions are made.

"A challenge in designing the system is the fact that we have national systems we have to interface with and we will have local PCSs," he said.

However, the result will be 'a complete in the processes that existed for trade'.

Technological and Community Challenges and Needs

Gadi Benmoshe, CIO, Israel Ports Development and Assets Company, Israel introduced his topic by pointing out that Israel's PCS infrastructure is very important because 99% of the nation's imports and exports are by sea. "We are like an island," he said. "The majority of processes in the Israeli maritime supply chain are digital and paperless."

He agreed with earlier comments that when building a PCS, community is the first thing to focus on. "We brought all the community together from the government and business sides: our aim was to put the regulator in the front, so the regulators heading the steering committee."

The Israel PCS has 3,758 users and handles the exchange of 7.52 million messages per month. Although it has been in place for more than 15 years, he said, "the most important thing we do is the working group monthly meetings we have. Every month we meet and talk about problems. Sometimes the solution is not a technology solution – it is just coordination with the parties."

Covid-19 has been a positive influence in that digitalisation of maritime supply chain processes and PCSs as enablers are now considered even more critical by a wider range of stakeholders, he added. "There is less resistance to changing to new methods of working. All the projects and initiatives involving digitalisation now receive the highest

priority and more support from governments." While it is difficult to instantly digitalise a process during a crisis, "we must use this momentum and move forward", he said.

PCS Implementation

Keevan Gipson, Port Analyst, Port St Maarten outlined Port St Maarten's project to set up a PCS, which went live a year ago; the process had been started by developers ITPartner to ensure that the port complied with the IMO FAL Convention. "However, in March 2020 after a miscommunication regarding the berthing of a vessel, it was agreed upon to have the PCS implementation accelerated to fit the needs of the new situation," he said.

He explained the overall flow of information in the PCS, starting with the agent/vessel captain who submits the necessary information – "the first and most vital part" – and on to the distribution of this information via the PCS to all necessary parties.

The PCS became even more vital during the pandemic, because it provides information to help with decisions on loading/unloading cargo and passengers, he said. "We didn't want to disembark anyone without effective screening."

Not everyone is technologically savvy, said Keevan Gipson, and users needed support. "All the stakeholders were trained and we highly recommend this in the process of setting up a PCS. We could not have done it without the training. We also established a PCS steering committee, which I chair. It is comprised of stakeholders, to address their needs and for them to suggest necessary updates and share any problems. We made the system very flexible to allow for timely updates as required."

Q&A session

Mona Swoboda, CIP program manager, thanked the distinguished panellists and acted as moderator for the Q&A session.

Among the key points:

Kevan Gipson: "About 80% of the challenge of setting up a PCS is getting people onboard."

John Mein: "Setting up a PCS is about change management as much as system change."

Gadi Benmoshe: "I am sure most of the processionals in the panel and audience know: a PCS is a special contradiction in cybersecurity because we have to be very transparent and our communication methods have to be open. That is why the cybersecurity of a PCS is very important and hard to achieve. One measure you have to take: it is important to separate the PCS operational network from the administrative network of the company."

Mona Swoboda: "When we share experiences, we really become better and stronger. We [CIP] just kicked off our partnership with IPCSA but it is already a great success. We are stronger together and it is wonderful to be creating synergies with such an established, important organisation. We are very honoured."

**Notes to editors:**

**About CIP:**

The Inter-American Committee on Ports (CIP) is the only permanent forum that brings together the national port authorities of the member countries of the Organization of American States (OAS) and leaders of the maritime port industry.

CIP promotes: the development of a competitive, secure, sustainable and inclusive port sector; policy dialogue; strengthening of institutional capacities; technical assistance; and cooperation with the private sector. The CIP Scholarship and Training Program includes certified courses, seminars, workshops and hemispheric conferences. These activities are carried out in collaboration with CIP members, associate members and strategic partners.

About IPCSA

IPCSA is an international association of sea and air port community operators, sea and air port authorities and single window operators that is recognised across the globe for providing advice and guidance on the electronic exchange of information across borders and throughout the whole supply chain.

The association currently has members from across the globe who handle the exchange of information for Business to Business, Government to Business and Government to Government processes and facilitate the smooth cross-border movement of goods.

IPCSA focuses on supporting and facilitating systems and innovations for Port Community System members and users, and promoting the use of international data standards in sea and air ports, at border crossings and via Single Window systems around the world. IPCSA is a recognised NGO with consultative status at UNECOSOC and IMO.

The PROTECT Group develops and supports the electronic reporting required by authorities for vessels entering or leaving a port or port area. It maintains and develops EDI through the PROTECT Guide. PROTECT is now fully integrated into IPCSA.

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