

CMI torch passes to Australian Stuart Hetherington

By David

The torch is being passed as top maritime legal experts from 50 states and administrations met in Beijing this week to consider proposals to solve some of the knottiest problems in maritime law.

Delegates to the 40th conference of the Comité Maritime International (CMI) had mixed opinions on the speed with which its goals were progressing but were in agreement on the importance of the law-ky, detailed ongoing work of the 117-year-old outfit.

Some of the dozen-old topics

before the CMI this year included a bid by the International Salvage Union (ISU) to create an environmental salvage award under the current salvage Convention, as well as proposals on the international recognition of radical ship sales, the revision of the 1924 York Antwerp general average rules, the regulation of offshore activity, the fair treatment of seafarers by courts after environmental incidents and the certification by states of the current version of the Rotterdam Rules on carriage of goods by sea.

This year, Norwegian-based



• **STUART HETHERINGTON**
The incoming CMI president.

Photo: CMI/ISU

Norwich lawyer Karl-Adam Gumbell ends a four-year term as president and is set to pass the office on to Australia's Stuart Hetherington.

Hetherington has devoted several years to salvage issues as head of a CMI international working group in addition to a broad range of maritime legal work at Australian law firm Collyer Riggers & Peabody and formerly at boutique maritime firm Withnell Hetherington.

Gumbell, a Norwegian-Deleban Club member, is a partner of Oslo's Arntsen de Besche.

and administratively by general secretary Nigel Rowley of Canada,

the CMI holds annual conferences in addition to numerous smaller meetings by members of working groups to hammer out proposals and responsibilities on individual topics. Every four years, it meets for a conference to put legal proposals to a vote of delegates.

The CMI was formed in 1907 as a forum for national maritime legal associations (MLAs), some of which, like the US MLA, were formed for the purpose of taking part in the CMI. Many, if not most, delegates are ex-officials of their national MLAs and devote time to CMI work on a pro-bono basis.