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NEWS

9 May 2014

Shippers launch global assault on ‘unsubstantiated’ charges

The world’s shippers have launched a full-scale attack against what they describe as ‘unsubstantiated’ shipping surcharges and terminal charges, according to Dr Beverley Waugh, executive director of the SA Shippers’ Council (SASC).

The Global Shippers’ Forum (GSF) has called for transparency and government intervention to deal with these charges – which it accuses of being “non-negotiable” and “anti-competitive”, she told FTW.

“At its recent annual meeting in Los Angeles, the GSF agreed to organise a new global campaign to confront the imposition of unsubstantiated shipping surcharges, terminal charges and more than 20 other non-negotiable local charges on shippers worldwide – coming to a grand total of 39 ‘extras’,” Waugh added.

And, according to the GSF, this campaign is targeted at convincing the world’s competition watchdogs (or other appropriate regulatory bodies) to bring in new shipping legislation that will pass the death sentence on these local anti-competitive practices.

Waugh pointed out that these malpractices were widespread. And the shippers’ beef is that these and non-negotiated charges imposed on consignors and shippers with any shipper input. “The consignor or shipper has no control or influence in their freight rate negotiations with the shipping line, terminal operator, shipping agent, or third party logistics provider,” she said. “GSF members complained that shippers generally were not party to the contracts in which these fees were set, yet they had no choice but to pay the fees if they wanted their cargo to be transported.”

Waugh also stressed that, according to the discussion at the GSF, it was pointed out that Africa (along with Asia and South America) had been a hotbed for these malpractices for many years.

“As stated by our colleagues at the Union of African Shippers’ Councils (UASC) and Cameroon Shippers’ Council, this campaign is an important initiative to address abusive practices of carriers and terminals,” she added.

FTW www.ftwonline.co.za